Reference No. 137

Summarising: Taylor & Bell (2004), *Continuity and change in Indigenous Australian population mobility*
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:
Continuity and change in Indigenous Australian population mobility

Research Publication:
In Taylor, John and Martin Bell (eds.) Population Mobility and Indigenous Peoples in Australasia and North America 2004

Name of Researcher(s):
J. Taylor and M. Bell

Time period:
1996 - 2001

Geographic location:
Australia-wide

Methodology:
A statistical analysis of population trends over the 1986-1999 period generally using information from the ABS Community Household Indigenous Survey and other ABS sources, but also drawing upon more historical information about Indigenous mobility.

Aims:
The paper explores the patterns of Indigenous mobility across Australia and aims to identify underlying factors which influence mobility behaviour and outcomes.

Selected findings and insights:
The paper identifies a history of circular mobility, where there are circuits of population movement between places which combine to form functional regions. These patterns of movement will be shaped by continuity of land use practices, maintaining kin relationships and on-going conduct of religious ceremonies. At the same time mobility will be influenced by access to mainstream institutions such as education, training, employment and essential services.

- These patterns of mobility occur not only in remote and rural Australia but also between urban areas and their rural hinterlands – and are referred to as ‘beats’, ‘runs’ and ‘lines’.

The paper highlights the disparity between locations of service centres and where many remote communities are living and the impact this has regarding access and equity.

[see below related paper for details]

The paper describes the complex mix of social and economic factors which act as a set of ‘pull’ and ‘push’ influences in different locations which induce a cycle of movement between them.
From rural/remote locations to urban locations:

- movement away from rural locations may be influenced by the following push factors: social tensions, no jobs, lack of services and alcohol prohibition
- movement into urban areas may be influenced by the following pull factors: family connections, employment prospects, social services and access to alcohol;

From urban locations to rural/remote locations:

- movement away from urban localities may be influenced by the following push factors: eviction, social tensions, no suitable jobs and no urban commitment
- movement to rural/remote locations will be influenced by the following pull factors: traditional living; family connections, alcohol prohibited and home land.

There are two overlapping patterns of urbanisation noted in the paper:

- In the large metropolitan areas of Melbourne and Sydney there appears to be a cycle of young single Indigenous people (15–24 years, especially) moving to the city for education, training and employment opportunities and returning to the country about 10 years later, possibly seeking better housing;
- In the smaller cities of Adelaide and Perth there appears to be more permanent migration of young people, possibly due to better Aboriginal housing programs.

[again, more details are included in the related paper cited below]

The paper concludes by contrasting Indigenous mobility with that in other less developed countries where there is an inexorable drift towards urbanisation. Increased Indigenous rights such as land title agreements (and programs such as CDEP) have tended to increase opportunities to return to country, allowing greater self-determination of lifestyle. When combined with tendencies for temporary mobility rather than long-term migration, this has limited urban drift by replacing it with a more complex mobility pattern between regions and between regions and urban locations.

Educational implications:

Both long-term and temporary mobility of Indigenous families present different service delivery challenges for education and training authorities, as well as other government agencies. In those cases whether migration is for a fairly long period and there is an established pattern of in-migration, schools can be staffed to meet the additional demand (or student enrolment reduction if it is the ‘exiting’ school) and implement appropriate curricula. [staffing] [curriculum]

Addressing temporary mobility is more difficult, particularly when it involves rather large families as is often the case, and occurs more spontaneously. The educational needs of these families requires not only their school-age children being accommodated in a class but also the setting in place of appropriate educational transition arrangements, especially when, as is often the case, these students will have come in from the ‘bush’, have lower literacy skills and have experienced quite a different school curriculum. Even when families have moved for example from a regional area such as the North Coast of NSW to a Sydney metropolitan school similar issues may arise. [curriculum]
Relevance:

*Introductory Topic: The Changing Demography of Indigenous Australia*

Related papers:
