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**Indigenous sole-parent families:
invisible and disadvantaged**

A.E. Daly and D.E. Smith

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DISCUSSION PAPER

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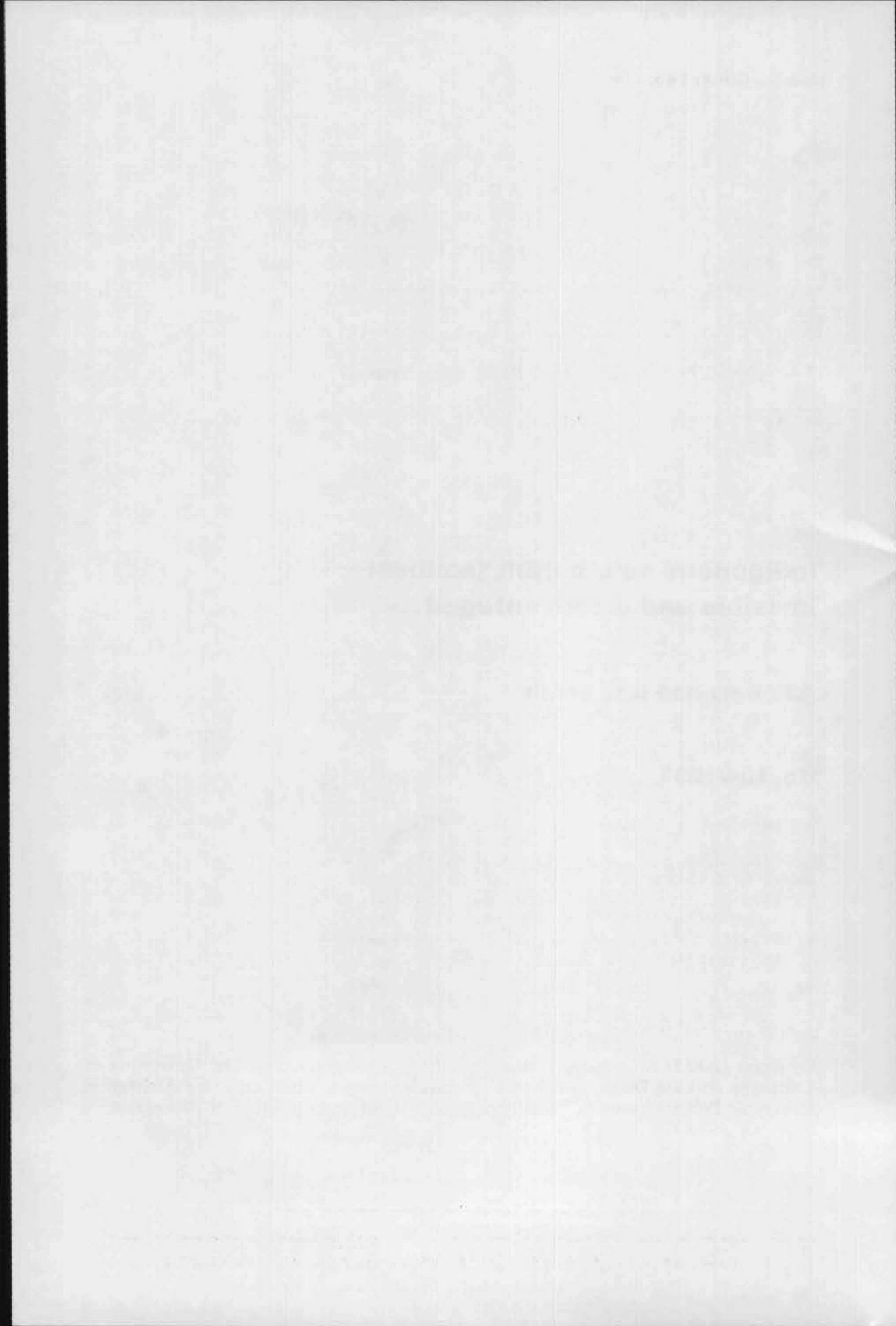


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Summary

This paper identifies the key characteristics of indigenous sole-parent families relative to other such Australian families and analyses the factors associated with their ongoing high levels of economic disadvantage using ethnographic research, the 1991 Census, the 1994 National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Survey (NATSIS), and the 1997 Department of Social Security (DSS) data.

The research concludes that indigenous sole-parent families:

- represent over one-third of indigenous families with children; a proportion twice as high as for the wider population;
- have younger parents, with lower educational status who are less likely to be in employment and have more children to support than other Australian sole parents;
- include more foster children than other Australian sole-parent families (25 per cent include foster children compared with 9 per cent of their counterparts);
- have median family incomes below that of other Australian sole-parent families and the households in which they live have lower household incomes;
- have a lower rate of access to maintenance payments from the other parent than do other sole parents;
- appear to shoulder higher adult and childhood 'dependency burdens', having more adults living with them who were not in employment than other sole parents;
- are very differently distributed in their geographic location than other Australian sole-parent families: they are less urbanised (only one-third are in 'major urban' areas compared to two-thirds of other sole-parent families) and a significant proportion live in rural areas compared to other sole-parent families (23 per cent compared to 10 per cent); but
- are, nevertheless, slightly more urbanised than other indigenous families (78 per cent reside in 'other' and 'major' urban areas compared to 70 per cent of indigenous two-parent families).

The research suggests that as a result of these and other factors, indigenous sole-parent families:

- may have markedly lower standards of living than their counterparts;
- continue to bear higher levels of poverty relative to other Australian sole-parent families; and

- the children in these families will be at great risk from the low economic status of their parent.

The research recommends:

- The access by indigenous sole parents to education, training and employment is especially critical. More finely-tuned program delivery and policy formulation based on their socioeconomic characteristics could play an important role in raising their employment and educational opportunities and their income levels.
- DSS target this client group for a comprehensive adequacy assessment of their social security income and program needs along the lines of the composite framework approach advocated in its 1995 policy paper (Department of Social Security, 'Developing a framework for benchmarks of adequacy for social security payments', *DSS Policy Discussion Paper No 6*, Department of Social Security, Canberra).
- Such an assessment would be significantly enhanced by the parallel conduct of an in-depth survey of the relative living standards of indigenous sole-parent families and the households in which they live.
- The family and socioeconomic characteristics described should be considered in formulations of a new Budget Standards approach to the measurement of poverty.
- DSS adopt a standard national policy to consistently identify these indigenous clients.
- More formal linkages be established between the Community Development Employment Projects (CDEP) scheme and the Jobs, Education and Training (JET) program, and greater co-ordination be established between these programs in order to increase vocational training opportunities for sole parents.
- The geographic distribution of sole-parent families in 'other urban' and rural areas, and their extremely high concentration in the Broome, Adelaide and Alice Springs ATSIC regions warrants priority program attention.

Acknowledgments

We would like to thank DSS for access to non-confidential national data on identified indigenous sole-parent pensioners. A number of DSS officers also made themselves available over many hours to discuss a range of policy and program issues with us, and provided valuable comments on an early draft; they include Cathryn McKenzie, Jenny Thompson, Fiona Carberry, Sally Richmond and Roy Chell. Cathryn McKenzie was also the DSS discussant when the paper was presented at a Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research seminar in July 1997 and provided critical comment. The paper has benefited from the general discussion following presentations at The University of Canberra, the Social Policy Research Centre Conference (University of New South Wales) and CAEPR.

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Introduction

Considerable research has been conducted into the socioeconomic characteristics of Australian sole-parent families who have been a focus for concern because of their growing numbers and fear of an inter-generational cycle of deprivation being established. In 1991, Australian sole-parent families represented 18 per cent of Australian families with children. By comparison, indigenous sole-parent families constituted a significant 34 per cent of indigenous families with children, yet remain virtually invisible in official surveys, mainstream policy debate and academic research.

A census-based study of indigenous families by the authors (Daly and Smith 1996a, 1996b) reported the low economic status of indigenous sole-parent families as a cause for particular concern and recommended further investigation. This paper begins that investigation by identifying the key characteristics of indigenous sole-parent families relative to other such Australian families, and analysing the factors associated with their ongoing high levels of economic disadvantage. By virtue of the limited research in this area, the paper uses a combination of statistical and ethnographic case study information, with a heavy reliance on data from the 1991 Census, complemented by more recent data from the 1994 National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Survey (NATSIS), and 1997 aggregate administrative data provided by the Department of Social Security (DSS).

Inevitably, a number of important conceptual issues arise when trying to define and describe sole parenthood in a cross-cultural context. Attention is paid here to identifying the culturally-based behaviours and practices reported amongst indigenous sole-parent families, and to examining the implications of these for program and policy. The economic outcomes for indigenous sole-parent families are summarised in the conclusion and a range of key policy and program implications are discussed.

Defining indigenous families—the 1991 Census and NATSIS

In the national censuses, the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) defines a family as 'a group of related individuals where at least one person is aged 15 years or over' (ABS 1991: 47). Indigenous families are defined here as those families where at least one adult within the family identified themselves on the census form as an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander.

The ABS classifies four main elementary family types: the two-parent family, the couple with no offspring, the sole-parent family, and the family of related individuals only. The elementary nuclear family of a mother, father and

children is regarded as the basic family structure and constitutes the ABS coding device referred to as the 'primary family' around which all family types in a household are constructed.

Apart from the 'primary family',¹ the ABS classifies only two other families within a household. As a consequence, if there are actually more than a total of three families residing in a household, the adults in them are effectively 'disbanded' from being a family, treated as separate relatives, and thereafter referred to as 'other related individuals'. Those individuals are subsequently coded (in terms of relationship, income and so on) only in respect to the primary family.

There are two types of sole-parent families identified in the 1991 Census:

- a lone adult with one or more of his or her own dependent offspring—where dependent offspring can include any child, whether related or not, who usually resides in the household (for example a woman and her child); and
- as above, but where other related adults are present, and none of the related adults have a spouse or children of their own living in the household (for example, a woman and her child living with her sister).

All children under 15 years within a household have to be coded as related to some adult. Children or 'family offspring' are classified as either 'dependent' or 'other' (the latter are adult offspring who have no partner or offspring of their own).²

The second set of data referred to here is from the 1994 NATSIS conducted by the ABS as a nationwide survey of 15,700 indigenous Australians. NATSIS data are generally not comparable with census data for the wider Australian population, but the one-off survey contains a range of health, income, employment and cultural information not available elsewhere. While 1991 Census operational definitions for family and household were retained for the NATSIS, it employed different coding practices for some variables (for example, all families resident in a household were coded, but visitors were overlooked) (see Jones 1996; T aylor 1996a). Census and NATSIS data are analysed here to develop a preliminary profile of the socioeconomic status of sole-parent families relative to other such families. The validity of the profile is further enhanced by reference to a available ethnographic case study research.

1991 Census and 1994 NATSIS data

Families and children

As Table 1 shows, since 1976, sole-parent families have accounted for a rising proportion of both indigenous and other Australian families with children. In 1991, 34 per cent of indigenous families with children were sole-parent families compared with 18 per cent of other Australian families. While it is true for both indigenous and other sole-parent families that over 90 per cent of sole-parent families were headed by women, interestingly, indigenous male sole parents accounted for over twice the share of all indigenous families than other Australian male sole parents did for all other families (4.4 per cent compared to 2.1 per cent).

Table 1. The proportion of families with children by family type, 1976-94

	1976 Census		1991 Census		1994 NATSIS
	Indigenous	Others	Indigenous	Others	Indigenous
Sole parent	0.28	0.12	0.34	0.18	0.35
female head	0.24	0.10	0.28	0.15	
male head	0.04	0.02	0.05	0.03	
median no. children	na	na	2.70	1.90	
Two parent	0.72	0.88	0.66	0.82	0.65
median no. children	na	na	2.80	2.40	

Source: Census of Population and Housing 1976, 1991; NATSIS 1994.

As Table 1 indicates, on average, indigenous sole-parent families had larger numbers of children in 1991 than other Australian sole-parent families. An issue that has been highlighted in earlier work (Daly and Smith 1996a) is the relatively large proportion of indigenous sole-parent families that include foster children (either legally fostered or by customary practice according to ABS definition) (see Table 2). About one-quarter of indigenous sole-parent families include foster children compared with 9 per cent of other Australian sole-parent families and 14 per cent for indigenous two-parent families.³

The fact that a relatively large proportion of indigenous sole-parent families contain foster children raises further questions as to how these families are established. These results confirm the case study evidence of a high degree of shared care for children within indigenous communities,

especially by close kin. In particular, female siblings and grandmothers are reported as acting as kinds of parents for the children of their sisters and daughters, often for extended periods of time.

Table 2. Family type by mix of dependent offspring^a, 1991

Mix of dependent offspring	Indigenous		Other
	Sole parent %	Two parent %	Sole parent %
Natural only	74.3	70.5	90.3
Step only	0.2	7.0	0.3
Step and natural	0.1	7.6	0.2
Foster only ^b	14.3	6.2	7.7
Natural and foster ^b	11.1	7.4	1.5
Step and foster ^b	0.0	0.8	0.0
Natural, step and foster	0.0	0.5	0.0
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0
Number of families	14,173	30,811	337,000

Notes: ^aThe data relate to primary families only; that is, they exclude second and third families.
^bFoster children can be related or unrelated but must usually be living with the family. They may be either legally fostered or fostered by custom.

Source: Census of Population and Housing, 1991.

Geographic location

In 1991, sole-parent families in general were more likely to live in urban centres than two-parent families (see Table 3). Other Australian sole-parent families were heavily concentrated in the major urban centres where over two-thirds of them lived, but in the case of indigenous sole-parent families, the largest concentration was in the smaller urban centres (see Table 3). A significant proportion (22.5 per cent) of indigenous sole-parent families lived in rural areas compared to other Australian sole-parent families (9.8 per cent).

This geographical distribution of indigenous sole-parent families is roughly similar to that for the total indigenous population. The main difference is that sole-parent families are slightly more urbanised: 33.8 per cent were resident in major urban areas compared to 28 per cent of the total indigenous population.

The NATSIS data show little change in the geographical distribution of indigenous families between 1991 and 1994. Figure 1 presents a further geographical breakdown by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC) region of the proportion of all indigenous families who were sole-parent families. Sole-parent families accounted for a higher proportion of all families in the coastal regions, particularly in New South Wales, Western

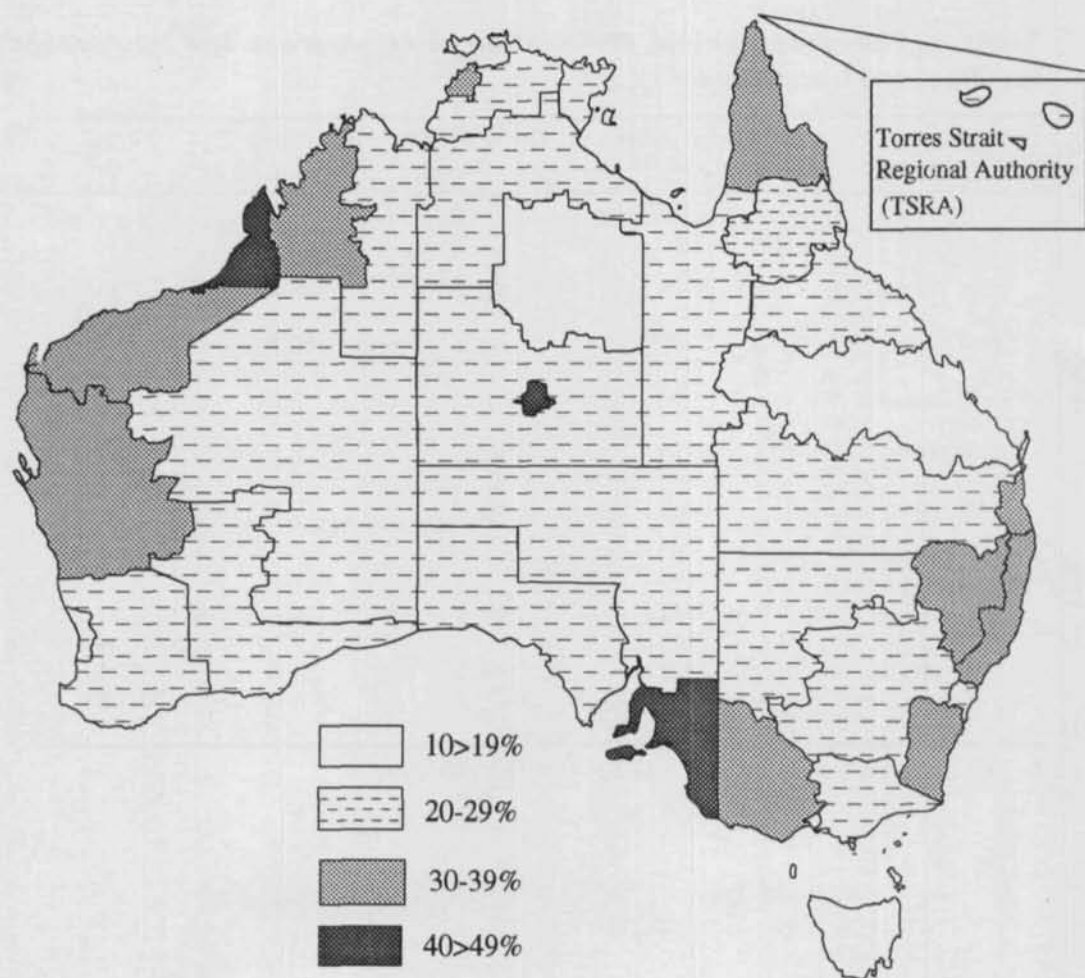
Australia and South Australia.⁴ An exception was the high concentration of sole-parent families in the Alice Springs region. In the ATSI regions of Alice Springs, Broome and Adelaide over 40 per cent of indigenous families were sole-parent families. This distribution has direct implications for service delivery and targeting for program effectiveness.

Table 3. The geographical distribution of sole-parent and two-parent families, 1991 and 1994

	Major urban %	Other urban %	Rural %	Total %
1991 Census				
Indigenous				
Sole parent	33.8	43.7	22.5	100.0 (18,682)
Two parent	28.0	41.3	30.8	100.0 (35,718)
1991 Census				
Others				
Sole parent	67.5	22.8	9.8	100.0 (513,033)
Two parent	63.3	21.0	15.8	100.0 (2,248m)
1994 NATSIS				
Indigenous				
Sole parent	32.6	43.4	24.0	100.0 (22,1080)
Two parent	21.2	44.0	34.8	100.0 (86,189)

Source: Census of Population and Housing, 1991; NATSIS 1994

Figure 1. Proportion of indigenous families who are sole-parent families, by ATSIC Regional Councils, 1994 NATSIS

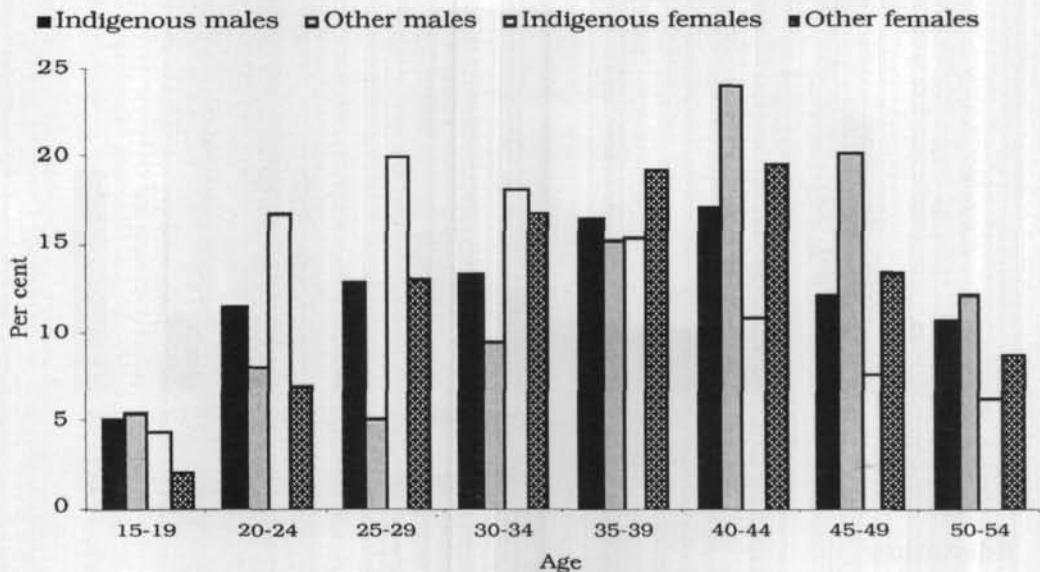


Source: NATSIS 1994.

Age and marital status

Figure 2 presents data on the age distribution of indigenous and other Australian sole parents (more detailed data are presented in Appendix Table A1). Indigenous sole parents tended to be younger than other sole parents; 41 per cent of female and 30 per cent of male sole parents were under 30 years of age compared with 22 per cent and 19 per cent respectively of other sole parents.

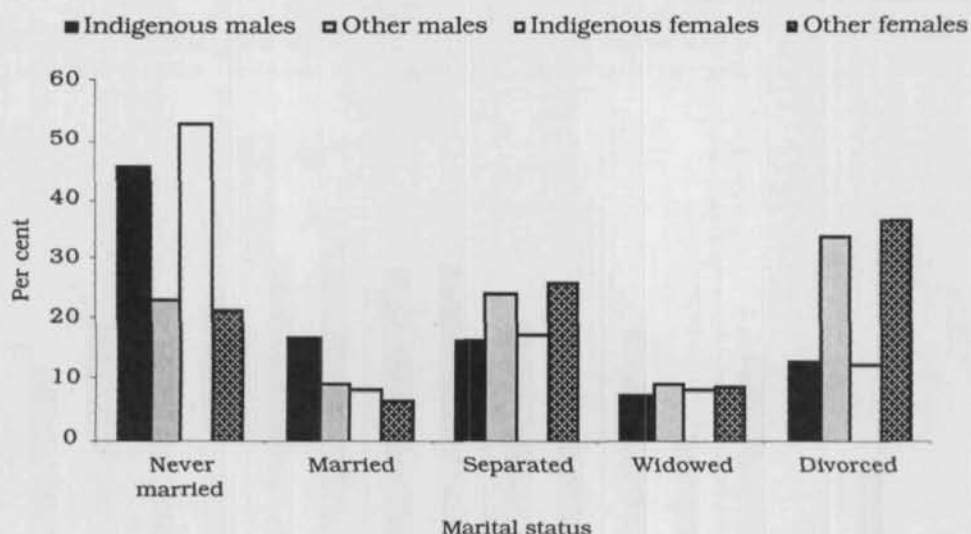
Figure 2. The age distribution of indigenous and other Australian sole parents, 1991 Census



There were also substantial differences in the marital status of sole parents as shown in Figure 3. About half of both male and female indigenous sole parents had never been married compared with less than one-quarter of other Australian sole parents for whom the major categories were 'separated' and 'divorced'. This need not imply that indigenous sole parents had not been partners in a long-term relationship prior to sole parenthood. It is possible that partners in a de facto relationship that had since broken up would state that they were 'never married'. Also, many indigenous people remain reluctant to provide any family information to government agencies. The share in the 'widowed' category was largest for non-indigenous males and the share of indigenous female sole parents who were widowed was no larger than among other sole-parent females.

The result, however, raises an important issue; namely, sole parenthood generally follows the breakdown of a long-term relationship, but these data question whether this is true for indigenous sole parents. The data suggest that indigenous sole-parent families may be established through a different process than is typical for other sole-parent families, and may exhibit a very different life cycle.

Figure 3. The distribution by marital status of sole parents, 1991 Census



Education

In an earlier paper, we documented the relatively low levels of education and employment of indigenous Australian sole parents (Daly and Smith 1996a). A larger proportion of indigenous sole parents (94 per cent of females and 80 per cent of males) had no educational qualifications than among other adults (80 per cent of females and 70 per cent of males). Importantly for employment outcomes, the proportion of indigenous female sole parents who had a post-secondary qualification was three times lower than their female counterparts (6 per cent compared to 19 per cent of other female sole parents).

Employment and income

These lower educational levels are reflected in differential income and employment outcomes. Only 22 per cent of indigenous female sole parents and 42 per cent of indigenous male sole parents were in employment compared

with 41 per cent of other female and 59 per cent of other male sole parents (Daly and Smith 1996a).

The income implications are summarised in Table 4. Indigenous sole-parent families had lower median incomes than indigenous two-parent families and other Australian sole-parent families. This remained true following a rough correction for the number of people in the family. The NATSIS results suggest little change between 1991 and 1994.

Table 4. Median family income by family type for indigenous and other Australians, 1991 and 1994

	Indigenous \$	Others \$	Ratio
Census 1991			
Family type			
One-parent family income	16,320	19,870	0.82
Per median no. family members	4,410	6,850	0.64
Two-parent family income	27,750	39,610	0.70
Per median no. family members	5,780	9,000	0.64
Household income per household containing a sole-parent family	18,524	21,330	0.87
Per median no. household members	4,410	6,770	0.65
NATSIS, 1994			
One-parent family income	15,780	na	na
Household income per household containing a sole-parent family	18,840	na	na
Per median no. household members	4,710	na	na

Note: na = not available.

Source: Census of Population and Housing, 1991; NATSIS 1994.

Not only is the income of the family important but where they are living in a shared household, the income of the other individuals in the household is important. Table 4 also reports median incomes for households containing a sole-parent family. The results suggest that additional individuals in sole-parent households, on average, have low incomes and reduce the average income available for each occupant.

Ethnographic evidence suggests that indigenous sole parents in some communities form a focal point for other adults lacking an independent means of support (Finlayson 1991). This is a difficult hypothesis to test at the aggregate level, but data from the 1991 Census show that in only 12 per cent of households that were occupied by an indigenous sole parent, were all the adults of working age in employment. This compared with 36 per cent of households including a non-indigenous sole parent.

It is generally recognised that the presence of additional members within a household or income unit results in lower levels of living for a given level of income (Travers and Richardson 1993; DSS 1995: 71-2). While census data are not the appropriate vehicle for testing the hypothesis, the data show that other adults of working age in the household are often not in employment or in the labour force, and therefore may well place a further financial burden on the sole-parent family. The analysis of census and NATSIS data presented here suggest that indigenous sole-parent families may have markedly lower standards of living than their counterparts.

Indigenous sole parents—poverty and welfare dependency

Table 5 reinforces the above conclusion of comparative economic disadvantage, presenting a more detailed calculation of the proportion of income units that fall below the Henderson poverty line. While the Henderson poverty line has been the subject of considerable debate and has important limitations, it remains the most widely quoted measure of poverty used in Australia (Saunders and Whiteford 1989; Saunders 1994; Altman and Hunter 1997). The general message of Table 5 remains clear. Sole parenthood is closely associated with poverty for all Australians (estimated at 54 per cent of sole-parent income units) but particularly for indigenous Australians (estimated at 78 per cent of sole-parent income units).

Table 5. Indigenous and other Australian income units with incomes below the Henderson poverty line, 1986 and 1991

Income unit type	Indigenous		Others	
	1986 %	1991 %	1986 %	1991 %
Couple with:				
one child	12.2	15.7	3.6	8.1
two children	27.3	23.3	8.0	9.4
three children	50.0	43.6	14.2	17.6
four + children	48.7	74.4	25.1	32.5
Total	30.5	34.2	8.8	12.0
Sole parent with:				
one child	46.3	67.6	25.8	46.3
two children	77.3	79.1	51.0	57.5
three + children	92.3	88.6	82.1	67.8
Total	64.9	78.2	41.8	53.5

Source: Ross and Mikalauskas (1996) Tables 6 and 7, based on Census of Population and Housing, 1986, 1991.

An earlier survey conducted as part of the Henderson Poverty Inquiry in Brisbane in 1973-74 estimated that 79 per cent of indigenous sole-parent family income units fell below the poverty line (Brown, Hirschfeld and Smith 1974). This suggests there may have been little change in the relative income status of indigenous sole-parent families over the recent past. As the Henderson measure of poverty is a relative one, this result does not imply that there has been no improvement in the real income level of indigenous sole-parent families over the period.

The issue of sole-parent poverty and dependence on social security income has been discussed extensively in the literature. The DSS estimated in 1997 that there were over 400,000 sole-parent families with children under 16 years of age, of whom about 84 per cent received a SPP (DSS 1997). It is difficult to know the proportion of indigenous sole parents on the SPP because of the incomplete use of the indigenous identifier on DSS forms.⁵ However, given the low level of employment among this group, it seems likely that the proportion is at least as large as among the Australian population in general. Data from the NATSIS show that 18 per cent of indigenous women received a SPP in 1994. This represents a substantial increase of 38 per cent from the 1976 Census figure; the last time that data on sources of income were collected in the census (see Table 6).

Table 6. Source of income for indigenous Australian women, 1976 and 1994

Source of income	1976 Census %	1994 NATSIS %
Government pensions and benefits:		
Jobsearch/Newstart	6.0	14.0
Age pension	7.0	8.0
Sole-parent pension ^a	13.0	18.0
Other government pension ^b	8.0	7.0
Other non-government sources	66.0	53.0
Total	100.0	100.0

Notes: ^a Includes widow pension and supporting mother's pension in 1976.

^b Includes invalid pension, sickness and special benefit.

Source: Daly and Hawke (1993); NATSIS survey.

The high level of welfare dependence among indigenous sole parents implies long-term absence from the labour market and poverty at an inter-generational level. There is concern that the high replacement ratio of potential employment income by welfare income may discourage indigenous

sole parents from seeking employment and gaining work experience, locking them into a cycle of welfare dependency.⁶ Estimates using 1986 data show that about one-third of indigenous women had replacement ratios above 60 per cent (Daly 1992). Preliminary estimates using 1994 NATSIS data suggest that high replacement ratios still remain an important issue for many indigenous Australian women.⁷ These findings can be explained by the low levels of labour market skills held by most indigenous sole parents, disincentives associated with access to regular child care and transportation costs, and the relatively large number of children which boost their welfare entitlements.

While high levels of welfare dependence may be undesirable, the ongoing poverty documented amongst this group indicates serious implications of any substantial reduction in pension payments, especially in the short term. Furthermore, while there may be negative effects from the apparently high level of welfare dependence among indigenous sole parents, it is important to remember that improved access to welfare payments is one probable explanation of the rising real incomes of indigenous women since 1976 and so may also have brought important benefits to these families (Daly and Hawke 1995).

Ethnographic case study research also suggests that given the prevalence of extended family formations, kin-based demand-sharing, and high levels of mobility and consequent high visitor numbers noted amongst indigenous families, it is likely that the economic burden experienced by low-income families such as sole-parent families is more substantial than the census depicts. Some of these culturally-based factors relevant to the economic status of indigenous sole-parent families are discussed below.

Indigenous sole parents—conceptual and definitional issues

There are well-documented difficulties in the capacity of ABS census categories and coding procedures to adequately reflect indigenous family structures and practices (see Daly and Smith 1996a, 1996b; Martin and Taylor 1996):

- First, geographic dispersion and mobility amongst the indigenous population makes it relatively inaccessible to census and survey data collection methods.
- Second, the census is conducted at a point in time and presents an essentially static model of family structures.
- Third, indigenous marital relationships are not easily established by interviewers, and considerable difficulty can be experienced in

translating complex kin relationships to the census format (for example, in dealing with several families in one dwelling; determining the relationships of visitors to 'usual residents', and identifying the relationship of offspring to adults).

- Fourthly, the ABS focus on creating the primary family around the nuclear couple family and limiting the classification of families to three per household may mean that some sole-parent families have been disbanded as a distinct family type and coded as separate individuals to the primary family. The extent to which this has occurred is unknown.

Clearly, the census approach is not always the most appropriate research tool for investigating the more dynamic characteristics of indigenous family formations and economies. The ABS recognises the importance of extended family structures and that there will be deficiencies in estimates of families for indigenous populations as a result of its definitional focus on the 'residential family' (Paice, Dugbaza and Taylor 1996). Importantly, what census data do provide, is a valuable snapshot of certain tightly defined family structures and of their economic well-being at a point in time (that is, the four weeks prior to the census). These data are available for indigenous families at a national, State and section-of-State level and, importantly, enable an assessment of their economic status relative to other Australian families.

How indigenous sole-parent families might be more validly defined, and how they might conceive of themselves, remain key issues. Unfortunately, there is scant research available on these matters. In mainstream Australian society, sole-parent families have historically tended to be regarded as a deviation from the norm of the couple family and taken as a sign of family breakdown (Saunders and Matheson 1991; Swain and Howe 1995; McHugh and Millar 1996). Whether this is also the case in indigenous society is a moot point.

Arguably, on the basis of available ethnographic evidence, one must question the extent to which indigenous sole parents are in fact 'sole' in respect to parenting. Indigenous families and households tend to be large, multi-generational and compositionally complex. High rates of mobility mean that they are likely have substantial flows of visitors, as well as 'usual residents' who are absent (Finlayson 1991; Taylor 1996b; Taylor and Bell 1996). The term 'sole parent' does not adequately account for this indigenous social context. Ethnographic case studies report that parenting can be provided to children by a wide range of kin other than the biological parents. A common interpretation of this shared parenting is that it bolsters the viability of impoverished families and promotes the support of children who might otherwise be marginalised in their receipt of care. But the converse has also been reported; namely, that individuals such as sole parents with their stable pension income provide important economic support to other dependant

adults and children (see Daylight and Johnstone 1986; Rowse 1988; Finlayson 1991; Schwab 1995). Given their own low income, this may be to the economic disadvantage of those pensioners.

Researchers have documented the important contemporary role of matrifocal (female-centred) families and of the female networks within them (Daylight and Johnstone 1986; Finlayson 1991; Davis 1992). They have noted as critical factors in the formation of female-centred families, the impact of the historical removal of children and dislocation of families, welfare dependence, poor health profiles—including high adult male death rates (Gray, Trompf and Houston 1991)—and the high rate of young motherhood (Burbank and Chisholm 1989). However, it has also been argued that such families are not necessarily evidence of a deviation from the nuclear family norm; nor are they dysfunctional transitions from some past male-centred family. Rather, they may also reflect the continuing role women play in determining the composition of domestic groups, and indicate a preferred form of female co-residence and support (Peterson 1978; Smith 1980; Finlayson 1991). Interestingly, the census data suggest that indigenous sole-parent families may be less matrifocal than their counterparts. Unfortunately the research literature tells us little about the formation and operation of indigenous male sole-parent families. Other important definitional issues include the extent to which indigenous sole parenthood is a transitory or recycling life-cycle state, the social distribution of parenting, and the degree of support a sole parent receives from the non-custodial parent and any subsequent partners.

The culturally-based characteristics described here have implications for program delivery. However, positive efforts by government and bureaucracy to proactively respond to cultural difference can nevertheless also be intrusive at the individual level and assimilationist in outcome, if not in intent. A critical question for policy and program consideration is the extent to which such nuances can be effectively accommodated. Another issue is the extent to which social security income and program support meets the particular needs of a client group that appears to be especially disadvantaged in comparison to other sole-parent families.

The Sole Parent Pension

In order to obtain a Sole Parent Pension (SPP) from DSS the applicant parent must have a child under the age of 16 years and have attempted (or be attempting) to obtain child support from the other parent. It is also possible to be what is called a 'partnered' sole parent; for example, if one's spouse is in gaol. In addition to SPP, a Family Payment is also available, which varies according to the age and number of dependent children.⁸ The SPP and Family Payment are means-tested so those sole parents with additional sources of

income (for example, from employment or maintenance from the non-custodial parent) may lose part of their benefit.

The DSS applies a particular definition of 'child' in order to assess pension eligibility by adults. An 'SPP child' is classified as one who:

- (a) (i) is a 'dependent' child of the adult; *or*
- (ii) a 'maintained' child of the adult; *and*
- (b) (i) has not turned 16 years; *or*
- (ii) is a child for whom the adult is qualified for a child disability allowance (payable up to 21 years of age); *and*

any of the following applies:

- (c) (i) the young person is the natural or legally adopted child of the adult; *or*
- (ia) the adult has a specific issues order within the meaning of the *Family Law Act 1975* in relation to the young person; *or*
- (ii) the young person is in the adult's legal custody; *or*
- (iii) the young person has been wholly or substantially in the care of the adult for a period of at least 12 months immediately before the day on which the adult claims a sole-parent pension; and is in the Secretary's opinion likely to remain 'wholly or substantially' in that adult's care 'permanently or indefinitely' (summarised from the *Australian Social Security Guide* s250(1)).

Since its introduction in 1973, the SPP has been controversial. Some have argued that it is a major cause of the rising number of sole-parent families (McDonald and Spindler 1988) while others find no such relationship (Lambert 1994). DSS data for May 1997 indicate that while indigenous recipients of SPP and family payments display similar broad features to other such pensioners, there are key differences of degree. Among the 20,096 indigenous sole-parent pensioners one-quarter have three or more children compared to 15 per cent of other such pensioners, and these children are generally younger. One-third are under the age of 25 years compared with 12 per cent of other SPP recipients. They are more likely to be single or widowed (42 per cent of the indigenous people fell in these categories compared with 26 per cent of other sole parents) and are less likely to be separated or divorced. The DSS data confirm the general comparative profile described above from Census and NATSIS data.

These key differences between indigenous and other sole-parent pensioners imply that the social security income and program needs of the former may also be different and should be more closely evaluated. The

sections below highlight some the program and policy implications of some of these differences.

SPP program issues

The definition of an SPP child

An area of potential mismatch between cultural practice and program delivery occurs in respect to the DSS definition of what constitutes an 'SPP child'. In particular, legal adoption and the DSS requirement for more informal arrangements to be ongoing for at least 12 months immediately before an adult's pension application, and for the child to remain 'wholly or substantially' in that person's care, do not accommodate the dynamic aspects of indigenous child care arrangements.

Where DSS guidelines *do* enable some flexibility is in circumstances where the alternate carer is also on a pension of some kind; for example, where a grandmother caring 'wholly and substantially' for a grandchild is receiving an aged pension. Such an aged pensioner does not have to wait the 12 months, but can apply for and receive a Family Payment. The general DSS approach is that a child qualifies only one adult for an SPP and presumably for a Family Payment. Accordingly, in circumstances where an alternate carer applies for a Family Payment, they would have to indicate that the arrangement is likely to be permanent or indefinite, and presumably the sole parent would be discontinued from the SPP. In other words, where there is flexibility it accommodates the more stable fostering arrangements.

However, the 'flowing care' of indigenous children means they may frequently change residential locations, and that their care is rotated around a known circuit of female kin, some of whom may be in receipt of a pension and some of whom may not (Butler 1993: 10; see also Smith 1980; Daylight and Johnstone 1986; Choo 1990; Finlayson 1991). Under these arrangements, the periods of 'parenting' time will not necessarily be as consecutively stable as 12 months nor likely to continue, but may nevertheless be considerable in accumulation. It is these circumstances where the mismatch between cultural practice and program guidelines would be most apparent.

A consequence for indigenous families is that female kin engaged in providing frequent but short-term care for the child of a sole parent may not have access to the pension payment specifically allocated for that child's care, and be ineligible for a Family Payment. The alternate carer receiving an aged or disabled pension simply has to 'make do' on that income, creating an additional economic burden for the adult concerned and disadvantaging the child. Indeed, given that indigenous children represent 2.7 per cent of all children but 7.1 per cent of all children in poverty, this area of incompatibility between dynamic cultural practice and program guidelines may well have

significant repercussions for the children of sole parents (Ross and Mikalaukas 1996).

It is difficult to envisage how DSS guidelines could be adapted to accommodate the more dynamic aspects of indigenous child-care practice without being overly intrusive. One option is to shift the focus more towards the actual care situation of the children by accommodating periods of time shorter than 12 months if it involves a recurrent pattern of extended care within a circuit of alternate carers. Though, it will not be possible to respond to extremely short-term child-care arrangements, it should be noted that the flow of child care described above is not an arbitrary process—there is a network of care just as there is a network to indigenous mobility—and a relatively well-defined set of other parental carers are invariably involved.

However, such changes are likely to be more difficult to implement in the current political climate that leans towards the restriction of eligibility to welfare rather than a more flexible expansion. Given the evident difficulties in adapting program guidelines to meet the specific needs of particular client groups, it becomes even more apparent that the internal support networks operating in indigenous communities are playing a vital economic role for economically vulnerable families. While this indigenous 'welfare network' is facilitated by mainstream welfare income, there appears to be an additional economic burden being assumed by the carers of other people's children.

An incentive to this role of the indigenous support network could be provided through indirect mechanisms that target the children of sole parents; for example, by the child care funding of more informal indigenous family day-care in the homes of extended kin, and by funding community-based child care through organisations operating the Community Development Employment Projects (CDEP) scheme. This latter context is discussed below.

Maintenance payments

A parent applying for the SPP can request an exemption by DSS from the initial mandatory requirement to seek child-support maintenance from the other parent. Such exemptions are granted by DSS on the basis that the parent may face physical violence as a consequence of making a maintenance request, or because the non-custodial parent is in jail. Once exempted, a sole parent obtains the higher rate of DSS family payment, but nevertheless remains financially worse off than the average sole parent who has sought and is receiving child-support maintenance from the other parent (reckoned by DSS to be an average of \$88 per person per week in 1997 for those receiving maintenance). According to DSS, indigenous sole parents are over-represented amongst such exemptions: 8.5 per cent of indigenous sole parents in receipt of a SPP are exempt compared to 4 per cent of other sole parents.

DSS data indicate a greater reliance among indigenous sole parents upon pension income: 92 per cent of indigenous pensioners had no income apart from the sole-parent pension compared to a lower 81 per cent of other sole-parent pensioners. This difference in part reflects the fact that only 23 per cent of indigenous sole-parent pensioners were receiving maintenance payments compared with 41 per cent of other sole-parent pensioners. The high levels of adult male mobility, their high unemployment rates, low incomes and high levels of welfare dependency mean that indigenous men will not be contributing maintenance payments to the other parent to the same extent as for other Australian sole-parent families.

The extent to which higher rates of male incarceration corresponds to higher rates of exemption and therefore lesser access to maintenance payments is difficult to gauge. DSS reports an extremely small number (circa 100) of such exemptions for all sole parents. But an apparently anomalous finding from the NATSIS is the number of people who identified as being part of a couple family, but who also reported they were receiving a SPP.⁹ One possible explanation for this anomaly is that male incarceration and mobility, together with a recycling pattern of short-term de facto relationships, mean that a female might identify in a survey as being part of a couple, but in reality effectively be a sole parent. This would especially be the case if the occasional or absent father is making only erratic or negligible contributions to meeting family costs. Lack of access to maintenance as a result of the other parent's lack of capacity to pay compounds the continuing economic disadvantage of indigenous sole parents and their children relative to other such families.

Indigenous sole parents and the JET program

DSS has implemented a number of specialist aspects to program delivery in order to improve indigenous access to welfare benefits. These include the use of specialist officers in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Liaison Officer scheme, established in 1975 to ensure wider understanding and utilisation of DSS programs. The Support Network for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Parents program was established in 1988 to promote the take-up of family support payments and services to meet the needs of children and families. Improved communications with remote indigenous communities and direct assistance have been provided through the establishment of a Community Agent Program, an Interpreter Program, Remote Visiting Teams and an Information and Public Relations Program. The Jobs, Education and Training (JET) program, established in 1989, is another recent initiative.

The JET program is a case-management program offered to people who obtain a SPP, a Carer or Widow Pension to improve their employment prospects. The program has three main target groups: a sole parent whose

youngest child is six years and over and who has been on SPP for 12 months; or whose youngest is 14 years; and sole parents who themselves are under 20 years of age. It offers a wide range of options, including assistance with access to education, vocational training and employment and to child-care programs. Access to the program is voluntary and participants who subsequently undertake any training or education retain their pension. In 1995-96 there were an estimated 50,000 new JET clients and 127,000 active clients.

For indigenous sole-parent pensioners, given their lower receipt of maintenance, lower family and household incomes and their generally lower supply-side employment skills, the JET program offers a potentially key service. However, DSS is of the opinion that indigenous parents are not accessing the assistance offered by the JET program to the same extent as other sole parents (Silkstone and Peard 1996). While indigenous sole parents reportedly represent 5.5 per cent of 'non-JET' sole pensioners at 1996, they only represent an estimated 2.3 per cent of sole-parent pensioners in the JET program (DSS pers. comm. 1996).

DSS has conducted a series of evaluations of the JET program from 1992 onwards with the objective of improving access and participation of indigenous clients. The evaluations found a range of barriers facing indigenous sole parents including: lack of supply-side skills such as literacy and numeracy, lack of confidence, lack of support from family and friends, lack of culturally-appropriate child care, lack of appropriate training and educational courses and outcomes and, especially in remote regions, lack of telephones, isolation, inadequate housing, and high costs associated with education and transport (Silkstone and Peard 1996).

A number of strategies have been proposed to improve JET service delivery. These include targeted promotion through indigenous media and community organisations, community outreach, redesigning interview formats through the use of community visits and home interviews, the greater use of specialist DSS staff including interpreters, and the development of local and community strategies for improving awareness about the program (Silkstone and Peard 1996). The effects of these changes await evaluation. However, overseas evidence suggest that it is important not to place too much reliance on schemes such as JET as a means of raising the labour force participation of sole parents (Jones 1996). Interestingly, it does appear that some indigenous sole-parent pensioners are accessing the Community Development Employment Projects (CDEP) scheme as participants and it may be instructive to consider why this is so.

Indigenous sole parents and the CDEP scheme

Indigenous sole parents are eligible to participate in the CDEP scheme and receive an income (either as a working or non-working participant).¹⁰ There are no data as to the total number of sole parents who may also be participants in a CDEP scheme—ATSIC participant schedules do not specifically identify sole parents. However, the few available case studies suggest that small (but perhaps growing) numbers of sole parents are participating in the schemes.¹¹ The research reports that sole parents are attracted to the scheme in order to obtain part-time employment and related skills, and see the scheme as providing an indigenous environment in which to make the transition from family responsibilities to work while having dependent children (Smith 1994). An important benefit to them of participation in the scheme is that many organisations also offer daily child care and assistance with transport to work for participants.

In other words, it offers a 'JET-like' outcome—that is, participation in part-time employment and vocational training—but in a distinctly indigenous environment; and one in which direct assistance with the oft-cited obstacles of transportation and child care are major incentives to participation. Program funding to support the operation of child-care facilities within CDEP organisations may be of great benefit to indigenous sole parents trying to make the transition from family duties to employment; irrespective of whether they are CDEP participants or not.

However, there continues to be bureaucratic and program confusion as to how CDEP employment and related income are to be categorised. When viewed as an unemployment benefit 'equivalent', a sole-parent pensioner participating in the scheme appears to constitute a form of double-dipping in the welfare system. In practice, however, DSS treats CDEP income as employment income which is means tested, so that the pension rate may be reduced on the basis of CDEP wages earned. This reduction is effected at the same rate as for other sole parents who have their pension reduced if earning above the 'income-free area'.

An area where there do appear to be inequities is *between* CDEP participants. A sole-parent pensioner can participate in the scheme and retain various pensioner concessions, whereas Job Search Allowance/Newstart participants lose certain benefits that were attached to those payments. On the other hand, a sole parent participating in the CDEP scheme cannot obtain a Parenting Allowance (see Sanders 1997).

Perhaps of more pertinence than double-dipping is whether sole-parent CDEP participants actually obtain employment skills or accredited training from the scheme. Only long-term assessment of their employment outcomes from the scheme will tell. However, NATSIS data show that only 6.9 per cent of

all CDEP participants attended a training course in the last 12 months, reinforcing research recommendations for greater coordination and funding of CDEP-based training (Smith 1996: 12-13). The apparent attractions and potential benefits that might be derived by sole parents from participation in the scheme suggest ATSIC should identify the extent of their current participation and investigate their potential training and employment needs. In regard to the latter, evaluations of the JET program by DSS will provide valuable information. Greater formal coordination of the JET program with the CDEP program could benefit pensioners and JET program effectiveness, not only in remote regions where the CDEP scheme predominates and mainstream employment opportunities are few, but also in the rural 'other' urban areas where the scheme is expanding and a large proportion of sole parents reside. NATSIS data indicate that the ATSIC regions of Broome, Alice Springs and Adelaide merit a pilot coordinated approach between the JET program and the CDEP scheme.

Conclusions and program and policy implications

In summary, indigenous sole parents are younger, have lower educational status, are less likely to be in employment and have more children to support than other Australian sole parents. Their median family income is below that of other Australian sole-parent families, and the households in which they live have lower household income. Furthermore, they appear to shoulder a higher 'adult dependency' burden, having more adults living with them who were not in employment than other sole parents. The higher childhood and adult dependency burdens experienced by indigenous sole-parent families suggest that they may have markedly lower standards of living than their counterparts. The Henderson poverty benchmarks indicate they continue to bear higher relative levels of poverty compared to other Australian sole-parent families.

Given the generally youthful demographic profile of the indigenous population and its growth rate,¹² it is likely that the numbers of indigenous people moving into the ages where they form families will increase rapidly over the next decade and that the numbers of indigenous sole-parent families will increase accordingly. By and large, indigenous sole parents will increasingly be younger than other such parents when their children turn 16 years of age. Their access to education, training and employment skills is especially critical. More finely tuned program delivery and policy formulation based on their family characteristics and projected increase in their number could play an important role in raising their employment and educational opportunities and their income levels.

An Adequacy Project for indigenous sole-parent pensioners

In November 1993 the then Minister for Social Security announced that DSS would undertake a study into the development of benchmarks for the adequacy of welfare payments and the effectiveness of the social security system in alleviating poverty. A subsequent report (DSS 1995) identified possible approaches to improving the assessment of adequacy, arguing that benchmarks cannot be based on the adequacy of wages or welfare income alone, but on 'adequacy of outcomes' as well.

The research analysis presented here reveals a particularly disadvantaged DSS client group exhibiting distinctive differences in demographic and socioeconomic characteristics. Some of the areas of disadvantage described here are beyond the short-term remedy of changing SPP income levels (for example, adult dependency burdens). Nevertheless, it is strongly recommended that DSS target the indigenous sole-parent client group for a comprehensive adequacy assessment of their social security incomes along the lines of the composite framework approach advocated in its policy paper (DSS 1995). The formulation of national adequacy benchmarks should also incorporate the findings of this assessment.

Such an assessment would be significantly enhanced by the parallel conduct of an in-depth survey of the living standards of indigenous sole-parent families and the households in which they live. The DSS is currently investigating the feasibility of incorporating an indigenous sample into just such a national Living Standards Survey.¹³ The socioeconomic characteristics described here should also be considered by the Budget Standards Project being developed in conjunction with DSS as part of a new approach to the measurement of poverty (see Saunders 1996).

Becoming visible: advantages of an indigenous identifier

In 1975, Henderson argued that 'Progress towards the abolition of poverty will not continue if the subject is allowed to fall out of sight of the general public' (Commonwealth of Australia 1975: 306). More recently, the Royal Commission of Inquiry into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody (RCIADIC) recommended that, in spite of the history of bureaucratic oversight of indigenous people's lives and the reporting burden this imposes on them, there was a need for more accurate administrative data, arguing in particular that identifiers were urgently needed and not discriminatory (Commonwealth of Australia 1991: 49-50).

Given the subjective nature of identity and the sensitivity of indigenous Australians to bureaucratic surveillance, administrative databases are unlikely ever to be fully comprehensive. Nevertheless, the adequacy of welfare income support and program outcomes can only be properly evaluated when comprehensive client data are available. Relevant policy formulation also

requires accurate and up-to-date administrative data. The key to making indigenous clients more 'visible' in administrative databases is to establish complete records 'through accurate completion of a 'standard' approach to identifying indigenous people' (Barnes 1996: 20). The DSS currently employs an indigenous identifier on its application forms, but it is incompletely recorded. It is highly desirable that DSS adopt a standard national policy to consistently identify these indigenous clients.

A focus on children

The children of indigenous sole parents are at great risk from the low economic status of their parent. It is critical that they are not further penalised by the incapacity of either parent to access or pay maintenance. Social security payments are already adjusted to account for factors that contribute to differential income needs between clients; for example, the number of people dependent on the payment, the age of children, rental costs, remoteness and disability. There is a persuasive argument that the economies and diseconomies of scale associated with family size amongst indigenous sole parents need further investigation; they may well operate to different economic effect in the social circumstances described above.

Related program issues

The position of sole parents participating in work under CDEP schemes needs clarification by DSS and ATSIC. Importantly, given the socioeconomic characteristics of indigenous sole parents described above, a well-organised CDEP scheme with adequately funded training could provide a unique vehicle for them to gain part-time work experience and skills, in a culturally familiar environment. Further consideration is needed at a national level as to how the scheme might be made more accessible to them.

The DSS has attempted to orient the JET program to the needs of indigenous clients, yet their participation is still comparatively low. The objectives of the JET program may be better implemented by developing more formalised links to 'specialist' indigenous employment and training programs such as the CDEP scheme.

Indigenous sole-parent families are very differently distributed than other sole-parent families. They are more likely to live in smaller urban and rural areas outside the major metropolitan locations than other sole-parent families. They are also slightly more urbanised than other indigenous family types. This raises important issues for service delivery to them and their children. NATSIS data show an extremely high proportion of indigenous sole-parent families are resident in the ATSIC regions of Adelaide, Broome and Alice Springs suggesting these regions should receive priority program attention from both DSS and ATSIC.

Sole-parent families are generally reported as being amongst the most economically vulnerable and impoverished families in Australia. This research shows that indigenous sole-parent families are even more disadvantaged than other sole-parent families—they remain at the bottom of the heap and their socioeconomic characteristics make them especially vulnerable to a cycle of inter-generational poverty. Indigenous families represent over one-third of indigenous families with children; a proportion twice as high as for the wider population. Their access to education, vocational training and employment skills, and assistance with overcoming transportation and child-care barriers to participation in the workforce, are especially critical for their post-welfare options.

Notes

1. Other families residing in a dwelling are identified in relation to this 'primary family' and to its 'primary reference person' (ABS 1991: 101).
2. The 'dependent offspring' variable contains the following categories:
 - Natural/adopted child of both parents or sole parent
 - Stepchild of male parent
 - Stepchild of female parent
 - Foster child
 - Child in a secondary family

Fostering covers legal and customary arrangements and includes both related and unrelated children who usually live in the household. Foster children who are also related to the family reference person are coded as dependent offspring, not by their actual kin relationship to that person. That is, a nephew or niece of the family reference person who is usually resident is classified as a 'dependent offspring', not as a nephew or niece. But these dependent offspring are classified as 'foster children', thereby distinguishing them from biological ('natural') offspring. The Census does not identify adopted children. In most cases they will be reported as offspring and coded as natural offspring.

3. Traditional adoption is also extremely common amongst Torres Strait Islanders both in the Straits and on the mainland. The welfare and program implications of these adoptions are currently the subject of consideration by the Queensland Government (W. Arthur pers. comm.).
4. The 1991 Census data report a far greater proportion of indigenous sole parents are reliant on State Housing Commission accommodation (42 per cent) than other sole parents (17 per cent). State housing tends to be concentrated in metropolitan and rural townships which may encourage the distribution of indigenous sole parents towards those locations.

5. When such information is obtained, it is because an applicant self-identifies as indigenous or has been identified as indigenous by the interviewing officer. As a consequence, DSS administrative data on indigenous sole parents are incomplete. In 1997, a total of 20,096 sole-parent pensioners were identified as indigenous by the DSS. The 1991 Census identified 18,682 sole parents (there is no census data on receipt of government pensions), and the 1994 NATSIS estimated there were 16,326 individuals receiving a sole-parent pension. While the NATSIS total is anomalous and the counts have different definitional bases, the 1997 and 1991 figures indicate that the DSS data may in fact represent a substantial coverage of indigenous sole parents.
6. The replacement ratio can be defined as $R = \frac{B+Y-T1}{E+Y-T2}$
- where B is income from the sole-parent pension, Y is other unearned income, E is potential employment income, T1 is the tax payable while on a pension and T2 is the tax payable when working.
7. We would like to thank Dr Boyd Hunter for sharing with us some preliminary estimates of the replacement ratio for sole-parent women based on NATSIS data.
8. In addition to the SPP and Family Payment there are a number of other payments for which sole parents may be eligible, including: Guardian Allowance, Rent Assistance, Child Disability Allowance, and Large Family Supplement. An important component of the pension (including for those on a part-pension) are the additional forms of assistance attached to a Pensioner Concession Card which provides for concessional rates on prescription drugs, dental services and rail transport. With such a card sole parents may also obtain concessionary rates on domestic accounts such as electricity charges, phone rental and car registration. The DSS estimates that such concessions are worth approximately \$500 per annum to individual sole parents in 1997.
9. Of those indigenous couples and sole parents who indicated they received some form of government benefit or pension (totalling 49,281), some 4,254 people in couple families reported they were receiving a SPP. They represented just under one-quarter of all parents receiving a SPP (totalling 16,326).
10. The CDEP is a 'work-for-the-dole' scheme operated by ATSIC where individual unemployment benefit entitlements paid by the DSS are converted into a combined grant delivered by ATSIC to an incorporated Aboriginal organisation on behalf of an entire community when it has sought such a conversion. The grant is to be used for the purpose of undertaking community employment projects. Community organisations running such schemes are paid additional on-costs by ATSIC on the basis of their participation rates, to assist with capital purchases and the recurrent costs in developing employment projects.

11. In 1994, Smith reported 8 of 120 CDEP participants in the Port Lincoln CDEP scheme being female sole parents (1994: 11). In that scheme, the sole-parent participants received a wage as working participants who carried out two days work each week, as did other working participants.
12. In 1993 it was estimated that the indigenous population was growing at almost double the national average (see Tesfaghiorghis and Gray (1991). This estimate may have to be substantially revised as a result of the considerable increase in the indigenous count from the 1996 Census.
13. As part of this project CAEPR is currently advising DSS on issue and methodologies relevant to measuring indigenous living standards.

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Appendix Table A1. The age and marital status of sole parents, 1991

Age	Never married %	Married %	Separated %	Widowed %	Divorced %	Total %
Males						
Indigenous						
15-19	4.6	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	5.2
20-24	8.3	2.0	0.4	0.3	0.5	11.6
25-29	8.9	2.4	1.1	0.2	0.4	13.0
30-34	6.7	2.4	2.3	0.5	1.4	13.4
35-39	6.9	2.5	3.7	1.0	2.4	16.5
40-44	5.0	2.5	4.4	1.6	3.6	17.1
45-49	2.5	2.2	2.9	1.7	3.0	12.3
50-54	2.6	2.3	1.7	2.3	1.9	10.8
Total	45.5 (842)	17.0 (314)	16.6 (308)	7.6 (141)	13.2 (245)	100.0 (1,850)
Others						
15-19	5.2	0.2	0.0	0.0	0.1	5.5
20-24	7.3	0.5	0.3	0.0	0.0	8.1
25-29	3.6	0.9	0.6	0.0	0.0	5.2
30-34	2.3	1.7	3.0	0.3	2.2	9.5
35-39	3.1	0.9	4.8	0.1	5.0	15.2
40-44	0.8	2.0	6.7	2.7	11.9	24.1
45-49	0.8	1.6	5.5	3.1	9.4	20.3
50-54	0.3	1.4	3.4	1.9	5.2	12.2
Total	23.4 (15,000)	9.2 (5,900)	24.4 (15,500)	9.2 (5,900)	33.8 (21,700)	100.0 (64,100)
Females						
Indigenous						
15-19	4.0	0.3	0.1	0.0	0.0	4.5
20-24	13.8	1.2	1.2	0.3	0.2	16.7
25-29	14.3	1.5	2.9	0.4	1.1	20.1
30-34	9.7	1.6	3.9	0.7	2.4	18.2
35-39	5.9	1.4	3.9	1.1	3.2	15.5
40-44	3.1	0.9	2.7	1.5	2.9	11.0
45-49	1.5	0.8	1.6	2.0	1.8	7.7
50-54	0.9	0.7	1.1	2.6	0.9	6.3
Total	53.1 (6,770)	8.4 (1,076)	17.5 (2,229)	8.5 (1,089)	12.5 (1,593)	100.0 (12,757)
Others						
15-19	1.8	0.1	0.0	0.1	0.0	2.1
20-24	5.3	0.3	1.3	0.0	0.2	7.1
25-29	6.1	0.6	3.6	0.5	2.3	13.1
30-34	4.3	1.0	5.7	0.8	5.1	16.8
35-39	2.2	1.2	6.0	1.3	8.5	19.2
40-44	1.1	1.5	4.9	2.1	9.9	19.6
45-49	0.6	1.3	3.0	1.5	7.0	13.4
50-54	0.1	0.7	1.6	2.6	3.8	8.8
Total	21.6 (73,900)	6.8 (23,100)	26.1 (89,300)	8.8 (30,100)	36.7 (125,600)	100.0 (342,000)

Note: The numbers in brackets refer to the number of people in each category.

Source: Census of Population and Housing, 1991, 1 per cent public use sample and the full Aboriginal sub-file.

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