Summary: Taylor (2006), *Demography is Destiny, Except in the Northern Territory*
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:
Demography is Destiny, Except in the Northern Territory

Research Publication:
In Coercive Reconciliation: Stabilise, Normalise, Exit Aboriginal Australia Eds. J.C. Altman and Melinda Hinkson Arena Publications Association 2007

Name of Researcher(s):
J. Taylor

Time period:
2006

Geographic location:
Northern Territory (NT)

Methodology:
This paper is based upon a statistical analysis of the 2006 Housing and Infrastructure in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities survey and the 2006 Population and Housing Census, both undertaken by the Australian Bureau of Statistics.

Aims:
Within the context of the 2007 Commonwealth Government’s national emergency response strategy in the NT, this paper aims to:

• provide benchmark information about numbers of Indigenous people living in discrete communities in the NT as well as the level of services and infrastructure provided.

Selected findings and insights:
In setting the scene for the development of relevant policies and programs to assist Indigenous people living in the NT, the paper notes that there were two distinct populations living in the NT with quite different characteristics, composition and growth trajectories.

• In contrast to the non-Indigenous population, there was the much younger, less migratory, high-fertility, high-mortality, high-growth, widely dispersed and permanently resident Indigenous population. As a result the policies and programs relevant to the Indigenous population were primarily concerned with child and family health, housing for new family formation, education, training, youth, criminal justice, employment and the means to secure asset accumulation and sustainable livelihoods.

In the NT there were 641 discrete communities identified in 2006, of which there were 42 town camps in urban settings (see Table footnote).

• Of these 641 discrete communities the large majority (560) had an estimated population size of less than 100 persons;

• 63 communities had a population of between 100-499 persons; and

• 18 communities had estimated populations of 500 or more persons.
The paper estimates the likely size of the population in select age groupings living in discrete communities (official ABS estimates will not be available until mid-2008). The paper estimates a total Indigenous usual residence population (ERP) of 41,640 persons living in discrete communities in 2006. Of these:

- 4,630 (11%) were within the 0-4 years age group;
- 9,670 (23%) were in the 5-14 years school-age group;
- 8,540 (21%) were in the 15-24 years transition to work age group;
- 14,220 (34%) were in the 25-49 years working age group; and
- 4,580 (11%) were in the 50+ years age group, representing ‘old age’.

The following table provides an indication of the level of services and infrastructure available to people living in those communities in 2006, according to size of community. The following Table identifies significant shortfalls even in the largest remote communities in services and infrastructure, including shortfalls in:

- hospitals, primary health care services, pre-schools, secondary schools, aged accommodation, women’s refuges, child care, youth centres and housing.

Table: Select services and infrastructure at discrete Indigenous communities by settlement size category: Northern Territory 2006

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Private dwelling</th>
<th>&lt;100</th>
<th>100-499</th>
<th>500-999</th>
<th>&gt;1,000</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No. of communities</td>
<td>560</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>641</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Estimated usual population</td>
<td>9,951</td>
<td>13,890</td>
<td>8,530</td>
<td>9,310</td>
<td>41,681</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-primary school</td>
<td>5 (0.9)</td>
<td>24 (38)</td>
<td>8 (67)</td>
<td>4 (67)</td>
<td>41 (6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary school</td>
<td>56 (10)</td>
<td>46 (73)</td>
<td>12 (100)</td>
<td>6 (100)</td>
<td>120 (17)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary school to Year 12</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>6 (9)</td>
<td>4 (33)</td>
<td>3 (50)</td>
<td>13 (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aged accommodation</td>
<td>2 (0.3)</td>
<td>10 (16)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>4 (67)</td>
<td>16 (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women’s refuge</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>7 (11)</td>
<td>5 (42)</td>
<td>3 (50)</td>
<td>15 (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Store</td>
<td>11 (2)</td>
<td>47 (75)</td>
<td>12 (100)</td>
<td>6 (100)</td>
<td>76 (11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child care centre</td>
<td>1 (0.2)</td>
<td>24 (38)</td>
<td>9 (75)</td>
<td>5 (83)</td>
<td>39 (6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth centre</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>15 (24)</td>
<td>4 (33)</td>
<td>5 (83)</td>
<td>24 (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swimming pool</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>3 (5)</td>
<td>4 (33)</td>
<td>2 (33)</td>
<td>9 (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access to a doctor</td>
<td>106 (19)</td>
<td>44 (70)</td>
<td>11 (92)</td>
<td>6 (100)</td>
<td>167 (24)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hospital</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary health care centre</td>
<td>9 (2)</td>
<td>24 (38)</td>
<td>10 (83)</td>
<td>4 (67)</td>
<td>47 (7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of dwellings requiring major repairs/replacement</td>
<td>27.8</td>
<td>30.2</td>
<td>40.3</td>
<td>29.5</td>
<td>31.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occupancy rate per functional dwelling</td>
<td>6.6</td>
<td>8.6</td>
<td>12.3</td>
<td>14.2</td>
<td>9.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. Permanent dwellings not requiring major repair or replacement

Note: Figures in parenthesis indicate the percentage of communities in each size category with the selected service or infrastructure. Some of the communities listed here are town camps. These include 32 of the 560 communities of less than 100 persons, and 10 of the 63 communities of between 100 and 499 persons. These urban settings in which these camps are located include the Greater Darwin region, Jabiru, Adelaide River, Pine Creek, Katherine, Mataranka, Borroloola, Elliot, Tennant Creek, and Alice Springs.
The above Table highlights an even greater deficiency in services and infrastructure for those 81 communities of 100 or more persons. In terms of services and infrastructure most relevant to *Australian Directions in Indigenous Education 2005-2008*, of these 81 communities:

- 38 (47%) had a child care centre;
- 36 (44%) had a pre-primary school;
- 64 (79%) had a primary school;
- 13 (16%) had a secondary school to Year 12;
- 10 (12%) had a youth centre; and
- 38 (47%) had a primary health care centre.

**Educational implications:**

This paper highlights the overall challenges facing governments in delivering necessary services to remote Indigenous communities. In the case of education authorities the impact of reduced servicing in key areas such as health and housing will limit the extent to which improved educational services are likely to result in improved educational outcomes due to the significant influences of health and quality housing upon student learning. [service delivery] [coordination]

**Relevance:**

*Introductory Topic: The Changing Demography of Indigenous Australia*

*Related papers:*
