

Indigenous families and the welfare system: The Yuendumu community case study, Stage Two

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Foreword

Australia is currently reassessing the relationship between all Australians and the welfare state. Given the low overall socioeconomic status of Indigenous families, a function of numerous factors including historic legacy, cultural difference, and location, it appears likely that many will remain welfare-reliant for many years to come. How to deal with Indigenous families and their diversity of circumstances in an equitable way will continue to be a critical challenge for any government committed to broad notions of universalism in the delivery of social services and income support. At the same time as the Federal government is considering a potentially significant reformulation of welfare policy and service delivery, there is little accurate information on the extent of Indigenous people's reliance on welfare or its impacts on families and communities. It remains debatable whether the government's new initiatives, under the broad rubric of 'mutual obligation' are applicable to the diverse circumstances and needs of Indigenous Australian families.

This Discussion Paper reports on elements of the second year of community-based research by the Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research (CAEPR) at the Australian National University (ANU). The first year's findings were comprehensively reported in CAEPR Research Monograph No. 17, *Indigenous Families and the Welfare System*, edited by Diane Smith (CAEPR, ANU, 2000). The overall research objectives of the project are to identify, at the community level, the particular factors influencing Indigenous families' access to, and receipt of, welfare income transfers paid for the care of their children, and the potential implications for appropriate policy and service delivery.

An important aspect of this project is the intention that research will be carried out over a number of years, with visits being made to the same households in the participating communities by the same researchers. Such intentions, of course, are dependent in part on some stability in household composition, an ongoing willingness of household members to participate in the project, and on the same researchers being available.

This Discussion Paper is one of two that report on the second period of fieldwork and household-based data collection associated with the project. It follows closely on from the first stage of the Yuendumu community case study as reported in Chapter 4 of CAEPR Research Monograph 17. On both occasions, CAEPR has been fortunate that Yasmine Musharbash, a doctoral scholar from the School of Archaeology and Anthropology at the ANU, has been available to collaborate on the project.

This Discussion Paper provides valuable insights into the dynamic and culturally-based aspects of Indigenous people's interaction with the welfare system. The timing of the completion of this publication, just after the Federal government's May 2001 election year budget, should facilitate informed debates during an election year concerning a particular 'at risk' section of the total population.

Professor Jon Altman
Director, CAEPR
June 2001

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Abbreviations and acronyms

AAA	American Anthropological Association
ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
AGPS	Australian Government Publishing Service
AIAS	Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies (now AIATSIS)
AIATSIS	Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies
ANU	The Australian National University
AP	Age Pension
ATSIC	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission
B	Brother (kin relationship)
CAEPR	Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research, ANU
CDEP	Community Development Employment Projects
CHINS	Community Housing and Infrastructure Needs Survey
CPS	CDEP Participant Supplement
CSC	Customer Service Centre
D	Daughter (kin relationship)
DFACS	Department of Family and Community Services
F	Female, or father (kin relationship)
FTB	Family Tax Benefit (A/B)
GST	Goods and Services Tax
H	Husband (kin relationship)
HB	Husband's brother (kin relationship)
HF	Husband's father (kin relationship)
HM	Husband's mother (kin relationship)
IPU	Indigenous Policy Unit, DFACS
JET	Jobs, Education and Training (program)
M	Male, or mother (kin relationship)
MB	Mother's brother (kin relationship)
MM	Mother's mother (kin relationship)
MZ	Mother's sister (kin relationship)
NARU	North Australia Research Unit, ANU
THS	Territory Health Services
UB	Unemployment Benefit
WSTC	Welfare Service Transaction Centre
YA	Youth Allowance
Z	Sister (kin relationship)

Summary

In 1998, CAEPR commenced research for the Children and Welfare Project, as negotiated with the Indigenous Policy Unit (IPU) of the Department of Family and Community Services (DFACS). The project aims to provide a longitudinal study into the factors influencing the service delivery of social security income support payments to Indigenous families for the care of their children. The results of the first stage community surveys undertaken at Kuranda, Queensland, and Yuendumu, Northern Territory, focused on a sample of households in the two communities and were published in 1999 and 2000. This Discussion Paper presents the findings of the first follow-up survey (referred to as Stage Two) undertaken at Yuendumu, in August and September 2000.

In line with issues raised in the original terms of reference and the earlier stages of the project, the focus is on mobility and consequent changes in membership and composition of households, and the related policy and service delivery issues. The paper presents an ethnographic and statistical exploration of intra-community mobility based on the comparative data available from the two consecutive surveys in 1999 and 2000. It relates mobility to factors underlying everyday life in Yuendumu—the sharing of food, money and other resources within social networks—and the implications of these for policy and the delivery of welfare services.

The paper concludes with further consideration of the recommendations made in the earlier stage of the project. It provides a more detailed elaboration of particular issues related to policy and more appropriate payment structures for Indigenous welfare recipients, and formulates relevant ideas for future action.

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Introduction

This paper presents the findings of the second phase (Stage Two) of a survey study, the Children and Welfare Project, which began in 1998. It is being undertaken by the Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research (CAEPR) at the behest of the Indigenous Policy Unit (IPU) of the Department of Family and Community Services (DFACS). The aim of the project is to provide a longitudinal study of the factors influencing the service delivery of social security income support payments to Indigenous families for the care of their children. The first stage of research was undertaken in 1999 at two Aboriginal communities, Yuendumu in central Australia, and Kuranda in north Queensland (see Finlayson & Auld 1999; Smith 2000). A detailed analysis of the 1999 survey data and baseline set of policy and service delivery recommendations as they relate to Yuendumu can be found in Musharbash (2000).

Research for the present study at Yuendumu was undertaken in August and September 2000. It comprised formal questionnaire-based interviews and informal interviews, and participant observation. Much of the outcome is informed by the author's recent long-term postgraduate anthropological fieldwork at Yuendumu (between November 1998 and March 2000).

This paper presents an ethnographic and statistical exploration of intra-community mobility at Yuendumu, especially as it impacts on and relates to changing household composition, caring arrangements for children and the delivery of social security income payments. Using the results of the 1999 survey research as a baseline, the main focus is on movements and changes which took place in the time between the original study conducted in August and September 1999, and the follow-up study. The information from the Stage Two survey is used as a basis for assessing and refining the recommendations made in the Stage One study, with a particular focus on the usefulness of the proposed 'Kids' Care Card'.

The paper starts with a description of methods used in the study, followed by a statistical overview of changes that have taken place over the one-year period between the two studies. These will provide a contextual background for the discussion of the ethnographic findings, which provides an in-depth analysis of intra-community mobility and its relation to child-care arrangements. The paper concludes by identifying key issues relevant to service providers and policy makers.

Yuendumu: Background information

Yuendumu is one of central Australia's largest remote Aboriginal communities. It was established as a government ration station in 1946 (Meggitt 1962; Rowse 1998) and is situated approximately 300 kilometres north-west of Alice Springs. Its population fluctuates both in number and composition, with the latest available Australian Bureau of Statistics data (ABS 1998) reporting 749 people for

Yuendumu and its outstations in 1996.¹ The health centre population-screening list (Yuendumu Health Profile 1999) reports 930 residents for October 1997. The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC) gives a number of 875 usual residents in 1999 (ATSIC 1999). According to an as yet unpublished Territory Health Services (THS) survey, in November 1998, of 818 persons living in the community, 745 were Indigenous, and 73 were non-Indigenous; in June 1999, of 721 persons in the community, 640 were Indigenous, and 81 non-Indigenous; and in August 2000, of 901 persons in the community, 795 were Indigenous and 106 were non-Indigenous.² The main languages spoken at Yuendumu are Warlpiri and English. The community is home to a wide range of service organisations.³

Methodology and problems of definition

To ensure comparability, only minor changes have been made to the multi-dimensional methodology employed in Stage One of the project (see Smith 2000: Ch. 2). Methodologies employed in both phases included participant observation, formal interviews with key reference persons, discussions with household members, and interviews with individuals in key positions at Yuendumu. During both Stage One and Stage Two, the author resided in one of the households of the questionnaire sample and maintained close relationships with members of this and a number of other households in the survey. This was particularly valuable in respect to forming an in-depth understanding of the events that took place between the two stages of the survey. The brief period of 'work experience' research at the Centrelink Customer Service Centre at Alice Springs was not repeated in 2000.

There were some changes to the questionnaire used in formal interviews. The formal interview again comprised two questionnaire components: a short general household overview documenting housing facilities, which was unchanged, and a long, general questionnaire concerned with welfare payment issues, household and family composition, and mobility.⁴ The 2000 long questionnaire had some specific questions added and some which were specific to the 1999 study were omitted. The latter either related to service delivery issues which were focused on only in Stage One, or were questions about general issues for which the questionnaire format had proved unsatisfactory at Yuendumu. Questions relating to specific comparisons between 1999 and 2000 were added.

The formal questionnaire-based interviews were conducted with the help of an Indigenous research assistant, Ms Erica Napurrurla Ross, to ensure the cultural appropriateness of the interview process and its content. In the previous year, two research assistants, Ms Ross and Ms Alma Nangala Roberston, were employed so as to provide access to a wide range of people from all four camps at Yuendumu. In 2000 Ms Robertson was not available. However, since the same key reference persons were targeted, working with only one assistant was not felt to be detrimental to data quality or interview responses.

Critical methodological problems with highly mobile populations are how to relocate key respondents and what constitutes the 'household' from one study to the next (see Hunter & Smith 2000). In the Stage Two survey therefore, attempts were made to locate the same key reference persons as in the previous study instead of returning to the same houses or camps for interviews. The key reference persons were 30 women, all of them recipients of Centrelink payments and either mothers or primary carers of at least one child under the age of 16 years.

Of these women, 90 per cent were successfully recontacted. Three key reference persons had either left the community or were not available for interview, and the decision was made to supplement the Stage One sample base with three new persons. Two of these new key reference persons in fact appear in the 1999 sample as members of the households of two other key reference persons. A further three key reference persons were kept in the sample even though in 2000 either they had taken up employment and were no longer recipients of Centrelink payments, or the youngest child in their care had turned 16 years of age in the meantime.

The 2000 sample population, consisting of the key reference persons and the members of their households, comprises a total of 285 persons: 180 adults and 105 children under 16 years. In comparison with the 1999 sample population of 238 (comprising 123 adults and 115 children), there has been an increase of 47 persons. There might be a number of causes for this increase. The first has to do with the 1999 sample and the fact that in the Stage One study there were more cases of more than one key reference person living in the same household. The increase might also be due the fluctuation in population numbers resulting from high mobility reported for remote Aboriginal communities (Taylor 1996a, 1996b; Young & Doohan 1989; see also Taylor & Bell 1999). Significantly, a total of only 120 individuals appear in both the Stage One and the Stage Two sample (see Table 7 below). This is good indicator of high fluctuation in household composition, and of the mobility of the 30 key reference persons.

A note on 'households'

A key methodological issue in the Stage One and Two surveys has been how to develop a valid and relevant conceptual model of 'household'. As was outlined for Stage One, the notion of household in a remote Aboriginal context is problematic (see Musharbash 2000: 57; Smith 2000: Ch. 2).

The ABS (1991: 60) definition of household, as 'a group of people who reside and eat together (in a single dwelling)...[who form a] a single unit in the sense that they have common housekeeping arrangements, i.e. they have some common provision for food and other essentials of living', may be useful in demographic and statistical contexts. However, when it comes to ethnographic realities, households in the ABS sense of the term cannot be identified in remote Aboriginal settings. The ABS definition has been criticised on many grounds, key amongst them its failure to take account of the sharing of resources across dwellings and

high fluidity in household composition (Finlayson 1989, 1991, 1995a; Gray 1987; Martin & Taylor 1995; Sansom 1980, 1982, 1988; Smith 1980, 1991a, 1991b, 1992; Taylor 1996a, 1996b). As was proposed in the Stage One study (Musharbash 2000a: 57–60), an ethnographically-based examination of the concept of ‘household’ would need to take into account the results of a variety of long-term research approaches, such as examining residential groups over time and following individuals in their movements from group to group (see Musharbash forthcoming).

Responding to these dilemmas, the questionnaire used the term ‘household’ to refer to all residents staying overnight at the same physical dwelling at the day of the interview, disregarding issues of food-sharing arrangements, whether within the dwelling or between dwellings. Household in this usage does include people who according to the ABS (1996: 226) definition are classified as ‘visitors’. Both Stage One and Stage Two in the Yuendumu study confirm that ‘visitors’ are more accurately defined as ‘usual residents’, and that some usual residents often use a number of home bases (see Musharbash 2000: 62–4 for more detailed discussion). This approach allows for a unit ‘household’ that can be used as an analytical tool. It should be noted, however, that ‘household’ as used in this study reflects neither the operationally-strict ABS definition of the term nor the more fluid ethnographic reality—the survey’s use of the term does not fully capture the complex realities of contemporary circumstances at Yuendumu. But by comparing ‘households’ in this sense over both survey periods, some of the dynamics underlying the mobility between and fluidity of households in the ABS sense can be explored.

Households and dwellings

Although all houses at Yuendumu are public housing, some are said to ‘belong’ to specific individuals, for example ‘Lily’s house’, ‘Rosemary’s house’, or ‘Gerald’s house’.⁵ This does not mean that Lily, Rosemary or Gerald ‘own’ these houses or even have rental contracts for them. Currently, no rental contract system for Indigenous occupants exists at Yuendumu. The council collects most rents by deductions out of welfare, CDEP and wage payments, currently at a rate of \$20.00 per person over the age of 16 per fortnight. From occupants of new houses (of which more below) the council attempts to collect \$100.00 per fortnight per dwelling, but is having difficulties in finding a way of administering this rent. The council is also proposing to change the rent system for the older houses to \$60.00 per fortnight per house to replace the \$20.00 per fortnight levy on individuals, but again there is no system in place yet to collect rent this way (and the old system yields much more than \$60.00 per dwelling per fortnight).

Living in the houses named for individuals, one may expect to find those individuals and members of their immediate families, as well as a number of temporary residents, who can be expected to be relatives. Another way of denoting houses is by colour, for example ‘pink house’, ‘brown house’, or ‘blue house’. These houses too are known to be occupied by certain individuals and families. A third way to denote houses is by referring to their primary function, for example

jilimi meaning ‘women’s camp’. There are a number of *jilimi* at Yuendumu. These are primarily occupied by single or widowed women, and women whose husbands are temporarily absent, as well as by children (see Bell 1983). Men sometimes stay in these houses too. Yuendumu also features *yupukarra*, or ‘single men’s camps’, however, these seem to be less enduring and are often attached to married people’s camps. These types of houses—men’s and women’s camps—also have certain ‘primary’ occupants who can be expected to be there.

This does not mean, however, that the ‘primary’ occupants of any dwelling carry responsibilities in any ‘official’ sense. The council expects and tries to collect rent from all inhabitants of Yuendumu, no matter which house they stay in (with the exception of the new houses, see above), and electricity is regulated through ‘power tickets’ which can be purchased at both of the local shops and inserted into meters. Only one key reference person answered that she alone paid for ‘power tickets’. All others asserted that it was a shared responsibility of all occupants of the house.

No matter what kind of the house or how long a household has lived in it, in circumstances such as a death in the family the house is vacated for the appropriate amount of time, and then passed on to others or swapped. The length of time a house remains empty after a death depends on factors such as the age of the deceased (in the case of very old and very young people the mourning period is shorter); the cause of death; the place where it occurred; and the relationship the occupants of the house have to the deceased. The cultural practices relating to death affect the size of the available housing stock at any given time, and death as a factor causing mobility warrants more research attention.

A note on ‘mobility’

Young (1990) argues that the desire of planners and policy makers to obtain accurate data on Aboriginal mobility might be focused on an unrealistic goal. Stating that mobility is a ‘vital characteristic of contemporary Aboriginal life’, she contends that it is

necessary to inquire further into the movements themselves and gain insights into the types of behaviour involved. This should allow more sympathetic comprehension of why mobility occurs, and thus acceptance of its existence rather than attempts to eradicate it (Young 1990: 195).

Part of the objective of the Children and Welfare Project is to look at patterns of mobility and their impact on the delivery of services and the wellbeing of children. By utilising the analysis of one kind of mobility—intra-community mobility—this paper aims at a more informed discussion of whether and how policy development and service delivery can accommodate cultural parameters. In this respect, this paper follows Young (1990) in discussing one aspect of mobility in depth.

Mobility takes many forms. The most frequently analysed form is inter-community mobility (see e.g. Taylor & Bell 1994a, 1994b, 1996, 1999; Young & Doohan 1989). Other forms of mobility are intra-community mobility and intra-

camp mobility (see Cane & Stanley 1985; Young & Doohan 1989). All three forms of mobility are intricately linked to, and mirror, each other. Together, they form the nexus through and within which much of Aboriginal sociality is played out. The present study takes a snapshot view of intra-community mobility at two points in time: the project's multi-year comparative objective, and the resulting data obtained over the first two years, lend themselves to a focus on intra-community mobility and a discussion of its impact on family wellbeing and service delivery issues.

The quality of housing

The 30 key reference persons interviewed in the 2000 survey live in 29 dwellings, with two residing in the same dwelling. Of the dwellings, 27 were houses situated at Yuendumu and the remaining two are outstations located 20 kilometres and 35 kilometres outside the community.⁶ Of the key reference persons from Stage One, only five were found to be living in the same dwelling in the Stage Two survey (see discussion below).

The Stage Two results show an average of 9.83 persons per dwelling, indicating a slight decrease from the previous survey's 10.82 persons per dwelling. This is probably because 16 new houses had been built at Yuendumu in the intervening period, a matter which will be discussed in more detail below.⁷ However, these results may be statistically insignificant owing to low sample size and the change in the sample between 1999 and 2000. The number of bedrooms per dwelling also increased from 2.38 to 2.63. Due to the additional housing, the number of persons per bedroom has fallen from 4.5 to 3.7. The results of the household facilities questionnaire are summarised in Table 1.

Table 1. Facilities in houses of 30 key reference persons, Yuendumu, 1999 and 2000^a

Facility	Dwellings with facility in working order (%)	
	1999	2000
Electricity	100	93
Tap/hot water	100	90
Heating	58	60
Bathroom/shower	96	83
Toilet	96	83
TV/VCR	85	83
Fridge	85	67
Stove	88	50
Radio/cassette player	50	37
Washing machine	50	47
Car	54	54
Telephone ^b	8	20

Notes: (a) This is as stated by the respondents to the questionnaire.

(b) New telephone lines were being laid during the research periods. Yuendumu lies outside the network for mobile telephones.

Although overcrowding has been somewhat reduced, Table 1 shows that the actual quality of facilities in dwellings in the survey sample has deteriorated between 1999 and 2000. This decline is particularly notable when considering that only four of the houses and one outstation appear in both studies and the Stage Two statistics include seven of the newly built houses. In the light of this, Table 1 indicates that the rate of depreciation of older housing stock (and perhaps also of new stock) must be much greater than the rate of repair. These findings are indicative of the difficulties encountered in increasing the stock of functional houses (see Heppell 1979). Some stoves especially, but also water supply and toilets, were in a serious state of disrepair. Housing maintenance is a council responsibility, and both occupants and the housing officer at Yuendumu Council complain about the long waiting time for repairs, largely due to the lack of personnel. The issues of housing conditions and maintenance relate closely to those of mobility and overcrowding, and will be discussed below.

Changes in payment distribution

Data on the receipt of Centrelink payments, Community Development Employment Projects (CDEP) wages, and other wages were collected in both 1999 and 2000. The results are compared in Table 2. It should be noted that although Centrelink payments were restructured and renamed earlier in 2000 due to the introduction of the Goods and Services Tax (GST), none of the key reference persons were aware of this. In 1999, Centrelink entitlements were grouped into three broad types by Indigenous people at Yuendumu. These were: 'kidsmoney' (all family payments), 'UB' (unemployment benefits), and 'pension money' (all other pensions) (Musharbash 2000: 57). Despite the restructuring of payments by Centrelink the same categories were still in use in 2000. In administering the questionnaire, payments were identified as far as possible.

The slight variations between the 1999 and the 2000 results may be explained by the slightly different composition of the two sample groups. None of the changes in Table 2 indicate any significant change in the distribution of Centrelink payments, CDEP wages, or other wages to respondents. Rather, they seem to confirm the steady ebb and flow of people signing on and off CDEP and Centrelink payments (see Musharbash 2001). In fact, Table 2 may be interpreted as an indicator of the absence of change in the distribution of types of payments and, at the macro-level, as a broad indicator of the absence of change in the structure of the welfare economy at Yuendumu (see Musharbash 2000: 55). However, the two surveys are only one year apart and significant structural change was not, in fact, anticipated.

The static nature of the payment distribution is further confirmed by aggregate data on the total number of Centrelink payments made at Yuendumu for one fortnight, in 1999 and in 2000. These are presented in Table 3.

Table 2. Main sources of income received by adults in sample group, Yuendumu, 1999 and 2000

Payment types	Percentage of total population receiving payment	
	1999	2000
Paid work:		
CDEP	15	11
Wages	10	11
Centrelink payments:		
Family Payments ^a	28	31
Unemployment Benefits/Newstart	33	33
Age Pension	7	6
Disability/Invalid/Sickness	2	4
Abstudy	2	0.5
Carer's Pension	1	0.5
No income	2	3
Total	100	100

Note: (a) This includes the newly introduced Family Tax Benefit Part A, Family Tax Benefit Part B and Parenting Payments.

Table 3. Total number of Centrelink payments to total Yuendumu population for one fortnight, in 1999 and in 2000^a

Payment type	1999	2000
Pension	116	106
Newstart	196	220
Family Payments/FTB ^b	135	132
Parenting Payments	28	31
Total	475	489

Notes: (a) Fortnightly period in October 1999 and in November 2000.

(b) Family Tax Benefit Part A and Part B.

Source: Aggregate data provided by Centrelink Customer Service Centre, Alice Springs.

One change that people did note and comment upon was the slight increase in amounts of Family Tax Benefit (FTB). This was due to tax adjustments made by Centrelink after the introduction of the GST. The difference in payments for one household in 1999 and in 2000 are illustrated in Tables A1 and A2 in Appendix 1.

In answer to the question: 'Is the money you get from welfare enough for you each week?' half of the respondents declared yes. Another 40 per cent indicated that they sometimes 'get by' and sometimes 'go hungry in nothing week', that is their money runs out before the next payment is due. The remaining respondents declared that they never manage to stretch their payments over the full fortnightly period.⁸

The 2000 questionnaire asked respondents to extend the list of items they spend their welfare money on. As in the 1999 questionnaire, 'food and clothes' were the only answers provided by respondents at Yuendumu (see also Middleton &

Francis 1976; Rowse 1994; Taylor & Westbury 2000). As Table 4 shows, the 2000 results indicate that 'food and clothes' nearly exhaust the expenditure list.⁹

Table 4. Stated expenditure from welfare income by key reference persons, Yuendumu, 1999 and 2000

Items on which welfare income expended	Percentage of respondents	
	1999	2000
Food	60	57
Food and clothes	33	33
Food, clothes and other ^a	7	10

Note: (a) Items named under 'other' were: oranges, candles and rent. Yuendumu Council deducts rent directly out of welfare cheques.

In elaboration of Table 4 it needs to be understood that at Yuendumu, 'to spend money on', as the phrasing appears in the questionnaire, refers exclusively to money spent at the shop. In this respect the answers given by respondents are confirmed by the author's daily observations over a long period of time. However, the situation is slightly more complex than indicated in Table 4. The wording of the question excluded two types of expenditure from being mentioned by respondents. The first is the occasional purchase of what can be termed 'expensive items' such as mattresses and blankets. Obviously, these are not purchased on a regular basis and therefore respondents excluded them. However, as an expenditure item they put a considerable strain on people's finances, considering that most are on welfare entitlements. For example, at Yuendumu a thin foam mattress currently costs \$125.00 and a double acrylic blanket \$110.00. In winter, one mattress and three blankets are the bare minimum necessary for comfort. Mattresses and blankets do not have a long life because most people do not have beds; they sleep outside and move their bedding almost daily.

The second type of expenditure excluded from Table 4 is the regular giving of amounts of cash to others. For example, people might give money to relatives who receive their payments in the alternative weeks to help tide them over, with the expectation of reciprocity in the future, or help someone with fuel money or money for car repairs in the hope of getting a lift (see case studies 2 and 11 in Musharbash 2000).

As was discussed in detail in the 1999 study (Musharbash 2000), living expenses at Yuendumu are significantly higher than in Alice Springs. This is due to high prices in the two local stores as much as to the fact that scarce resources such as money, food, and blankets are shared within extended networks of households and families.¹⁰ The previous study presented more detailed information on this practice of Indigenous 'banking' and portrayed it as 'a critical cultural and economic strategy that both relies upon and cements social relations' (Musharbash, 2000: 56). The present study further confirms the findings reported there, and the persistence of these economic and social circumstances.

Mobility

A set of descriptive categories for intra-community mobility are used in order to analyse data and discuss the causal factors involved. It should be noted that the data only encompass those moves captured in both surveys, that is, they act as a one-year indicator. In a number of cases there could have been multiple moves over the period between the two surveys; the author's own long-term research confirms such patterns of movement. Also, the sample is small (consisting of 27 people) so these categories are descriptive analytic devices rather than being based on a large population sample. Moreover, the mobility discussed in this paper focuses on the actual moving of residence by key reference persons. It is quite likely that over a longer period of time individual key reference persons will change from one mobility category to another. Thus, this study presents a snapshot of mobility at two points in time, roughly 12 months apart. In the following sections of the paper, the categories are delineated (see also Table 5) and then substantiated through the discussion of example cases.

Categories of intra-community mobility

Of the 27 key reference persons interviewed in both studies, 22 persons had moved house at least once during the one-year period between the two surveys.¹¹ Much of their mobility was triggered by the completion of 16 new houses at Yuendumu in the period between the two studies, and the effects of this will be discussed first, under the heading of 'new houses'. There are two aspects to this type of mobility: direct receipt of new houses ('new house—direct'), which concerns four key reference persons, and moving into new houses received by relatives ('new house—related'), which concerns a further four key reference persons. One difference between these two aspects is that it might be assumed that persons who directly received a new house are less likely to be moving in the near future than those who moved into someone else's new house.

The 'new house' categories are exceptional in that they depend on the singular event of a large number of new houses being provided at one time. Since this study provides a snapshot view of two points in time, a year apart, movement in connection to the new houses takes a peculiar place in the scenario. However, while these categories may appear to be describing a one-off occurrence, the types of movement they capture can also be considered simply as variants of other forms of shifting. People simply moved out of one dwelling to move into another, and after a while any 'new house' is going to become 'another' house.

The next category covers 'circumstance-related mobility' which prompted five key reference persons to move. A further category is that of 'continual mobility', encompassing the movement patterns of the nine reference persons who had no permanent residence at the time of either survey. And lastly, in 2000, five key reference persons lived in the same house as the previous year. These will be discussed under the heading of 'zero mobility'.

Table 5. Categories of intra-community mobility for key reference persons, Yuendumu, 2000

Mobility category	No. of key reference persons
New house—direct	4
New house—related	4
Circumstance-related	5
Continual mobility	9
Zero mobility (same dwelling as 1999)	5
Total	27

There are no broad characteristics by which to distinguish key reference persons in any one category from those in the others. All categories contain single and married women, employed and unemployed women, and young, middle-aged and old women.¹² Intra-community mobility is a fact of life experienced by all members of the community. The one exception to this generalisation is that the ‘continual mobility’ category contains a relatively large proportion of single women (6 of the 9 women in this category are single). Interestingly, these women are older than would be expected from other ethnographic literature (see Finlayson 1991; Taylor & Bell 1999) which reports high mobility particularly for youth and young single women. The mobility of older single women should be a focus of future work, but it is also true that high mobility of young people is not absent in Yuendumu; this finding may be due to the factors determining the sample of 27 key reference persons. The mobility of youth and young single mothers is certainly encompassed in the total sample of 285 individuals.

New houses

In 1999, THS researchers at Yuendumu counted 112 occupied houses, in 77 (67%) of which lived Indigenous persons. In 2000, they counted 126 occupied houses, of which 92 (73%) had Indigenous occupants (THS 2000).¹³ There are also a number of non-occupied and/or derelict houses as well as informally constructed housing of corrugated iron. Occupied houses vary greatly in size and quality: about half are brick houses and the others are corrugated iron. Many only have one or two bedrooms, but houses with four or five bedrooms also exist (see also ATSIC 1999).

After the 1999 research was completed and before the 2000 research was begun, 16 new houses for Indigenous occupation were completed. This is an increase of Indigenous housing by one-sixth. Interestingly it does not appear to have led to any significant correlated decrease in overcrowding: the average number of persons per household amongst the survey sample went down from 10.82 persons per dwelling in 1999 to 9.83 persons per dwelling in 2000, while the number of bedrooms per dwelling increased from 2.38 to 2.63. The number of persons per bedroom fell by 0.8, considerably less than could be expected with such an increase in the housing stock. One explanation is that the building of new houses attracts new people into the housing stock; in 2000 there were markedly fewer people living in impoverished buildings (humpies). However, none of the key reference persons in the sample of either survey actually lived in a

humpy. Other explanations for the lack of effect on overcrowding will become clear as the discussion progresses.

Yuendumu is made up of four residential areas: North Camp, East Camp, South Camp and West Camp. New houses were built in all four areas and distributed to individuals who were at the top of a long waiting list administered by Yuendumu Council. Of the 30 women interviewed and the 27 considered here, eight had moved into new houses.

New house—direct

Four interviewees moved into new houses which, at the time of the Stage Two research, were named either after them or their husbands. In all but one case these moves reveal interesting and seemingly quite complex patterns of household fusion and fission in the year since the Stage One survey in 1999. The exception is one household of ten persons which moved in its entirety from an old one-bedroom house into a new four-bedroom house, with no addition of household members. Their old house is currently vacant due to a death in the family, and will probably be taken over by distant relatives after the appropriate mourning period.

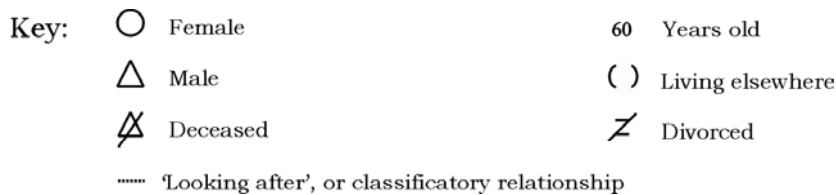
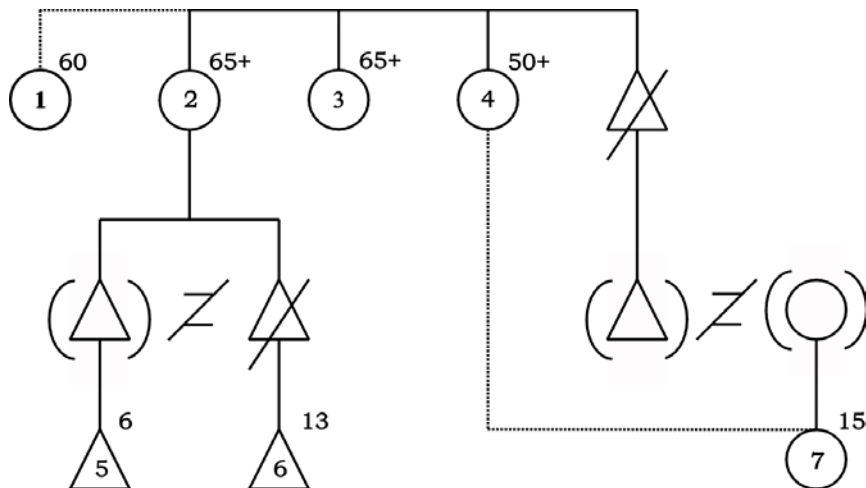
One new four-bedroom house now is occupied by two households which previously were situated in two adjacent one-bedroom houses. Those one-bedroom houses had 11 and 12 occupants respectively in the 1999 survey, from which a total of 16 individuals have moved into the new house. The occupants of the new house are mainly made up of the oldest and the youngest generations of the two former households, leaving the two old one-bedroom houses to young couples and their children from the former households, and to new arrivals.

Of the remaining two new houses in this category, one is occupied by a married and the other by a single key reference person, each with their respective households. Both of these key reference persons and their dependants formerly lived with maternal kin, and by moving into the new houses have effectively turned their previous houses into *jilimi* (women's camps). Both the households in the new houses and the households in the newly formed *jilimi* have attracted kin and have thereby grown in size. In particular, one young single woman who moved into her 'own' new house with her three children found, contrary to her plan of having separate bedrooms for herself and each of her children, that all but one of the bedrooms were taken over by young relatives with their spouses and children. Just as she herself had been before, these young relatives were formerly attached to households with older maternal kin. By moving in with her they have effectively turned her house into a 'young people's house'. Since she is judged to have more space available than she needs for herself and her children, there is a considerable flow of very young 'married' couples coming to stay with her. Moreover, some of the older women of her former household—with whom she still has inter-camp financial and other exchange arrangements—occasionally stay with her when the need arises, particularly when their husbands are absent or when fights break out at their own houses.

New house—related

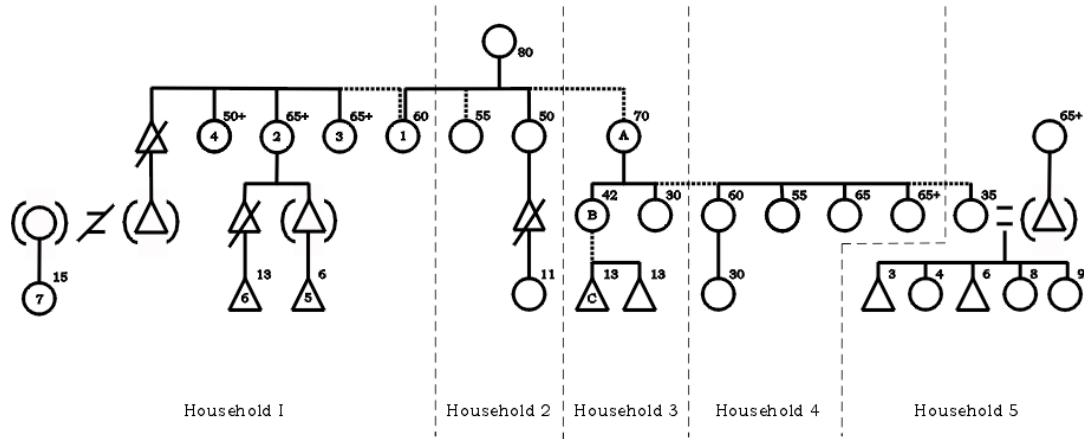
A further four key reference persons moved in with relatives who received new houses. One of them is involved in the merger, described above, of two former neighbouring households. The new house 'belongs' to the key reference person's sister's husband. Another key reference person in this category and her former household, in its entirety, moved to a new house. This house is said to 'belong' to the key reference person's sister, who was part of the former household. Before the sister 'received' her new house, the two sisters and their household regularly moved to stay either with daughters or with other sisters. Now that they have a house 'of their own', this in turn attracts relatives to stay with them.

Fig. 1. Household 1 in 1999



Note: Numbers (or letters of the alphabet) within symbols serve to cross-reference individuals between Figs. 1, 2, and 3.

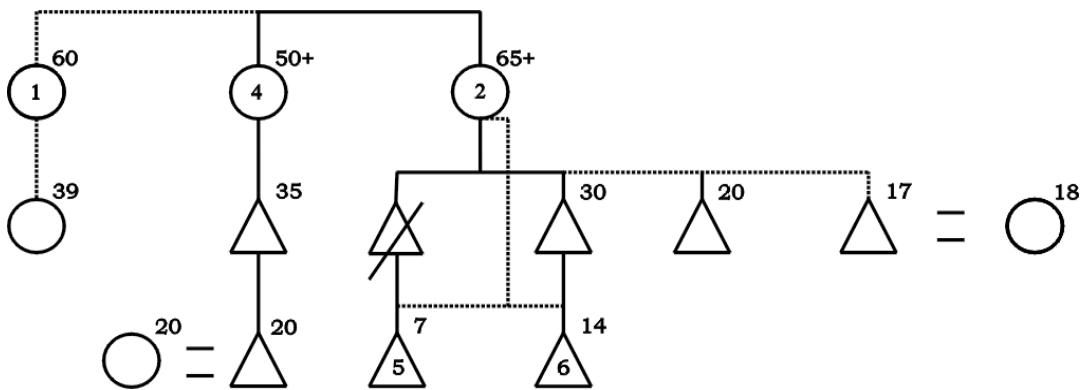
Fig. 2. Household 1, household 3, and their co-residents in the *jilimi*, 1999



Note: For key to symbols see Fig. 1.

Fig. 1 (see previous page) shows the household of the two sisters (#2 and #4) in 1999. In Fig. 1 the household they moved with has been isolated out of the larger *jilimi* household they were staying with at the time (see Fig. 2, which shows the complete *jilimi* household of 1999, discussed further below). In the period before the 1999 interview, they were living with #4's daughter, but because of fights occurring at her place they had moved into the *jilimi*.

Fig. 3. Household 1 in 2000



Notes: #3 (shown in Fig. 1) passed away; #7 turned 16 and moves around on her own, sometimes staying in this camp, or with her mother, or with her cousins (other young girls). For key to symbols, see Fig. 1.

Fig. 3 shows the current composition of household 1, at the new house. It shows how the availability of housing attracts close kin to reside with those who received houses, thereby causing 'overcrowding' in 'new houses'. It should be noted that overcrowding in itself is not an issue that people at Yuendumu complain about

much. Quite to the contrary: there are often complaints, especially from older household members, about 'feeling lonely' when not enough people are around to give one *malpa* ('company'). However, overcrowding does often lead to fights breaking out, and this is something people do complain about.

The other two respondents in this category are young married women who, with their husbands and children, moved in with their in-laws after the latter 'received' new houses. One of them had lived with the same people in an old house a year earlier, and after the exodus of the two households, this old house effectively turned into a single men's camp. This case and the other case discussed above are good examples of how mobility causes changes in the social function of housing.

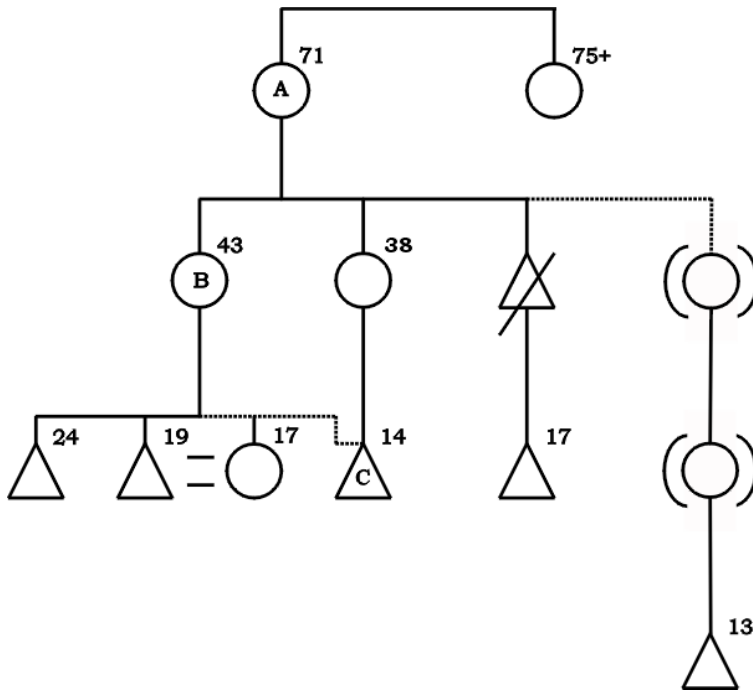
The second woman had previously fallen into the category of 'continual mobility' (discussed below). It remains to be seen whether she, her husband and their child settle with her in-laws, or whether they will keep moving.

Circumstance-related mobility

This category includes those people who, based on the author's observations over two years, are usually fairly stable with respect to residence and whose movements have been affected by unpredictable circumstances. One woman's house was being renovated during the 1999 interview period. She and her household lived alternately with her husband's mother's mother and her own mother's mother until the repairs to her house were completed (this took a little longer than one year). They lived in the repaired 'old house' at the time of the 2000 interview.

Another woman was living with her close kin, moving between her close mother's, her sister's and her cousin's houses while her husband was in jail. After his return to the community they moved back into their former house. A third woman still 'holds' her and her husband's house, but is in the process of establishing an outstation about 20 kilometres out of Yuendumu and spends most of her time there. Another woman and her close kin (household 3 in Figs 2 and 4) moved out of their former house because of a death that occurred there.

This death caused the dispersal of all residents who lived in that house—the aforementioned *jilimi*—in 1999. In Fig. 2 the residents of this house are identified as five households, according to the groupings in which they dispersed. After a period of several months during which the house remained unoccupied, one of the households (household 5) moved back. The other four households still live at other places and have no intention of moving back. They either moved in with relatives, received a new house (household 1, Fig. 1), or, like household 3, took up residence in one of the old derelict houses. Household 3 was hoping for more new houses to be built in the near future, but has since moved on to yet another house.

Fig. 4. Household 3 in 2000

Note: For key to symbols see Fig. 1.

The last woman in this category was described in the 1999 survey as having vacated her own house due to overcrowding (fights broke out in her 'own' house and prompted her to move out for a few weeks until some of the other occupants dispersed). She, her husband, and her three children moved back into 'their' house shortly after the first survey was conducted and were living there in 2000, with the regular addition of other family members.

Continual mobility

The next group of nine key reference persons may be currently described as 'continually moving'. These people have no permanent residence, but rather a series of 'usual home residences' (as described in Smith 2000). They move regularly between these, always staying with close relatives or in-laws. Three factors contribute to this kind of mobility.

First, the shortage of housing effectively excludes many Indigenous persons at Yuendumu from establishing their 'own camp' and forces people to reside with other family members who have houses.¹⁴ However, this is not necessarily voiced as a concern by people themselves.

Second, in the case of single women and of young couples, these co-residing practices broadly comply with 'traditional' patterns of co-residence (see Daly & Smith 1995; and the literature on residence and lifecycle changes, e.g. Goodale

1996; Peterson 1978). Large households satisfy people's desire to be close to their kin. From a Warlpiri perspective to be close to one's kin is desirable not only so that one has *malpa*, but also support. The latter is expected to be both social and financial. Sharing responsibilities such as child care as well as money and other resources is easiest when co-residing. However, the pressure to share may also contribute to and intensify the 'boom and bust' cycles of households (see Finlayson 1991; Merlan 1991; and Sansom 1982 on 'concertina households'), encouraging people to move again.

Third, people have few personal belongings or assets, and in fact often only own a mattress, some blankets and a few clothes. Most often, people sleep in the yard, on the verandah, or in the main room of the house; the inside of the house is used for sleeping most often when it rains or when it is very cold. In order to move, all one needs to do is shift one's few belongings from one place to another. The interior of a typical Indigenous house at Yuendumu is mainly used for storage; many houses do not contain any furniture apart from some mattresses. The addition of extra household members into existing camps is therefore easy—as easy as it is for a person to move from one dwelling to the next.

Zero mobility

Five key reference persons were living in the same house in both years. One of these women lives at an outstation some 30 kilometres east of Yuendumu, the remaining four in houses at Yuendumu. They experienced the occasional addition of other members to their households and of other households into their camps in the same way as those who were recipients of 'new houses'. This absence of mobility may be an artefact of the snapshot view this paper presents rather than reflecting enduring stability. For example, in much the same way as everybody else, these women will be expected to move in the case of a death occurring in their dwelling and may move in the future for other reasons including fights, marriages, or any number of other personal reasons (see also Altman 1987; Goodale 1996; Peterson 1978).

Mobility: A summary

Intra-community mobility is something that most households at Yuendumu experience actively, on a regular basis. The patterning of mobility often appears to be quite complex. The question, 'How long have you been living in this house/camp?' was asked in both 1999 and 2000. The responses are indicated in Table 6.

The level of mobility is fuelled to some extent by the shortage of availability of housing, and facilitated by the availability of new housing. However, it must be stressed that co-residency of extended families in large households is not viewed as forced by necessity. Quite to the contrary, the social and cultural benefits are often emphasised.

Table 6. Length of residence in house/camp by respondents, Yuendumu, 1999 and 2000

Period of time	Response (%)	
	1999	2000
1–4 weeks	13	17
1–6 months ^a	20	17
>6 months ^b	37	30
'long time'	30	36
Total (%)	100	100

Notes: (a) For 2000, the period asked about was 1–4 months, not 1–6 months.

(b) For 2000, the period asked about was 6 months, not >6 months.

One final type of mobility must be mentioned briefly. It is captured by the notion of 'stopping', a term used to describe short-term movement away from one's usual place of residence. Reasons for stopping away include going to Alice Springs for shopping, or to other communities for ceremonies or visits (for a fuller list see Table 7). To the question: 'Have you stopped at other places over the last year?' 90 per cent of respondents answered yes.¹⁵ All these respondents stayed at houses where they had (close) relatives.¹⁶

Table 7. Survey respondents' reasons for 'stopping away' over the previous year, Yuendumu, 1999 and 2000

Reason for stopping away	Percentage of respondents	
	1999	2000
Waiting for new house		67
Visiting/shopping	37	3
Fights/drunks	16	20
Husband away	26	7
Living in 2 houses		7
Living with family		3
For 'sorry business'		3
House became vacant		3
Move between outstation and house		3
Other ^a	21	10
N/a		3
Total (%)^b	100	129

Notes: (a) The category 'other' included homelessness, overcrowding, feeling lonely, working at the petrol-sniffer outstation, and because of a death.

(b) In 2000 some respondents gave more than one reason for stopping away.

Mobility and child-care arrangements

The majority of key reference persons, all adult women, can be described as highly mobile. As noted in the analysis of the 1999 survey data, children's

mobility is even higher. However, this is not to say that children move randomly, or are left without care. Of the respondents in 2000, 97 per cent stated that their children, or the children for whom they are primary carers, stay with them most of the time (90% said the same in the 1999 survey). In 2000, 53 per cent stated that their children always stay with them (compared to 63% in 1999). Another 43 per cent said that there were other places at which their children sometimes stay (compared to 40% in 1999). At all these places, the children are looked after by close relatives, confirming the findings of the 1999 survey data.¹⁷

A comparison of the composition of the households of the key reference persons in 1999 and 2000 provides an indicator of children's (and adults') mobility. There were 115 children in these 30 households in 1999, and 105 in 2000. But only 55 individual children (including 5 individuals who turned 16 in the period between the two surveys) were found in the same household in both years.

Table 8. Comparison of sample composition, Yuendumu, 1999 and 2000

	Number of persons in households of 30 key reference persons		
	1999	2000	overlap
Adults	123	180	65+5 ^a
Children	115	105	50
Total	238	285	120

Note: (a) These five individuals were 15 years old in 1999 and counted as children. In 2000 they were 16 years old and counted as adults.

Kin networks are of great significance to people at Yuendumu, and mobility is a means of actively reinforcing them. From the time they are born, children, are socialised into these networks (see also Hamilton 1981). A constantly observable, everyday practice at Yuendumu is children being familiarised with their kin. The case detailed below is typical.

Louise comes visiting her mother, Petra and her brother, Marvin who live a few houses away from her. With her she brings Bert, her baby son. As Louise and Bert approach, Petra and Marvin call out: 'Bert is coming, Bert is coming to *jaja* [MM] and his *ngamirni* [MB]. Come and sit with uncle and granny.' During her visit, Louise repeatedly points at Petra and says to Bert: '*jaja*, that's your *jaja*' and at Marvin and points out: '*ngamirni*, that's your *ngamirni*.'

A few months later when Bert is starting to talk he will be prompted again and again to say kinship terms and will be applauded heartily when he gets them right. This process of encouragement through praise continues as he grows and learns more kinship terms and relations. In fact, interactions of this nature form a large proportion of the interaction people have with the little boy. Older children also teach him in the same way about the same issues. It is not unusual at all to observe 6 year-olds teaching 4 year-olds the intricacies of kinship.

While children are very young, at least until the age of four, they stay exclusively with their mother or other primary carer, most often a sister or mother of their

mother. They might be given to close relatives for a few hours to be looked after by them once in a while. However, the mother or primary carer will never be too far away, and as soon as the child starts to cry it will immediately be returned to her. As the child grows older, it might stay for a night at a time with close relatives who live in separate camps. This way, the child is gradually eased into staying with different relatives at different times, something that is seen to be essential in achieving its autonomy as a person (see also Myers 1986).

In the 2000 survey, in answer to the question about who looks after their children in the camps each day, 57 per cent of respondents answered they themselves did and the remainder answered they did so in tandem with close family in the same camp (these are exactly the same percentages as in the 1999 survey).

To the question whether anyone from another camp helps to look after their children, 70 per cent of respondents answered yes. The individuals who are closely involved in the upbringing of the children are mostly the mother's mothers, sisters, or in-laws of the primary carers; this again confirms the 1999 findings. These are the same individuals who are quoted as also helping financially in the upbringing of children (see Tables 9 and 10).

Table 9. Answers to the question: 'Who usually pays for food and clothes for your kids?' Yuendumu, 1999 and 2000

Who pays?	Percentage of respondents ^a	
	1999	2000
Respondent	67	77
Respondent and partner	17	7
Respondent and other relative	13	13

Note: (a) The respondents are the 30 key reference persons for each year.

Table 10. Answers to the question: 'Does anyone else regularly help pay for food and clothes for your kids?' Yuendumu, 1999 and 2000

Does anyone else help to pay?	Percentage of respondents ^a	
	1999	2000
Yes	60	67
No	37	23
Sometimes		7
N/a	3	3
Total (%)	100	100

Note: (a) The respondents are the 30 key reference persons for each year.

The picture that emerges is one of intensive socialisation of children into kin networks which they will be able to access and use once they are old enough, in much the same way that adults do. As the previous study (Musharbash 2000) outlined in more detail, these networks are crucial to Aboriginal sociality. Not only do they provide support in a welfare dependent environment where money is a scarce resource, but they are also crucial for their significance to the social and

cultural wellbeing of individuals. What to an outsider may look like a society in constant flux is, in fact, a wide-ranging grid of social relations into which individuals are socialised, and which they access throughout their entire lives.

Conclusion

Both, in general terms and in particular instances, the Stage Two survey data have confirmed the results of the initial survey and enabled a preliminary consideration of factors affecting and the impacts of mobility within the community at two periods—a ‘one year mobility indicator’ (see also Taylor & Bell 1999). This, in turn, provides the means for a more detailed description of the dynamic processes of ‘household’ composition. Relating these more detailed pictures to key welfare policy and service delivery issues allows for a more carefully attuned, culturally informed assessment of recommendations made in 1999 (see Smith 2000).

The present study delineates social networks as being far ranging and of crucial cultural importance on a number of levels, most significantly the financial and the social. The Stage One survey concluded that:

Respondents in both communities identified their own extended family networks as a critical source of social and financial support. Shared child-care arrangements are an essential and valued feature of such support networks. Household members in both places also rely on these networks for lending and subsequent borrowing of money and other resources, using them as a form of ‘banking’ to help ameliorate the impact of the fortnightly ‘feast and famine’ welfare cycle (Smith 2000: 87).

The present study has gone further by examining some of the principles and processes underlying those networks, in particular those concerning mobility and its impact on ‘household’ composition and the welfare economy. It has utilised the comparative data now available from the two surveys, as well as data gathered through participant observation, to investigate the underlying processes dictating intra-community mobility. The data show that mobility in a remote Aboriginal community context is not only a response to necessity triggered by the lack of adequate housing, but also a phenomenon that is valued and that underpins a particular social order and way of life. It is through mobility that people link themselves into the large social networks that are such an essential feature of Aboriginal everyday life. Further, the study has shown that children are socialised into these networks from a very early age, and that this socialisation is a means of providing them with a financial, social and cultural safety net for the rest of their lives.

The Stage One study outlined a fundamental dilemma for government, policy makers, and Indigenous families and their communities. It considered:

the extent to which government can realistically be expected and effectively hope to respond to the cultural dynamics and diversity of Indigenous life. Is it possible for the welfare state to develop more effective service delivery and policies on the basis of cultural realities, without succumbing to highly

interventionist social engineering? If the answer is yes, what might be the central social arrangements of Indigenous family life that are relevant to formulating suitable policy and service delivery? In implementing such 'culturally informed' policy and service delivery, is it possible for enhanced economic wellbeing for families to be realised in a practical form that goes beyond political rhetoric and managerial clichés? What might be the policy criteria for developing better models of service delivery to achieve such outcomes? (Smith 2000: 8).

It is within the framework of these questions that the Stage Two study aims to consider the relevance to policy and service delivery issues of the material presented. The prevalence of continual intra-community mobility, as described in this study, immediately suggests that Aboriginal community life displays features which require specific consideration in the development of policy, but which also place strong limits on the extent to which government can and should intervene. Suggestions for culturally-informed policy and welfare delivery which attempt to achieve a balance between these tensions, are outlined and discussed below, in the final part of this paper.

Policy and service delivery recommendations

It has only been one year between the two surveys, and both Centrelink and DFACS are still considering the wide range of recommended changes originally proposed (see Musharbash 2000: 73–84 and Smith 2000: Chs 7 & 8 for a detailed discussion of these recommendations). Therefore, no comments can be made on their implementation or reception. Respondents remarked on the absence of change, but did not voice any further complaints or suggestions apart from stressing the continuing and desperate need for enhanced services for children and youth at Yuendumu, such as boosting the youth centre and petrol sniffing programs. In the intervening year both these programs experienced substantial funding and personnel problems, and petrol sniffing, as well as the lack of 'things to do' for youth, are issues of great concern to the whole community.

The Stage Two survey data suggest that any possible implementation of the baseline set of recommendations made in 2000 is advisable. These recommendations have been discussed (Smith 2000) and will not be reiterated in detail here; they advocated the following measures, among others:

- the development of a more decentralised Centrelink service delivery model at the regional level;
- the establishment of welfare service transaction centres (WSTCs) in key regional communities;
- the review, substantial reform, and enhanced support of the Community Agents Program;
- a more streamlined application process, a simplified remote area claim form, and recognition of 'no correspondence' clients;

- the development of more flexible mechanisms for delivering payments which accommodate extended family child-care arrangements and include development of a Kids' Care Card;
- the provision of early intervention assistance to youth, young parents, and sole parent families immediately upon their entry into the welfare system;
- the development of an Indigenous component of the Jobs, Education and Training (JET) program for sole parents;
- the formulation of an Indigenous Welfare Policy and Indigenous Mutual Obligation Strategy that reflect the areas of commonality, as well as the diversity of circumstances, of Indigenous welfare recipients;
- the development of a more streamlined and integrated welfare payment structure based on a flat rate payment, with supplementary payments for certain life-event factors, and participation support incentives;
- a revitalised role for CDEP organisations to assist in the development of regional frameworks for mutual obligation agreements; and
- the development of partnerships between Centrelink, DFACS, Indigenous communities, and their regional organisations to ensure more culturally-informed, coordinated, and effective service delivery on the ground.

The focus of this paper is on making some further refinements to the recommendations about service delivery and policy issues as they arise out of the data presented in this study and within the context of the welfare reform agenda currently being proposed by government, in particular as set out in the McClure Report (2000). The Report recommends a decentralised service delivery model and a change in welfare payments structures as they relate to families and children. It strongly recommends an 'individualised service delivery' model which will:

need to be capable of taking into account regional variations and issues of locational and other disadvantage. For example, Indigenous people and people of culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds require modes of delivery which are culturally appropriate, provide good access to isolated communities and take account of the specific community and family context in place (McClure 2000: 14).

It further stresses the need for the 'streaming of people into different levels of service interventions based on assessment of individual (not categorical) needs, capacities and circumstances' (McClure 2000: 16) and recommends 'in consultation with Indigenous communities, trial innovations in service delivery for Indigenous peoples. These might include culturally and locationally appropriate approaches in the context of individualised service' (McClure 2000: 17).

The Yuendumu data from the Stage One survey has already been used to support a series of baseline recommendations based on precisely these concepts. The Stage Two data reinforce the validity of those baseline recommendations and suggest that a combination of these recommendations about streamlining payments and payment structure, and an extension of the idea behind the Kids' Care Card would achieve a workable, innovative and culturally-informed change in both service delivery and policy effectiveness. The Kids' Care Card

recommendation (Musharbash 2000: 80) was made in response to the ethnographic and statistical findings about the networks that are in place for the task of child care, as well as the high mobility of children within these networks. The proposal affords a service mechanism attuned to the actual dynamic practices of Indigenous child-care that does not require increased and burdensome interference in family life. The suggested Kids' Care Card:

would function as a re-useable debit card into which Centrelink would deposit the relevant welfare payments attributable to a child. Each individual child would be allocated a card (but not be the authorised signatory) and that card would have a set number of 'designated carers' as signatories.

The designated carers would be agreed upon within the child's family. The card could 'travel' with a child as it goes between those carers, or alternatively, it could be housed at a community agency where it would be accessible to all signatories when the child is in their care, for example at the Centrelink Agent's office, or the local store (as is often the case with other individual welfare payments) (Musharbash 2000: 80).

It will be extremely difficult to construct policies tailored to the intricate and dynamic complexities of Indigenous patterns of child care and mobility. However, there are factors which can be taken into account as a basis for the formulation of culturally-informed policy. The logical refinement of the recommendation for a Kids' Care Card, based on the data from both this and the Stage One study, is to introduce a single remote welfare payment structure, encompassing all individuals, that is, children and adults. This is envisioned as an umbrella policy which would provide a flexible framework.

In the first instance, payments would commence with the birth of a child, and would be paid into the Kids' Care Card until that person turns 16 years of age. The sums debited into this card by Centrelink would be age-graded: a newborn baby requires more money (for nappies and so on) than does a young child, and more money is needed once again when a child enters school. Age-related amounts would have to be carefully calculated on the basis of actual expenditure in remote circumstances. The card would be held and used by whichever carer the child is staying with at the time, that is, it would follow the child in its mobility.

Once a person turns 16 years of age, the card would no longer be held by carers, but by the individual—for as long as they continue to be eligible for welfare. Instead of having to identify under Centrelink's proposed life events model, the age of the recipient would be the only factor determining the upgrading of payment amounts. Payments should amount to the equivalent of what other Australians in that age group on welfare receive, and should include an adjustment for the more expensive circumstances of remote living. Any individual with such a card would simply continue receiving age-graded welfare payments, with three exceptions: the payments would stop in the case of the recipient joining the labour market, being in jail, or dying.

The data from the survey point to a direct correlation between the provision of suburban-style houses to remote Aboriginal communities and the pitfalls of Centrelink's current service delivery strategies. At Yuendumu, the provision of new houses does not lead to the formation of nuclear family households, but to 'overcrowding' which occurs for social reasons and for the sharing of resources. The same result has been described for the sharing of welfare payments and the resulting 'boom and bust' cycles. The introduction of the suggested payment structure would be a departure from welfare payments developed around the concept of the nuclear family. By administering payments to individuals calculated on an age-graded needs basis only, the existence of social networks in Aboriginal communities would be both acknowledged and strengthened.

The benefits of the introduction of this payment system would thus include a departure from family structure dependent payments. Currently, and even if the life events model comes into practice, payment sums are calculated on the basis of marital status, number of children in one's care, and so on. These payments are calculated on the basis of the needs of an average Australian family and do not cater well for remote circumstances which include a higher cost of living, the sharing of resources in large networks, a multiplicity of caring arrangements, and high mobility.

The proposal made here would acknowledge the existence and importance of strong and wide-ranging social networks as well as the hardships of remote life, such as the absence of many services available in urban centres and the lack of adequate employment opportunities. The proposed model, if adopted, would be an example of more culturally-informed policy and service delivery, replacing culturally interventionist policy which pressures Aboriginal people, at least nominally, to conform to the idealised model of the nuclear family.

The introduction of the proposed streamlined payment model would stop a lot of the signing on, and signing off from one Centrelink payment to the next, and would thereby decrease the administrative workload. It would greatly simplify the suggestions for Centrelink's decentralisation made in the previous study (see Musharbash 2000: 73-9; Smith 2000: Chs 7 & 8). It would decrease individuals' dealings with Centrelink as the upgradings would be automatically adjusted on birthdays, and payments would only stop in the case of employment, imprisonment, or death.

Lastly, the proposed reform would be in line with the Federal government's response to the McLure Report, which stated that:

[T]he government is committed to simplifying and improving this [income support] structure ... However, changing such a complex system is not simple and will take time. The government is disposed to simplify the current range of different participation requirements for job seekers, introducing a clear, coherent and sensitive set of requirements across all age groups. Over the medium to long term, and subject to further research and consultation, we are disposed to implement the McLure report recommendations of an income support structure comprising a base rate of payment, additional add-ons to recognise special income needs of some people, and a participation

supplement to encourage and support participation where appropriate (Commonwealth of Australia 2000: 6).

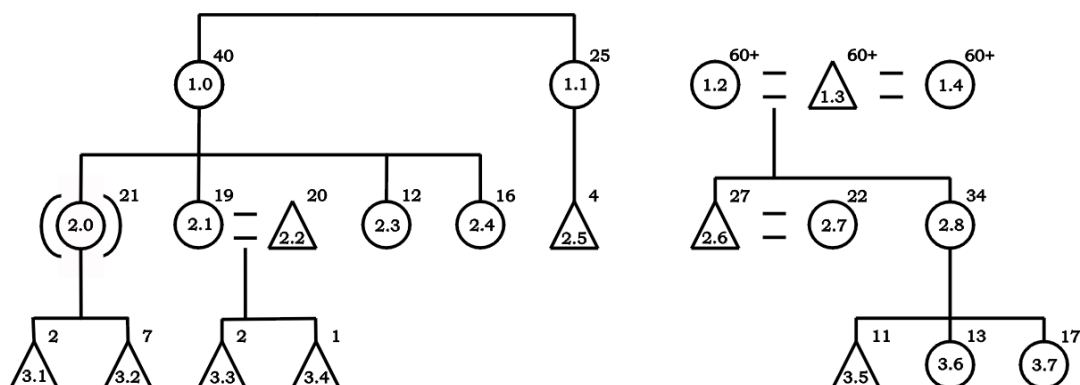
There are a number of issues that remain to be solved, and the idea of a remote payment structure should be further developed and piloted in a range of Indigenous communities. First, a workable solution needs to be found in respect to eligibility. Second, it would be advisable to leave signing up for this kind of payment as a voluntary option, otherwise issues of discrimination might arise. Lastly, although the author has great faith in the social pressure put on people 'taking off' with a Kids' Care Card, a procedure to deal with conflicts arising out of this issue should be in place. A potential model for dealing with such pressure and conflicts is in fact being piloted by DFACS under their Carers Statement Trial, where Centrelink Indigenous officers are assisting self-nominated sets of carers for specific children to manage arrangements for sharing welfare income between carers. Overall, though, the option suggested here seems to present a fairer and more culturally-informed way to accommodate the regional and cultural differences of remote Aboriginal welfare recipients within a model which, hitherto, has taken the 'average' Australian family as the conceptual unit around which welfare entitlements are calculated.

Appendix 1. Changes in welfare payments due to the introduction of GST

The introduction of the GST made tax adjustments in welfare payments necessary. This appendix illustrates the difference in payments for one Yuendumu household in 1999 and in 2000. As a result of consultation with the field assistants, no data concerning the total amount of income received via Centrelink payments or wages were taken during the questionnaire interviews. There were a number of reasons for this, including the discomfort of interviewees in discussing amounts of money received by them; lack of knowledge of actual amounts especially among people who do not receive cheques; lack of information about deductions; and for reasons of privacy. The amounts in Tables A1 and A2 have been provided to the project by DFACS and represent maximum notional entitlements. Since no data concerning wages and CDEP wages were collected these amounts are approximate estimates only.

The two tables indicate the payments that individuals of the household as presented in Fig. A1 *should* receive, as outlined in the previous study (Musharbash 2000). The actual payments received are often less.

Fig. A1. Example household for GST changes



- Key:
- 1.0 (40 years, single, F) = CDEP plus welfare for 2.4 and 2.3
 - 1.1 (25 years, single, F) = CDEP plus welfare for 2.5
 - 1.2 (60+ years, married, F) = pension plus welfare for 3.6
 - 1.3 (60+ years, married, M) = pension
 - 1.4 (60+ years, married, F) = pension
 - 2.0 (21 years, single, F, absent) = welfare for herself and 3.1 and 3.2
 - 2.1 (19 years, married, F) = welfare for herself and 3.3 and 3.4
 - 2.2 (20 years, married, M) = CDEP
 - 2.6 (27 years, married, M) = Unemployment Benefit
 - 2.7 (22, married, F) = Unemployment Benefit
 - 2.8 (34 years, single, F) = wages plus welfare for 3.5
 - 3.7 (17 years, single, F) = Unemployment Benefit

Note: For key to symbols see Fig. 1.

Table A1. Family Assistance: Rates effective from 20 September 1999

Ref. ^a	Family composition	Benefit type	Fortnightly amount (\$)
1.0	Single female on CDEP with two children aged 10 and 12 years	CDEP wage	350.00
		Parenting Payment ^b	45.20
		CPS ^c	20.00
		Family Allowance ^d	235.00
		Family Tax Payment (A)	15.40
		Remote Area Allowance	31.50
		Total for 1.0	697.10
1.1	Single female on CDEP with one child aged 4 years	CDEP wage	350.00
		Parenting Payment ^b	45.20
		CPS ^c	20.00
		Family Allowance ^d	136.00
		Family Tax Payment (A)	7.70
		Family Tax Payment (B)	19.24
		Remote Area Allowance	24.50
1.2	Married (to 1.3) female age pensioner with a 13 year-old granddaughter	Single rate Age Pension ^e	371.90
		Remote Area Allowance	24.50
		Family Allowance	165.80
		Family Tax Payment (A)	7.70
		Total for 1.2	569.90
1.3	Married male age pensioner	Married rate Age Pension	305.90
		Remote Area Allowance	15.00
		Pharmaceutical Allowance	2.70
		Total for 1.3	323.60
1.4	Married (to 1.3) female age pensioner	Married rate Age Pension	308.60
		Remote Area Allowance	15.00
2.0	Single female with two children aged 2 and 7 years	Parenting Payment ^b	371.90
		Remote Area Allowance	31.50
		Family Allowance ^c	235.00
		Family Tax Payment (A)	15.40
		Family Tax Payment (B)	19.24
		Total for 2.0	673.04
2.1	Married (to 2.2) female with 2 children aged 1 and 2 years	Parenting Payment ^b	294.70
		Remote Area Allowance	29.00
		Family Allowance	198.00
		Family Tax Payment (A)	15.40
		Family Tax Payment (B)	19.24
		Total for 2.1	556.34
2.2	Married male on CDEP	CDEP wage	350.00
		CPS ^c	20.00
2.6	Married (to 2.7) unemployed male	NewStart (incl. RAA)	309.70
2.7	Married female, unemployed	NewStart (incl. RAA)	309.70
2.8	Single female wages of \$22,000 per annum with one child aged 11 years	Parenting Payment ^b	11.83
		Remote Area Allowance	24.50
		Family Allowance ^c	136.00
		Family Tax Payment (A)	7.70
3.7	Single unemployed 17 year-old	Youth Allowance (incl. RAA)	163.90

For notes to this table see p. 30.

Table A2. Family Assistance: Rates effective from 20 September 2000

Ref. ^a	Family composition	Benefit type	Fortnightly amount (\$)
1.0	Single female on CDEP with two children aged 10 and 12 years	CDEP wage	350.00
		Parenting payment ^b	49.50
		CPS ^c	20.80
		Family Tax Benefit (A)	232.40
		Family Tax Benefit (B)	69.58
		Remote Area Allowance	32.80
Total for 1.0			755.08
1.1	Single female on CDEP with one child aged 4 years	CDEP wage	350.00
		Parenting Payment ^b	49.50
		CPS ^c	20.80
		Family Tax Benefit (A)	116.20
		Family Tax Benefit (B)	99.82
		Remote Area Allowance	25.50
Total for 1.1			661.82
1.2	Married (to 1.3) female age pensioner with a 13 year-old granddaughter	Single rate Age Pension ^d	399.70
		Remote Area Allowance	25.50
		Family Tax Benefit (A)	147.28
		Family Tax Benefit (B)	69.58
Total for 1.2			642.06
1.3	Married male age pensioner	Married rate Age Pension	331.70
		Remote Area Allowance	15.60
		Total for 1.3	347.30
1.4	Married (to 1.3) female age pensioner	Married rate Age Pension	331.70
		Remote Area Allowance	15.60
		Total for 1.4	347.30
2.0	Single female with two children aged 2 and 7 years	Parenting Payment ^b	399.70
		Remote Area Allowance	32.80
		Family Tax Benefit (A)	232.40
		Family Tax Benefit (B)	99.82
Total for 2.0			764.72
2.1	Married (to 2.2) female with 2 children aged 1 and 2 years	Parenting Payment ^b	316.40
		Remote Area Allowance	30.20
		Family Tax Benefit (A)	232.40
		Family Tax Benefit (B)	23.82
Total for 2.1			602.82
2.2	Married male on CDEP	CDEP wage	350.00
		CPS ^c	20.80
		NewStart	0.80
		Total for 2.2	371.60
2.6	Married (to 2.7) unemployed male	NewStart (incl. RAA)	332.00
2.7	Married unemployed female	NewStart (incl. RAA)	332.00
2.8	Single female on wages of \$22,000 per annum with one child aged 11 years	Parenting Payment ^b	107.88
		Remote Area Allowance	25.50
		Pharmaceutical Allowance	5.60
		FTB (A)	116.20
		FTB (B)	69.58
		Total for 2.8	324.76
3.7	Single unemployed 17 year-old	Youth Allowance (incl. RAA)	172.10

For notes to this table see p. 30.

Notes to Table A1.

- (a) Numbers in this column refer to the individuals shown in Fig. A1.
- (b) Pharmaceutical Allowance is included in the Parenting Payment amount.
- (c) The CDEP Participant Supplement (CPS) is paid where the participant is: listed on the CDEP scheme participant schedule; receiving CDEP scheme wages; and qualified for an income support payment.
- (d) Guardian Allowance is included in the September 1999 Family Allowance rates for sole parents.
- (e) The female age pensioner (ref. 1.2) has had her rate calculated at the single person age pensioner rate on the presumption that she was not living with 1.3. If counted as living with 1.3 her rate of Age Pension would be calculated at the married rate and Family Tax Payment would be reduced.

Notes to Table A2.

- (a) Numbers in this column refer to the individuals shown in Fig. A1.
- (b) Pharmaceutical Allowance is included in the Parenting Payment amount.
- (c) The CDEP Participant Supplement (CPS) is paid where the participant is: listed on the CDEP scheme participant schedule; receiving CDEP scheme wages; and qualified for an income support payment.
- (d) The female age pensioner (ref. 1.2) has had her rate calculated at the single person age pensioner rate on the presumption that she was not living with 1.3. If counted as living with 1.3 her rate of Age Pension would be calculated at the married rate and Family Tax Benefit (B) would be reduced.

Notes

1. Mobility is a defining feature of remote Indigenous communities and makes census data notoriously unreliable. See Young and Doohan (1989) on mobility in remote central Australia, and Martin and Taylor (1995) on the under-enumeration of Indigenous populations in remote communities during census taking.
2. The data from this THS survey were supplied by Yuendumu Council.
3. Among others, these include a bilingual school, Centrelink Agent's office, police station and child-care centre. For more information refer to Musharbash (2000).
4. These questionnaires are available in electronic form on the CAEPR website at <http://www.charlotte.anu.edu.au/caepr>
5. The same is true for houses not occupied by Aborigines, which are often denoted by the employer or the position held, for example 'Warlpiri Media house', or 'principal's house'. In the case of long-time residents, they may also be known by name, for example 'Milton's house'. Note that all names used in this paper are pseudonyms.
6. The 1999 survey included one key reference person living on an outstation.
7. These houses are rather large suburban-style buildings with a big central kitchen and dining area and four or five bedrooms, showers and toilets, and verandah space on all four sides. Some recipients were given a minimal say in the building process but this mostly consisted of them being asked which way they wanted the house oriented. All others were allotted a house without any say. For information on Warlpiri ethno-architecture and use of living space see Keys (1998).
8. There is no comparative data for this question as it was not asked in Stage One.
9. The Stage One study (Musharbash 2000: 64) criticised the 1997 THS report on nutrition (Grieve, Napangardi Robertson & Davis 1997a, 1997b) on the basis that the 'basket of goods' used as a benchmark did not represent actual food expenditure and consumption patterns at Yuendumu, nor did the 'model family type' correspond to

Yuendumu food sharing patterns. For more information on Aboriginal expenditure patterns, sharing of resources and exchange see Altman (1987).

10. For more details see the discussions in Smith (2000) and the literature on 'feast and famine cycles' in Aboriginal communities (Finlayson 1991; Sansom 1980, 1982, 1988), and on 'demand sharing' (Peterson 1993, 1997; Myers 1982, 1986; Schwab 1995).
11. Since the categories of mobility are based exclusively on a comparison between the two surveys, the three new reference persons who replaced three key reference persons from the Stage One (1999) survey are not taken into consideration.
12. The terms 'single', 'married', and 'divorced' in the Yuendumu context do not correspond closely to the wider Australian usage. In the context of this study 'to be married' means of a woman that she is living with a man who generally is acknowledged to be her husband. 'Divorced' means that a woman used to live with a man considered her husband and now no longer does. 'Single' means that currently a woman is not living with a man considered her husband nor is there a man considered to be her husband living elsewhere (for more detail on Warlpiri marriages see Musharbash forthcoming).
13. The data from this THS survey were supplied by Yuendumu Council.
14. This compares to concerns raised in the Kuranda study (see Finlayson & Auld 1999: 24; Finlayson, Daly & Smith 2000).
15. People in the 'zero mobility' category were as prone to this type of mobility as anyone else: the 'zero mobility' category is a measure of location at two particular (arbitrary) points in time, and as such does not capture any movement that occurs between those two points.
16. Relationships which were described most often include the following: M, 'M', MM, MZ, F, 'F', Z, 'Z', B, D, HF, 'HB', HB, HM, HMM, cousins, and in-laws. Inverted commas denote a classificatory relationship.
17. These are mostly the children's grandparents, especially their maternal or paternal grandmothers, or close classificatory mothers and/or fathers, that is siblings of the actual parents.

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