Reference No. 134

Summarising: Taylor, Social Engineering and Indigenous Demography: Testing the implications of current policy directions
Responsibility for the preparation of this research summary rests with the authors of the MCEETYA report *Education, Training and Indigenous Futures: CAEPR Policy Research 1990–2007* and not the original author(s) of the summarised material.

Title of Research:
Social Engineering and Indigenous Demography: Testing the implications of current policy directions

Research Publication:
CAEPR Seminar March 2007

Name of Researcher(s):
J. Taylor

Time period:
2007 projections, using 2001 Census information

Geographic location:
Major towns of NT and WA

Methodology:
Projected town population increases were estimated based upon the flow of Indigenous people from outstations, homelands and smaller townships to larger remotely located towns and centres such as Darwin (NT), using 2001 Census of Population and Housing information as a base-line.

Aims:
The paper aims to explore possible scenarios if current government policies result in major migrations of Indigenous peoples to regional centres, beyond the level of migration which is already occurring.

Selected findings and insights:
This is purely an exploratory study, intended to identify implications which may follow any significant migration of Indigenous people to larger town centres, seeking better housing, improved access to education and improved access to employment opportunities as a reaction to current government policy settings. The findings are very much speculative and do provide possibly a maximum effect, but they are a basis for discussion and future planning by government agencies. For example,

- in the region of Apatula (NT), this research projected significant decreases across all age-groups, ranging from 50% for the 0–4 years and 5–14 years age group down to 35% for the 50 years and over age group;

- with these Indigenous people migrating from Apatula Region into Alice Springs, the corresponding impact on the town’s Indigenous population would be to lead to an overall increase of 74%, with an 85% increase in the 5–14 years age group down to a 27% increase in the 50 years and over age group;

- in towns such as Tennant Creek (NT), Alice Springs (NT), Kununurra (WA) and Derby (WA) the Indigenous population would comprise at least 50%, and Katherine (NT) would be about 45% Indigenous;

- for towns such as Halls Creek (WA) and Fitzroy Crossing (WA) the Indigenous population would approach 90% of the total population; and

- within Darwin (NT) itself, the Indigenous population would double in size to be about 20% of the total population and in Broome (WA) it would approach 40%.
Whilst projections were not presented for Queensland towns such as Cairns, substantial increases in the Indigenous population there might be expected. Similarly the already detected migration patterns of Indigenous peoples in Western NSW to larger towns would be expected to increase.

**Educational implications:**

As emphasised this is a speculative set of findings but to at least some degree the trends identified above seem to be happening. As such they suggest quite different policy settings in which to address immediate and future directions for the education, training and higher education of Indigenous Australians. [policy]

With such marked projected changes occurring in the distribution and movement of Indigenous young people, agencies responsible for the delivery of education and training services will need to respond to greater demands being placed upon existing school curricula, training courses, support services and facilities. [planning]

**Relevance:**

*Introductory Topic: The Changing Demography of Indigenous Australia*

*Domain 5: Pathways to training, employment and higher education*

Access to post-compulsory education, training, employment and higher education

**Related papers:**
