

DESERT KNOWLEDGE CRC

The Working Paper Series

Community governance:
The Ti Tree Creek Camp Study

Sarah Holcombe
Will Sanders

Working Paper

10

July
2007

Contributing author information

Sarah Holcombe is the Social Science Coordinator for the DKCRC and a Research Fellow at CAEPR, primarily working on the Indigenous Community Governance Project. She was previously post doctoral fellow at CAEPR for 3 years. Prior to that, she worked for the Central and Northern Land Councils as a social anthropologist on a diverse range of projects.

Will Sanders has been a researcher at The Australian National University in various aspects of Indigenous affairs policy since 1981. He joined the staff of the Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research (CAEPR) at The Australian National University in 1993, where he is now a Senior Fellow. Will is a Chief Investigator on the Indigenous Community Governance Project (ICGP), an ARC Linkage Project between CAEPR and Reconciliation Australia.

Desert Knowledge CRC Working Paper #10

Information contained in this publication may be copied or reproduced for study, research, information or educational purposes, subject to inclusion of an acknowledgement of the source.

ISBN: 1 74158 045 5 (Web copy)

ISSN: 1833-7309 (Web copy)

Citation

Holcombe S and Sanders W 2007, *Community Governance: The Ti Tree Creek Camp Study*, Working Paper 10, Desert Knowledge CRC, Alice Springs.

The Desert Knowledge Cooperative Research Centre is an unincorporated joint venture with 28 partners whose mission is to develop and disseminate an understanding of sustainable living in remote desert environments, deliver enduring regional economies and livelihoods based on Desert Knowledge, and create the networks to market this knowledge in other desert lands.

Acknowledgements

The Desert Knowledge CRC receives funding through the Australian Government Cooperative Research Centres Programme; the views expressed herein do not necessarily represent the views of Desert Knowledge CRC or its Participants.

For additional information please contact

Desert Knowledge CRC
Publications Officer
PO Box 3971
Alice Springs NT 0871
Australia
Telephone +61 8 8959 6000 Fax +61 8 8959 6048
www.desertknowledgecrc.com.au

© Desert Knowledge CRC 2007

Introduction

This compilation of reports brings together almost 3 years work with the Desert Knowledge CRC and the Anmatjere Community Government Council (ACGC). The research was originally sponsored under the “Governance, Management and Leadership” theme and was entitled “Community Governance and Service Delivery in sparsely settled desert areas” (3.115). The Desert Knowledge CRC provided funding for field research and community collaboration. The project was also part of a larger ‘Indigenous Community Governance’ project funded by the ARC based at CAEPR (ANU) with Reconciliation Australia as the linkage partner.

The first six months of ‘working’ with the Council was spent establishing a relationship with them – over several visits. We attended several council meetings and gave them information about our selves and the projects we were involved with, to allow them the time to make a decision about whether they wanted to work with us. This proved to be instructive, if for only illustrating to us how the concept of ‘governance’ is difficult to convey. We talked about being interested in how the Council makes decisions about issues of importance to it and its constituents.

During a council meeting it emerged that an issue of importance was the “creek camp”, a fringe camp within the township where people camp without basic services. The Northern Territory Government had recently sent a letter to the Council suggesting that this situation was unacceptable pushing the Council to do something about it. We suggested that we could help the Council look into it and document who was living in the camp and why and thereby assist them in developing their own approach to the issue.

Over the period of a year and a half we presented 3 reports to the Council that profiled the aspirations and mobility patterns of the creek camp residents, as well as canvassing broader Ti Tree resident’s perspectives of the place and the possibilities for government action. These reports were written in plain English specifically for the Council and they appear in the appendix of this document, while the first paper in this volume is the analysis of the material that lies behind these plain English reports.

THE TI TREE CREEK CAMP STUDY: A CONTRIBUTION TO GOOD GOVERNANCE¹

WILL SANDERS* AND SARAH HOLCOMBE**

I Introduction

Ti Tree is a small roadside town in Australia's Northern Territory (NT) on the main north-south road — the Stuart Highway — about half way between the larger urban centres of Alice Springs and Tennant Creek. It has an old-style roadhouse which sells fuel, food and beverages, including alcohol, and a somewhat newer art gallery/café, which also contains some general provisions in the style of a small supermarket. Ti Tree has a school, a health clinic and a police station, all staffed by the NT Government, and it is also the operational centre of the Anmatjere Community Government Council (ACGC), established in 1993. ACGC's offices used to be in one end of the school. However, in 2002 a new office and Council chambers was opened, in which ACGC now also runs a Centrelink agency, a library or knowledge centre, and a rural transaction centre. Elsewhere around town ACGC runs an aged care centre, a power station and water infrastructure, as well as being responsible for a park, an oval and an airstrip. ACGC also has a works and machinery yard from which outdoor staff undertake activities such as rubbish collection and town and infrastructure maintenance. Another works yard and residence belongs to the non-Indigenous manager of the Indigenous-owned Puraiya Cattle Company, which runs pastoral operations on the surrounding Ahakeye Land Trust, once formally known and still often referred to as Ti Tree Station.

To accommodate the employees of these and other organisations, Ti Tree has about 35 formally constructed residences. These are mainly in a compact subdivision on the east side of the Stuart Highway, along with the school, health clinic, police station and aged care centre. Some, however, are west of the Stuart Highway in a more spread out subdivision which is more industrial in nature and includes the ACGC's offices, power house, and works yard. As well as these formally constructed residences in clearly delineated subdivisions, Ti Tree also has an area of self-made dwellings occupied by Aboriginal people running along its western and southwestern sides. This area, known as Creek Camp, has no reticulated water or electricity services (see Map 1 for a pictorial representation of many of these details).

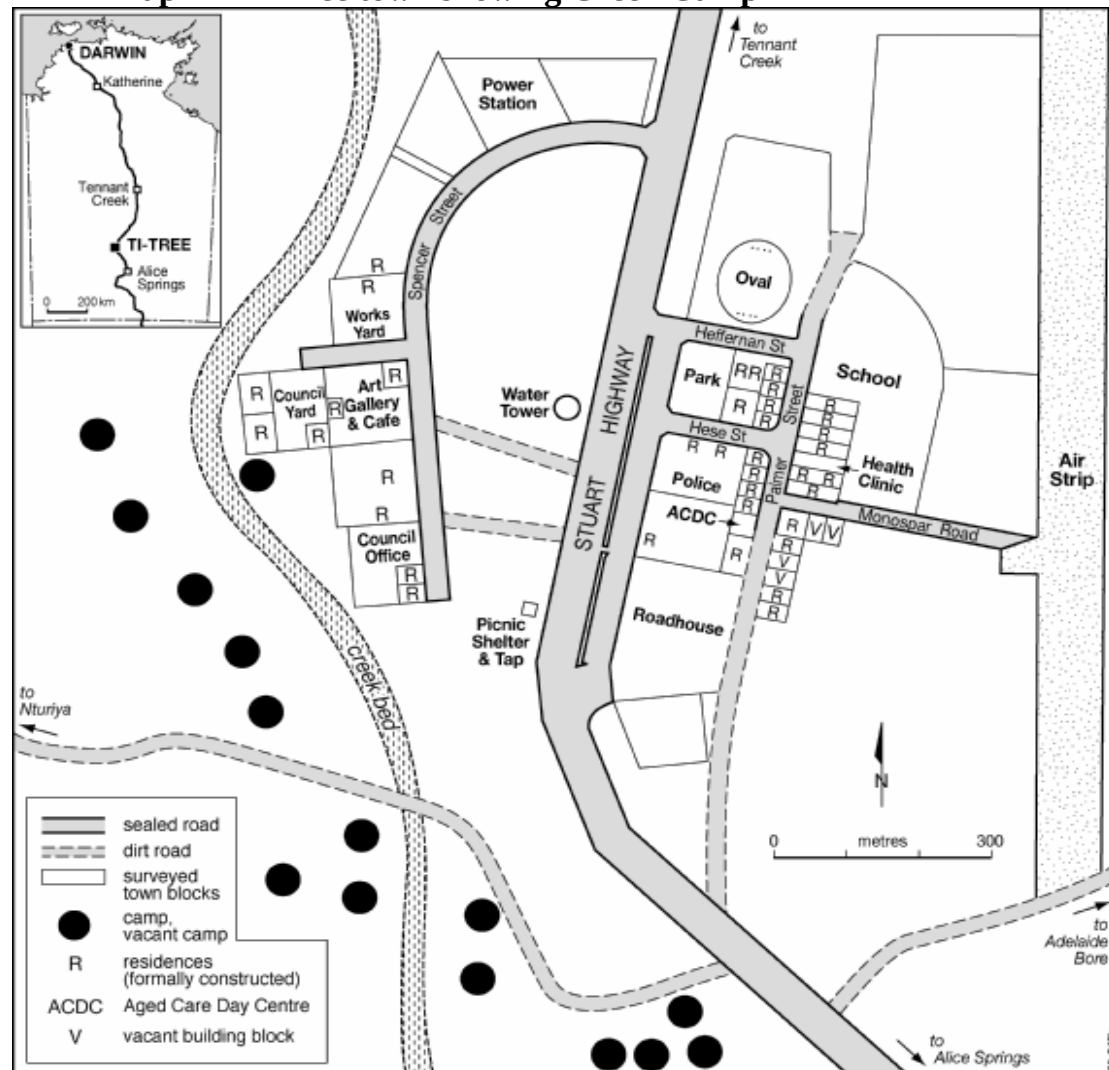
¹ Research for this paper was made possible through funding under the *Indigenous Community Governance Project* (ICGP), an Australian Research Council Linkage Project (No 0348744) between the Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research at The Australian National University and Reconciliation Australia. The Desert Knowledge Cooperative Research Centre also supported the research through funding for travel and community collaboration.

* Will Sanders has been a researcher at The Australian National University in various aspects of Indigenous affairs policy since 1981. He joined the staff of the Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research (CAEPR) at The Australian National University in 1993, where he is now a Senior Fellow. Will is a Chief Investigator on the Indigenous Community Governance Project (ICGP), an ARC Linkage Project between CAEPR and Reconciliation Australia.

** Sarah Holcombe is a Research Fellow at CAEPR, primarily working on the ICGP, and part-time Social Science Coordinator for the Desert Knowledge Cooperative Research Centre (DKCRC). She was previously post doctoral fellow at CAEPR for 3 years. Prior to that she worked for the Central and Northern Land Councils as a social anthropologist.

west of the Stuart Highway in a more spread out subdivision which is more industrial in nature and includes the ACGC's offices, power house, and works yard. As well as these formally constructed residences in clearly delineated subdivisions, Ti Tree also has an area of self-made dwellings occupied by Aboriginal people running along its western and southwestern sides. This area, known as Creek Camp, has no reticulated water or electricity services (see Map 1 for a pictorial representation of many of these details).

Map 1 – Ti Tree town showing Creek Camp



Our study of Creek Camp came about as part of an involvement with ACGC in a research project on Indigenous community governance. In 2004 we asked ACGC if they would be part of the project and explained that our approach would be to work with Council on issues of importance or concern to them. The first issue that Council directed us to was Creek Camp. This followed a letter to Council in October 2004 from the then local member of the NT Legislative Assembly and Minister in the Martin Labor Government, Peter Toyne, expressing some concern about the conditions and lack of services in

Creek Camp. ACGC's response to this letter, after some negotiation with various parts of the NT Government, was to agree to provide a boxed water service to the residents of Creek Camp over the summer of 2004–05, funded by the NT Office of Local Government. ACGC could also, of course, point to our study as another response.

In March 2005, with the assistance of Council, we developed a questionnaire intended for current or recent Creek Camp residents which covered the following matters:

- How long people had been living at Creek Camp;
- Who they lived with there;
- What other places they lived, either currently or in the past;
- What attracted them to Creek Camp;
- How they provided for water, food and ablutions;
- What things were problems or they didn't like about living in Creek Camp;
- Whether Creek Camp was overall a good or bad place for them to live, and whether it was better or worse than other places;
- How long they thought they would be living in Creek Camp in the future;
- Whether they thought Creek Camp should be developed with water, electricity and possibly also buildings;
- Whether they would still want to live in Creek Camp if it was so developed: and
- Whether they would be interested in living in public or community housing in the more formal, planned area of Ti Tree.

In April 2005, with the aid of two Councillors as research assistants, we interviewed 32 current and recent Creek Camp residents using this questionnaire. In June we delivered a report to Council on these interviews.² We also took copies back to our interviewees and in the process did another count of Creek Camp residents. Similar return visits and counts of Creek Camp residents were also undertaken in September 2005 and February 2006, giving us a view of residential stability and change in Creek Camp over ten months.

The findings of all these interviews and visits will be reported in the next section of this paper. However, before doing so it should be noted that we also carried out two other sets of interviews in December 2005 and February 2006. The first set was with nine senior NT Government officials based in Alice Springs about their understandings of, and approaches to, Creek Camp. The second was with 16 residents of the more formally constructed dwellings

² Will Sanders and Sarah Holcombe, 'The Ti Tree Creek Camp Study: Reports to Anmatjere Community Government Council' (ICGP Case Study Report No 1, Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research, The Australian National University, 2006) First Report, <http://www.anu.edu.au/caepr/Projects/Reports_toACGCCreekCamp_2006.pdf> at 30 October 2006.

of Ti Tree about their understandings and attitudes towards Creek Camp. The findings of all these interviews with the three sets of stakeholders were reported back to ACGC in May 2006.³ About 100 copies of that report were then also distributed to residents of Creek Camp, residents of the more formally constructed dwellings of Ti Tree and to NT Government officials. This last led to two further developments. The first was clarification and amendment of an argument we had made in our second report, which necessitated a brief third report to Council in mid July 2006. The second was an invitation to the Chairman of ACGC and one of us to make a presentation on the work to a late July meeting of the NT Government's southern Regional Executive Coordination Committee.⁴

All this may seem rather detailed information for an introduction. However, as indicated by our sub-title, in a later section of this paper we want to suggest how and why the Creek Camp Study is a contribution to good governance. Our argument, in part, is that the study has mutually informed diverse stakeholders. So who we interviewed, and when and how our findings were reported and distributed among these stakeholders, is itself important. We will also argue that the study has contributed to good governance by both identifying ideas for change and clarifying obstacles of change. This, however, takes us somewhat ahead of ourselves. Before making these arguments, we need to report the findings of our three sets of interviews and our return visits to Creek Camp over the ten month period, and the ACGC and NT Government responses to our reports.

II Current and Recent Creek Camp Residents

Our 32 interviews in April 2005 led us to identify approximately 100 recent Creek Camp residents grouped, somewhat roughly, into 13 camps (see Map 1).⁵ Only about 60 of these people were resident full-time in Creek Camp for the week of our interviews, but some others were resident for a night or two. We also identified about 20 visitors who were staying at Creek Camp during that week, but who clearly identified themselves as living somewhere else.

Six of the 13 camps of current and recent residents had connections to Creek Camp going back many years. Some in these camps reported being continuous residents for so long that they could not identify a previous place of residence. Others reported previous residences many years ago, as a result of moving around the region for work and other reasons. But clearly they all saw Creek Camp and Ti Tree as their home.

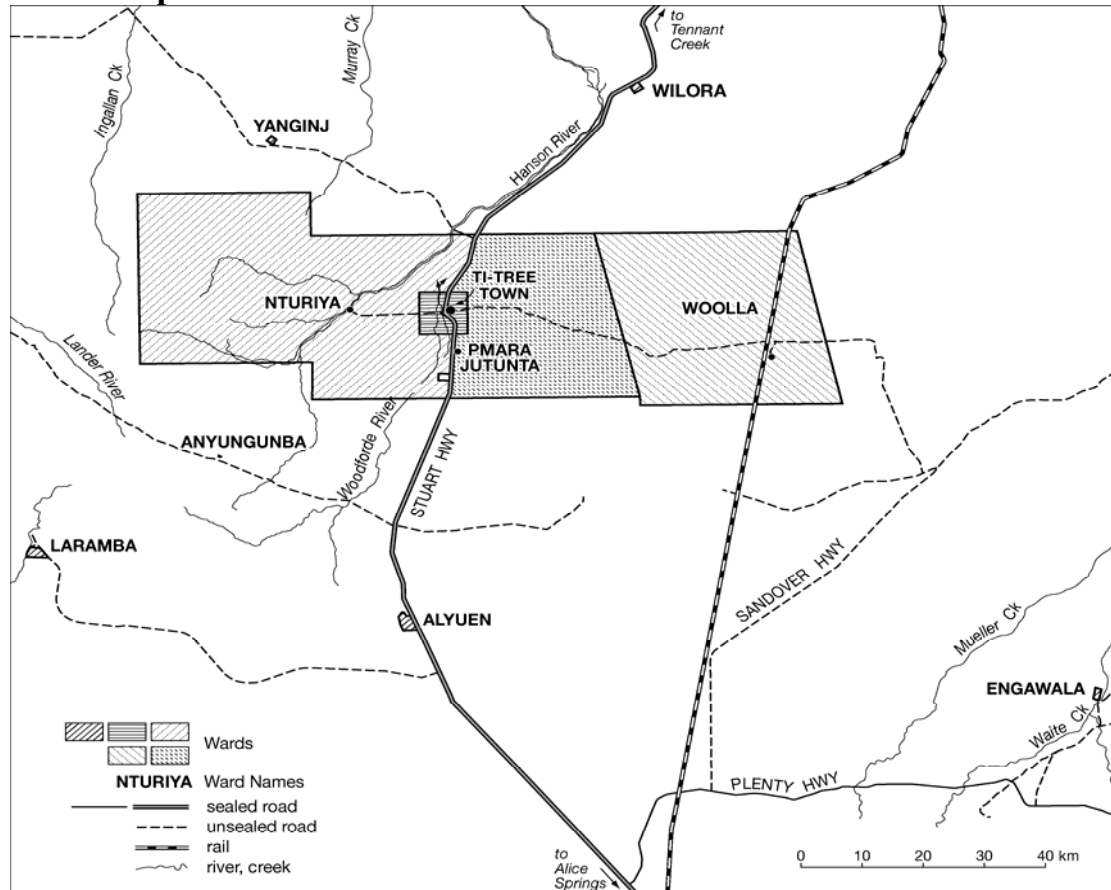
³ Ibid, Second Report.

⁴ Electronic versions of these reports were also placed on the web pages of the ICGP (CAEPR, ANU), and on the website of the Desert Knowledge Cooperative Research Centre (DKCRC).

⁵ Of the 15 camps shown on map 1, the south-eastern most camp did not yet exist. Also the north-western most camp was vacant at this time due to a recent death and its occupants were camping on the eastern side of the creek near the Council yard.

Four of the camps had lived in Creek Camp for two or three years and could still clearly identify a previous place of residence. One of these previous residences was Yanginj, a discrete Aboriginal settlement about 50 km northwest of Ti Tree which is an outlying ward of ACGC (see Map 2).

Map 2: Ti-Tree Land Tenure



Another was Willowra, a discrete Aboriginal settlement further to the northwest, which is outside the ACGC's jurisdiction. For these camps, Creek Camp had effectively become home, though they also retained some considerable attachment to their former places of residence.

Two other camps had been living in Creek Camp for less than a year. They were both from the Willowra area and were avoiding trouble there, but intended in the future to return out that way. The thirteenth camp we identified was only occupied part-time in April 2004, as its residents had recently moved into ACGC housing in Nturiya, another outlying discrete Aboriginal settlement and ward of ACGC.

Here, it needs to be noted that ACGC, as well as being the local governing body for the roadside town of Ti Tree also has nine outlying wards which cover discrete Aboriginal living areas.⁶ The closest of these is Pmara

⁶ Three of these wards cover large land areas corresponding to the western, central and eastern portions of the Ahakeye Land Trust. Together with Ti Tree town, these three wards constitute the large hatched area in the middle of map 2. The other six wards cover very small land areas which are Aboriginal living area excisions from surrounding pastoral leases (see

Jutunta, or Six Mile, which is adjacent to the Stuart Highway about 9 km, or six miles south of Ti Tree. The next closest is Nturiya, 17 km to the west of Ti Tree on a dirt road (see Map 2).⁷ Both Pmara Jutunta and Nturiya are joined to the electricity and water supply system operated by ACGC from Ti Tree. Each has about 25 to 30 houses which are owned and managed by ACGC as 'community housing'. Their populations during the time of our study were claimed to be of the order of 150 to 260 people, though whether these were resident or service populations was somewhat unclear.⁸ Our interviews in April 2005 identified three of the camps in Creek Camp as also having houses at Nturiya, and another one as having some limited access to such a house through close family members. Interestingly, our interviews did not identify any Creek Camp residents who had houses at Pmara Jutunta, though both then and later we did come across short-term overnight visitors to Creek Camp who were avoiding trouble at Pmara Jutunta.

When we returned to Creek Camp in June 2005 the number of people present was down to about 45 in eight camps. There were no visitors present and those with access to houses at Nturiya were living back there, rather than in Creek Camp. We thought this might be due to the cold winter weather, but another relevant factor was possibly that ACGC had just finished a program of substantial housing repairs in Nturiya. In September 2005, the numbers in Creek Camp were back up to 80 or possibly even 100, due to a recent death at Nturiya and people moving away from there for a while as part of 'sorry business'. However, by February 2006 these people had returned again to their houses at Nturiya and the numbers present in Creek Camp were down to about 25 people in six camps. In February 2006, the count of Creek Camp residents was lower than the 45 of the previous June largely because one large camp from Willowra had now returned out that way.

By the end of our ten month study, a number of themes had emerged in relation to Creek Camp residence patterns. One was the way in which the camps in the middle of Creek Camp provided a useful, ongoing, if sporadically occupied 'in-town' location for people with houses at Nturiya. Apart from reticulated water and electricity, a road to Ti Tree, a school bus service and a weekly visit from health clinic staff, Nturiya has few services. A store run there by the Puraiya pastoral company closed in early 2002, so Nturiya residents have in recent years been obliged to shop in Ti Tree or further afield. The camps in the middle of Creek Camp seem to act as a convenient place for Nturiya residents to sit down either for day or overnight trips to Ti Tree for shopping and other business. These camps are also at the end of a parallel informal road system between Nturiya and Ti Tree along which unregistered vehicles can travel without the threat of police surveillance.

A second theme was that the camps at the north and south ends of Creek Camp were more permanently occupied on a full-time basis. The 25 people

map 2).

⁷ The settlement at Nturiya is also sometimes referred to as Ti Tree Station or the old Station.

⁸ Sam Miles & Associates, *Review of Existing Anmatjere Housing Stock at Ti Tree and Alyuen, Pmara Jutunta, Nturiya and Yanginj Communities* (2005) 7.

who we counted in Creek Camp in February 2006 were all in these camps and had all been there throughout the ten month period of the study.⁹ They included the people who could not identify any previous residence and for whom Ti Tree and Creek Camp were simply home. They also, interestingly included about 10 elderly or disabled people and their carers, as well as five employees of either ACGC or the NT Government, plus their children. Also among these full-time residents over the ten month period was the camp which identified its previous residence as Yanginj. Due to health issues and aging among its members, plus younger members of the family living in Nturiya and working in Ti Tree, this camp did not see itself as likely to return to Yanginj as full-time residents in the foreseeable future. The lack of other people living at Yanginj, and a related decline in water and electricity services there, also meant that this was not an attractive option.¹⁰

These six camps of 25 constant residents led us to further consider two issues: the links between employment and housing in Ti Tree and the importance of ACGC's aged care service to Creek Camp. The aged care service delivered midday meals to Creek Camp residents who were among its clientele and it also assisted them with filling jerry cans for their water supply. The aged care centre in town also provided these Creek Camp residents with a place to visit some days, and to attend to ablutions and money matters. The ACGC's aged care service was clearly an important element of *how* these elderly people lived in Creek Camp.

The presence of ACGC and NT Government employees among this core Creek Camp population also raised some interesting questions about housing and employment. Generally, if people are recruited from elsewhere into public sector jobs in Ti Tree, they will be provided with housing as part of their employment package. If people are recruited locally into these jobs, housing is usually not part of the employment package, except in a limited number of more senior jobs. This sets up tensions over who obtains access to housing in Ti Tree through employment, both among locals and between locals and outsiders. Of the twelve residences owned by ACGC in Ti Tree, most are used to house managerial employees who come from elsewhere. Just two, west of the Council yard close to the northern end of Creek Camp, are routinely used to house local Aboriginal workers and their families (see Map 1). These latter two houses were acquired in the late 1990s through the community housing program of the former Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission and

⁹ The southeastern most camp in Map 1 was established between June and September due to a death in the two camps slightly further west but still east of the creek. The northwestern most camp was by this time re-occupied by its owners and their temporary camp to the east of the Creek was no longer in use.

¹⁰ Yanginj has a stand-alone water and electricity system that has fallen into disrepair during the recent period of vacancy. The generator at Yanginj has disappeared and there are some unresolved, long-running issues about both the quality and quantity of the water supply. Some discussion of the possibility of restoring previous service levels at Yanginj occurred at ACGC meetings in early 2005. However, in the absence of a commitment from anyone to return to Yanginj as residents, plans for the restoration of basic water and electricity services there were not pursued.

the Indigenous Housing Authority of NT and are referred to by ACGC as 'community housing'. Two houses in Ti Tree for local Aboriginal ACGC employees is nowhere near enough and so many such employees either live at Nturiya or Pmara Jutunta in community housing there, or in Creek Camp.

The housing issue and its relationship to Creek Camp is even more complex when one realizes that three of the ACGC and NT Government employees who were living in Creek Camp during the study had previously lived in houses in Ti Tree's more formal sub-divisions. All had stories to tell of how living in houses in Ti Tree led to considerable pressure from relatives with either no access to housing or access only to community housing in outlying settlements. Some talked of their lounge rooms becoming other people's bedrooms and of deciding to vacate their house in favour of Creek Camp.

This experience of living in a house in Ti Tree also related to a theme that emerged in response to our asking Creek Camp residents what attracted them to living there. One of the most common unprompted responses to this question was that Creek Camp was a quiet, spread out place to live close to services and family, but not 'boxed-up' like the houses on the east side of Ti Tree, where non-Indigenous residents sometimes complained about Aboriginal residents' dogs and visiting relatives. Creek Camp was also seen as less noisy and crowded than Aboriginal community housing at Nturiya and Pmara Jutunta, particularly when there was drinking going on in those places. Creek Camp was thus seen by many of its residents as a workable living arrangement among a rather limited range of somewhat fraught housing options.

Reflecting this comparative attraction, many Creek Camp residents thought they would be living there for some time to come and were not all that interested in the idea of living in a house in Ti Tree town. Residents tended to be more interested in the idea of gaining services in Creek Camp itself and perhaps even some buildings. However, there was also considerable caution in relation to the potential development of Creek Camp, due to a concern that it might become too attractive to people now living at Nturiya and Pmara Jutunta and thereby lose its current character as a quiet, spread out place to live. People were generally optimistic that if Creek Camp was developed these problems could be avoided by measures such as fences and keeping buildings and services fairly basic and spread out. But there was an underlying caution and conservatism about development ideas for Creek Camp, both among Creek Camp residents and among Councillors, lest the current attractions of what already existed might be threatened.

If this caution and conservatism sounds like romanticising Creek Camp, we should also report that there were some residents who clearly wanted to move out of Creek Camp as soon as they could. One adolescent girl expressed strong dissatisfaction with residence there, even though her co-resident grandmother was more settled and accepting. Also one camp was interested in the idea of living in a house in Ti Tree town and asked us to find out about possibilities. We will return to this matter soon, when we describe our interviews with NT Government officials.

Overall then, Creek Camp was seen in quite positive terms by its

residents. It was a quiet, convenient, spread out place to live with dogs and family, close to services, while also being less noisy and crowded than community housing at Nturiya or Pmara Jutunta. Most residents saw themselves as continuing to live in Creek Camp in the future and liked the idea of possible reticulated services, or perhaps even buildings. Creek Camp was also clearly a place where people could camp intermittently to get away from other places where they were experiencing trouble, like Nturiya, Pmara Jutunta, or further afield, Willowra. Creek Camp was, in these instances, a resource for people who, while primarily living elsewhere, could also make use of its quiet, convenient location.

III Northern Territory Government Officials

Earlier we noted that it was following a letter to ACGC in October 2004 from the then local member of the NT Legislative Assembly and Minister in the Martin Labor government, Peter Toyne, that we were directed to Creek Camp as an issue of importance or concern on which to work with Council. A month later in November 2004, the Regional Director of the NT Department of Community Development, Sport and Cultural Affairs wrote a background paper on Creek Camp for the NT Government's southern, Alice Springs-based, Regional Executive Co-ordination Committee. In that background paper, she argued that the 'conditions of people living in Creek Camp' was a 'complex issue' to which the NT Government needed 'to develop a measured and coordinated long-term response' in 'partnership with the families at Creek Camp' and with ACGC.¹¹ It was in an attempt to find out, one year on, how this response was developing that one of us interviewed nine senior NT Government officials based in Alice Springs. These officials covered the areas of responsibility of health, housing, education, lands, liquor and gaming licensing, power and water, police and local government. They also included an officer of the Department of Chief Minister concerned with central coordination.

The most important insight to emerge from these interviews with senior NT Government officials was that the tenure of Creek Camp as 'unallocated crown land' was a major impediment to the provision of reticulated water and electricity services there, let alone any building development. Indeed, on the basis of these interviews we reported to Council in May 2006 that for such reticulated services to become a possibility at Creek Camp, some organisation, such as ACGC, would probably have to apply for and acquire an 'appropriate title' over the land, such as a perpetual or term 'crown lease'.

Because Creek Camp is located on 'unallocated crown land' and the prospects for providing buildings or even reticulated services there seem slight, most NT Government officials we interviewed were more focussed on what could be done to encourage residents to move on from Creek Camp. The most

¹¹ Andre Burgess, 'Background Paper – Creek Camp at Ti Tree' (NT Department of Community Development, Sport and Cultural Affairs, November 2004).

commonly identified initiative here was the planned provision of a number of aged care accommodation units in Ti Tree, funded partly by the Commonwealth and partly by the NT. However as we noted in our May 2006 report, planning for this was still uncertain and hence any addressing of Creek Camp issues through it was some way off. We also noted in that report that consultation with elderly Creek Camp residents may reveal varying and not always positive levels of interest in the option of aged care accommodation units in Ti Tree. As it has turned out in 2006, the inter-governmental aspects of these plans have proven intractable and the identified Commonwealth aged care money is now being used for the provision of a couple of respite care accommodation units adjacent to ACGC's aged care day centre. While these respite aged care units may be of occasional assistance to Creek Camp's elderly residents, they will not provide them with alternative, longer term accommodation options.

On the housing front more generally, we ascertained from these interviews with NT Government officials that at the end of 2005 Territory Housing owned and managed 11 residences in Ti Tree, nine of which were in the government employees housing pool and two of which were in the public housing pool. We also ascertained that there could be movement of residences between these pools, and that to the extent that there had been such movement in recent years, it had probably been from public housing into government employee housing. This was due to NT Government departments attempting to build up their numbers of employees in Ti Tree and to local Aboriginal residents sometimes vacating dwellings due to difficulties managing their tenancies with Territory Housing. Perhaps more importantly, we ascertained that there had been no applications for public housing in Ti Tree in recent years and that consequently there had been no recent building of public housing in the town. As a result of our study, however, one application for public housing in Ti Tree was lodged, with our assistance, by the one group of Creek Camp residents who had explicitly expressed interest in living in a house in town in our April 2005 survey.

It may seem perverse that there would be no recent applications for public housing in Ti Tree when Creek Camp appears to have had a significant number of residents over recent years. This could be explained in part by Territory Housing's rather passive approach to applications, waiting for applicants to come to it rather than actively seeking them out. Our experience of helping that one group of Creek Camp residents with such an application suggested that it was, for them, a somewhat daunting administrative process which they would have been unlikely to attempt on their own. However, the lack of recent applications for public housing in Ti Tree could also in part be explained by Indigenous people knowing, from both past and present experience, that public housing tenancies in Ti Tree can put people under pressure and be quite hard to manage.

It is clearly very difficult to be one of the few Aboriginal people housed in Ti Tree, while countrymen and family members either lack housing altogether or only have access to community housing located further away from

services in outlying Aboriginal living areas. This difficulty applies not only to public housing but also to government employee housing, when local Aboriginal people do occasionally access this. To a lesser extent it also even applies to the two community houses owned by ACGC west of the Council works yard, as evidenced by the fact that two of the ACGC employees living in Creek Camp had previously lived in one of these houses.

As residential land tenure does not so directly affect their service provision functions, interviewed NT Government officials in areas of responsibility such as health, education and policing seemed to have a somewhat easier task relating to Creek Camp. Residents from Creek Camp can come to the school or the health clinic, just like anyone else. Indeed one of the advantages of living in Creek Camp is that these services are within daily walking distance. Staff from the school, health clinic and police station can also easily visit and contact people living in Creek Camp if they need to. Also, as we pointed out in one of our reports, being a public place in a town within two kilometres of a licensed alcohol outlet actually gives Creek Camp a convenient, built-in alcohol management mechanism. Under the NT's so-called 'two kilometre' law, drinking alcohol in such a place is forbidden. With the police station less than a kilometre from Creek Camp and police surveillance of the area fairly easily achieved, drinking of alcohol in Creek Camp does not seem to be a major problem. We noted in our reports that there was a general understanding among NT Government officials that Creek Camp was not a drinkers camp and that, in fact, there seemed to be times when people used it as a refuge from trouble caused by drinking in other places.

Clearly, NT Government officials had a variety of understandings of Creek Camp and approaches to it, depending on their particular service responsibilities. Most accepted the long-term reality of Aboriginal people camping there, both in the past and into the future. Most regarded Creek Camp residents as among their general clientele, though in some instances like housing adopted a rather passive approach. However in the areas of land and reticulated services, there was clear resistance to the idea of formally recognising and servicing Creek Camp and its residents, which we will return to later.

IV Residents of the More Formally Constructed Dwellings in Ti Tree

Our third set of interviews, in February 2006, was with residents of the 35 or so more formally constructed dwellings in Ti Tree. We interviewed 16 such residents, three of whom were local Aboriginal people. Another two were from nearby areas of the NT and had family connections in Ti Tree, which had seen them come and go from the area over the years in conjunction with employment opportunities. Our other 11 interviewees were essentially non-locals who had come to Ti Tree because of employment opportunities. Some of these interviewees had been in Ti Tree for as long as five, or even 10 years, but the majority had been there for briefer periods of a year or three, or even in a

couple of instances just down to a couple of weeks. Some of these 11 saw themselves as staying in Ti Tree for a substantial number of years to come, but most thought they would move on within the next few years through the termination or further development of their employment opportunities.

Three of these interviewees from Ti Tree's more formally constructed residences thought that Creek Camp should *not* be serviced either with reticulated water, or electricity, and definitely not with buildings. These interviewees were aware of vacant houses in ACGC's three outlying wards of Yanginj, Woolla and Anyungunba, all about 50 km out from Ti Tree, which they thought Creek Camp residents should use if they wanted housing (see Map 2).¹² However, the vast majority of our interviewees from the more formally constructed residences of Ti Tree were supportive of the idea that at least reticulated water should be supplied to Creek Camp. Some noted that people had lived in Creek Camp for many years and did not look like moving on, so it seemed only sensible and prudent to provide water there. Most also thought that buildings and electricity in Creek Camp would be okay, but many emphasised that it should be up to the residents of Creek Camp themselves to decide what they wanted.

Our interviews with these residents of Ti Tree's more formally constructed dwellings also asked about the possibility of building houses in Ti Tree's more formal subdivisions to accommodate Creek Camp residents. This too elicited a range of responses. One interviewee noted the restricted number of available serviced blocks of land in Ti Tree. Another noted the rather slowly developing plans to build aged care accommodation units close to the aged care day centre, but wondered whether people from Creek Camp would find this attractive. Most interviewees returned to the point that it was up to the residents of Creek Camp themselves to articulate what they wanted. But there was clear majority support among our interviewees for built accommodation for Creek Camp residents either in Creek Camp or in Ti Tree town, if that was what Creek Camp residents sought.

V Ideas for Further Action and ACGC Responses

At the end of our second report to Council in May 2006 we identified some ideas for further action by ACGC. We noted that ACGC was already providing mobile aged care services to Creek Camp residents and suggested that there was no reason in principle why they could not also provide other mobile services, such as rubbish collection. We suggested that ACGC could use its newly acquired workforce under the Community Development

¹² As well as Yanginj, Woolla and Anyungunba, which have all been unoccupied during the period we have been working with ACGC, there are also two other ACGC wards about 50 km out from Ti Tree. These are Alyuen to the south and Wilora to the north. Both seem more successful at retaining a resident population and this may be related to their proximity to the Stuart Highway and to nearby roadhouses for basic store services. ACGC also has two wards about 150 km from Ti Tree, which operate more like autonomous communities. These are Engawala to the southeast and Laramba to the southwest (see Map 2).

Employment Projects (CDEP) scheme to run a transport service between Nturiya and Ti Tree, and possibly also Pmara Jutunta, in order to give residents of these outlying settlements both access to services in Ti Tree and a way of returning to their residences soon thereafter. We suggested that ACGC could also attempt to increase the housing supply in Ti Tree, Nturiya and Pmara Jutunta, both through obtaining grant funding for Indigenous community housing and through supporting people to apply for public housing in Ti Tree. In both these latter instances, however, we also noted that while these measures may lessen the use of Creek Camp they would not totally address the wide variety of reasons why people camped there. Hence, we also argued that it was important for Council to think about what could be done in Creek Camp itself. We argued that if Council was interested in providing reticulated services or dwellings in Creek Camp it would need to apply for some appropriate form of tenure over the land on which Creek Camp is situated. We noted that this would be a major initiative for ACGC which would be complex to execute, gaining considerable support from both Creek Camp and other Ti Tree residents but also meeting with some concerns and opposition. We also noted that there would be complex native title issues to deal with, as well as town planning and funding concerns.

Council's immediate response to these ideas for further action at its May 2006 meeting was to place a standing item on its agenda paper inviting an officer of the NT Department of Planning and Infrastructure to come and talk to them about land tenure and reticulated services. That invitation has not at the time of writing yet been taken up, but in the meantime a number of further responses have also emerged. First, ACGC began to run a daily transport service between Ti Tree, Nturiya and Pmara Jutunta, using some of its newly acquired CDEP workforce. This was partly in response to the Creek Camp Study but also due to the fact that the store at Pmara Jutunta has recently closed and so residents there are now also obliged to shop in Ti Tree or further afield, similarly to Nturiya.¹³ Second, Council has accepted grant funding for two new community houses to be built at Pmara Jutunta and its Social Services Manager has continued to explore ideas for developing aged care accommodation in Ti Tree, including through the possibility of public housing applications. Hence, over a period of three or four months after our second report, ACGC could be seen as responding positively to three out of four of our ideas for further action. The only one that was not taken up is the idea of providing mobile services beyond aged care to Creek Camp, like garbage collection.

VI Northern Territory Government Responses and the Third Report

When one of us and the Chairman of ACGC delivered copies of our first two Creek Camp reports back to interviewed NT Government officials in late

¹³ We understand that this bus service has since ceased to operate due to a lack of patronage and other demands on ACGC vehicles.

May 2006, we were met with some diverse responses. One, from the Department of Chief Minister, was an invitation to make a presentation on the work to the monthly meeting of the southern Regional Executive Coordination Committee in late July. This Committee comprises the senior NT Government officials in Central Australia from about a dozen departments and statutory agencies and included four or five of our interviewees from the previous December. Another response, from the Department of Planning and Infrastructure, was to suggest that our argument that there would need to be land tenure change in order to provide reticulated services at Creek Camp was not quite correct. An option was now identified, which involved the provision of basic reticulated services on crown land under 'licence' or 'permissive occupancy' without land tenure change. The identification of this option led to our third brief report to ACGC in July 2006, clarifying and amending the concluding argument of our second report.¹⁴ We commended this new option to Council for its consideration, as possibly both avoiding complex native title issues and balancing the desires and concerns of Creek Camp residents about development. Reticulated services under licence, we argued, might initially at least be a better option for balancing diverse stakeholder interests in Creek Camp than either the current situation or land tenure change.

At the late July meeting of the NT Government's southern Regional Executive Coordination Committee, we encountered a somewhat different response again from the Department of Planning and Infrastructure. In response to our presentation, their representative now noted that they were not entirely comfortable with the idea of linking reticulated services for Creek Camp to land tenure; as a choice between land tenure change as a forerunner to services or more basic services under licence without land tenure change. It was now suggested that the issue was more a matter of government policy relating to the establishment of new Aboriginal 'community living areas', particularly in towns. The suggestion was that existing policy was against the further establishment of such community living areas and that if this policy was to be altered or overridden in Ti Tree, a direction to that effect would have to come 'right from the top'. In line with this understanding of existing NT Government policy, the Department of Planning and Infrastructure outlined, as a way of dealing with Creek Camp, a proposal for the extension of the compact residential subdivision on the eastern side of Ti Tree by up to another thirty serviced blocks. The major issues which the Department foresaw with these plans were cost and native title extinguishment. Whereas land development and servicing would cost in excess of \$100 000 per block, the market value of serviced blocks in Ti Tree was estimated at less than \$10 000. This shortfall, it was argued, would test the Martin Government's resolve to do something about Creek Camp.

In response to this proposal, we noted that even uneconomic development of the compact eastern residential sub-division would not address many of the usage patterns of Creek Camp that our study had revealed and that

¹⁴ Sander and Holcombe, above n 2, Third Report.

therefore the NT Government also needed to be thinking about what could be done in Creek Camp itself. However this only elicited a repetition that existing government policy was not to recognize new Aboriginal community living areas in towns. It also elicited a fairly firm clarification that reticulated services provided under licence to Creek Camp would only be reluctantly accepted rather than actively supported and would have to be very basic; perhaps no more than a single tap.¹⁵ One final firm clarification was that the land administration within the Department of Planning and Infrastructure could, of course, respond to pressure for services at Creek Camp by initiating processes to remove unauthorised residents from unallocated Crown land.

This late July meeting of the NT Government's southern Regional Executive Coordination Committee was, in many ways, a fairly robust conclusion to the Ti Tree Creek Camp Study which also brought the Study full circle. It clarified that, at least in the view of the Department of Planning and Infrastructure, problems surrounding reticulated services at Creek Camp were not so much legal land tenure issues as policy issues relating to Aboriginal community living areas in towns or, as they are more commonly known, town camps. This clarification focuses attention back at the top of NT Government, on relationships between Cabinet Ministers and departmental views of existing government policy. Ministers and Cabinets can, of course, change government policies, or choose not to follow them in particular circumstances. However in the absence of such explicit directions from the top, departmental officials will generally simply continue to act on their own established understandings of existing government policy. This is what the Department of Planning and Infrastructure is doing in relation to Ti Tree Creek Camp.

VII A Contribution to Good Governance

Why and how might this study be seen as a contribution to good governance? Good governance for Indigenous communities is often discussed in terms of structures which have legitimacy and support in those communities.¹⁶ Against this tendency, one of us has previously argued that good governance for Indigenous communities can be as much about processes as structures.¹⁷ Our approach to governance in the Ti Tree Creek Camp Study, and in our work more generally with ACGC, has been primarily about process. We have taken the structure of ACGC largely as a given, though not

¹⁵ Earlier discussion with The Department of Planning and Infrastructure around this option had suggested that more substantial ablution facilities could be provided under licence or permissive occupancy and it was on this basis that we commended this option to Council for its consideration in our third report. The spread out nature of Creek Camp suggests that a single tap there would be of limited value.

¹⁶ See, Garth Nettheim, Gary Meyers, and Donna Craig, *Indigenous People and Governance Structures: A Comparative Analysis of Land and Resource Management Rights* (2002).

¹⁷ Will Sanders, 'Thinking About Indigenous Community Governance' (CAEPR Discussion Paper No 262, Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research, The Australian National University, 2004) ch 3.

uncritically, and have attempted to work within it. We have sought to identify issues of importance or concern to Council and to work with them on possibly progressing those issues.

Progressing the Creek Camp issue has thus far involved a number of different processes. The first has been to identify and mutually inform a number of diverse stakeholder interests ranged around the issue. The most important and directly affected stakeholders in this issue are, of course, the Creek Camp residents themselves. Beyond them, there are the other residents of Ti Tree and the Councillors, representing not only these two sets of Ti Tree residents but also the residents of ACGC's outlying wards. Cutting across these groups, there is also a sense that potential native title holders of Ti Tree's unallocated crown land may constitute a distinct, or distinctive interest. Further afield, there are the various NT Government departments which, as we have seen above, have a variety of approaches to Creek Camp. There are also various members of the NT Legislative Assembly and the Martin Labor Government who might be designated as more distant stakeholders. Even further in the background, there are various Commonwealth government office holders and agencies that have a variety of interests and responsibilities in relation to a place like Creek Camp.¹⁸

That what we were doing in this study was mutually informing some of these diverse stakeholder interests became apparent to us when we gave our first report to Council in June 2005. That report was largely about who lived in Creek Camp, and how and why they did so. There was something rather silly about telling Council about this. All Councillors at the time of the study were local Aboriginal people and a few were Creek Camp residents. The other Councillors also knew only too well who among their countrymen and families were living there. In retrospect, the importance of our first report was that it presented information about Creek Camp residents to NT Government officials in ways which they could relate to. It quantified numbers of people in Creek Camp through a formal survey, it clarified that some people had lived there a long time and had nowhere else they regarded as home and it also clarified that other people who did have houses elsewhere sometimes saw Creek Camp as a useful place for accessing services or avoiding trouble in those other home places. So there were population numbers, residential histories, service access and community order issues to which NT Government officials in a variety of different departments could relate.

Our second report in May 2006 continued this process of informing NT Government officials. By then the study gave population numbers over time, better descriptions of diversity among the camps, and better elucidation of issues around permanent residence, access to services, mobility and the avoidance of trouble. But this second report was also more genuinely informative for Council. It told Councillors some things which they were less

¹⁸ One reviewer of an earlier version of this paper noted that our list of stakeholders, while ostensibly descriptive, also entails normative judgments about who possesses a relevant interest. Identifying stakeholders is, therefore, contestable and itself part of the political process.

likely to know from everyday life in Ti Tree and the outlying Anmatjere wards. It told them about the attitudes of other Ti Tree residents in the more formally constructed dwellings, with whom they might not share quite such intimate daily interactions.¹⁹ Our second report also told Councillors about the attitudes and approaches of various NT Government officials and, hence, who would need to be worked with, or persuaded, in what way in order to progress Creek Camp issues.

A second aspect of good governance in the Ti Tree Creek Camp Study was the identification of ideas for change, in the form of ideas for further action by ACGC. These included some quite simple ideas which ACGC could and in some cases subsequently did implement on its own. However, they also included some much more ambitious ideas which would involve ACGC working through some quite complex processes of negotiation with other stakeholders. Changing the land tenure at Creek Camp, as a prelude to the development of services and buildings, was clearly a very major idea for change which would take an enormous amount of work for ACGC and others to progress. The subsequent idea of ACGC providing basic reticulated services to Creek Camp under licence or permissive occupancy without land tenure change was somewhat more modest, but still a major idea for change which would involve considerable further work for both ACGC and other stakeholders.

Beyond mutually informing diverse interests and identifying ideas for change, a third aspect of good governance in the Ti Tree Creek Camp Study was clarifying more precisely the obstacles of change. This process became particularly evident between the second and third reports to Council and also subsequently when the Chairman of ACGC and one of us made the presentation to the late July meeting of the NT Government's southern Regional Executive Coordination Committee. In effect, a series of discussions was necessary in order to draw out more clearly the precise positioning of the NT Department of Planning and Infrastructure in relation to land tenure, reticulated servicing and town camp policy issues. This process of clarifying obstacles to change should also continue into the future when the NT Department of Planning and Infrastructure responds to ACGC's standing invitation to come and talk to them about Creek Camp and land tenure issues. It could also continue by Ministers within the Martin government becoming more precisely aware of the policy positioning of the Department of Planning and Infrastructure in relation to the establishment of new Aboriginal community living areas in towns. Ministers in the Martin government were all directly exposed to the Creek Camp situation through a Cabinet meeting held in Ti Tree in November 2005. So if this issue does ever reach the Cabinet table, that visit to Ti Tree and our study should at least provide some basis for informed discussion.²⁰

¹⁹ Here it could be noted that only one of the current 16 Councillors lives in a formally constructed dwelling in Ti Tree.

²⁰ In late August 2006, Peter Toyne resigned for health reasons as both the local member of the NT Legislative Assembly and as a Minister in the Martin Labor government. The new

It may, of course, be that in any future Cabinet discussion of the Ti Tree situation, the Ministers of the Martin government will endorse the current policy positioning of the Department of Planning and Infrastructure that there are to be no new Aboriginal community living areas in urban areas. But it is also possible that Ministers will choose through their deliberations to vary that understanding of policy, or in the particular circumstances of Ti Tree not to follow it. Either way the process of clarifying the policy positioning of these senior NT bureaucratic and political actors could itself be seen as a significant contribution to good governance. Clarifying such positioning is just a normal part of holding power to account in a modern democratic system.²¹

In ending by focussing on the policy positioning of senior NT bureaucratic and political actors, we do not mean to imply that this is by any means the only obstacle to change at Creek Camp. Even if this policy positioning was clarified in a way which permitted Creek Camp's formal recognition and development, there would still be very significant obstacles to change to be negotiated within the Anmatjere region. We noted previously, for example, that there was in fact considerable caution and conservatism among both Creek Camp residents and ACGC members around the idea of formalising and developing Creek Camp, due to worries that it could prove too attractive to current residents of places like Nturiya and Pmara Jutunta and that the positive aspects of what already exists informally might possibly be lost. We have also mentioned in passing the issue of native title extinguishment which may accompany formalisation. In this regard, it needs to be noted that not all Creek Camp residents claim to be native title holders and there are others living elsewhere who are often mentioned as possible native title holders of the area. So even if formalisation was to proceed, there would be complex issues to deal with about the different interests of Creek Camp residents, native title holders and current residents of outlying Aboriginal communities. The idea of recognising and formalising Creek Camp, as a way of servicing it better, is therefore no simple solution. Rather, it is a recipe for further local and regional governance challenges in an existing situation which, although in many ways inadequate, already has many positive aspects and strengths.

VIII Social Science and Good Governance

A reviewer of an earlier version of this paper encouraged us to explore a little more explicitly the relationship between our own social science research efforts and good governance. Were we, they asked, simply acting as 'an honest broker between interests that have difficulty making sense to each other' or was our work more a 'substitute' for 'self-representation' by both ACGC and Creek

local member is Karl Hampton, an Aboriginal football identity and former ministerial adviser of Toyne's. The Ministers who might participate in any future discussion of Creek Camp will not therefore be quite the same group as visited Ti Tree for that community Cabinet meeting in November 2005.

²¹ Richard Mulgan, *Holding Power to Account: Accountability in Modern Democracies* (2003).

Camp residents and hence ‘a patch job on imperfect governance’? If the latter, the reviewer asked, was social science playing this role ‘essential to improved governance’, or was such improvement possible in the absence of social science research?

What we have done in the Creek Camp Study is referred to by Lindblom as ‘probing’; a form of interactive inquiry through which participants in any society attempt to identify and ameliorate inadequate social situations, or unending social problems.²² Probing, Lindblom argues, is open to and engaged in by all. However, he also notes that social scientists and other functionaries can develop more honed probing skills. In the Creek Camp Study we have shown ACGC, and the NT Government, how we probe as social scientists in search of more refined understandings of existing social situations. The immediate hope of such probing is that these more refined understandings may open up new ways of viewing these social situations which may in turn help to change their inadequate aspects while also recognising their existing strengths. A more distant hope is also that some of the other players with whom we are engaged may also, through their involvement, develop and improve their own probing skills. This more distant hope is sometimes referred to as capacity building.

Hence, while it is true that what we have done in the Creek Camp Study is to some extent a ‘substitute’ for ‘self-representation’ by both ACGC and Creek Camp residents, and hence a ‘patch job on imperfect governance’, it is also true that ACGC, Creek Camp residents and the NT Government were all open to our involvement and were thus also agents themselves in that improved governance. While our role was somewhat more than just ‘honest broker’ between interests who were having ‘difficulty making sense to each other’, the role of social science in such processes should not be over-stated. The stakeholder interests we were dealing with did, in many ways, already understand each other quite well. They also understood quite well the nature of the unending social problem with which they were collectively grappling. What was perhaps missing among these stakeholders was a capacity for further inquiry which might just change ways of viewing the situation and open up new ways of proceeding. Further inquiry and changed positioning is, as Lindblom argues, the predominant way in which inadequate social situations are grappled with and progressed.²³

IX Transcending and Repeating history: Some Concluding Comments

Finally we would note that, were Creek Camp in the future to become formally recognised and serviced, this would in a sense be both transcending Ti Tree’s history of the last hundred or more years and also repeating the more recent history of the nearby larger urban centres of Alice Springs and Tennant

²² Charles E. Lindblom, *Inquiry and Change: The Troubled Attempt to Understand and Shape Society* (1990) 29–31.

²³ Ibid 6–7.

Creek. We will conclude by briefly explaining each of these suggestions.

Since its establishment as a telegraph station in the 1870s, Ti Tree has been a predominantly non-Indigenous residential settlement which has consistently attempted to hold Indigenous people at a distance, or only admitted them on a limited informal basis as in Creek Camp. Apart from needed Indigenous workers, the residential position preferred by non-Indigenous Ti Tree residents for local Aboriginal people during most, if not all of the twentieth century, has been out of town on surrounding pastoral stations. Before the establishment of the ACGC in 1993, the previous organisational guardian of Ti Tree town, the Ti Tree Progress Association, worked constantly and quite effectively to maintain this residential pattern. Since then, despite ACGC being a predominantly Indigenous Council, this established residential pattern has still largely persisted. Many non-Indigenous people in the region and beyond still regard Anmatjere's outlying wards on pastoral stations as the preferred residential position for Aboriginal people of this region. Aboriginal ownership of the former Ti Tree Station since the 1970s has not greatly changed this pattern, and indeed may even have served to reinforce it. Non-Indigenous opponents of Creek Camp development, or indeed of Indigenous residence in Ti Tree town more generally, can conveniently point to Aboriginal land only four kilometres away from the town centre in any direction.²⁴

There is thus a very long history of formally segregated Indigenous and non-Indigenous residence patterns in the Anmatjere region which would have to be transcended if Creek Camp was to be formally recognised and serviced. However, formalising Creek Camp could in some sense be seen as a middle ground alternative to breaking down this segregation, if compared with the idea of expanding Ti Tree's compact eastern residential subdivision. Whereas the latter would give Ti Tree's predominantly non-Indigenous residents lots of close, additional Aboriginal neighbours, the former would give Ti Tree a distinct Aboriginal neighbourhood. This distinct Aboriginal neighbourhood may be more in accord with both Indigenous and non-Indigenous residential preferences than the Department of Planning and Infrastructure's proposal for a single, expanded, compact eastern residential subdivision.

Another way of viewing the Creek Camp issue would be to say that the history of town camp establishment in Alice Springs to the south and Tennant Creek to the north, in the 1970s and 1980s, would need to be repeated in order for Creek Camp in Ti Tree to become formally recognised and serviced. Accounts of the development of those town camps in Alice Springs and Tennant Creek make very clear that their formal recognition involved highly contested political processes in which land rights claims were used by Aboriginal interests as effective bargaining tools.²⁵ One of these accounts also

²⁴ Ti Tree essentially sits at the centre of a five mile or eight kilometres square which was formally gazetted as a town only in 1981, but was previously reserved for telegraph and other purposes. This reservation and its location astride the Stuart Highway effectively made Ti Tree an open roadside town for many years before 1981.

²⁵ See, Michael Heppell and Julian J. Wigley, *Black Out in Alice: A History of the Establishment and Development of Town Camps in Alice Springs* (1981); Jeff Collmann,

notes that the formal establishment and recognition of town camps in the early to mid 1980s occurred against a background NT Government policy which embargoed the granting of land tenure change for town camps.²⁶ Hence, if Ti Tree Creek Camp were to be formally recognised, serviced and developed in the next few years, it would indeed be a very close repetition of town camp history in nearby parts of the NT from the 1980s.

Those accounts of the 1970s and 1980s in both Alice Springs and Tennant Creek also suggest that very single-minded organisations and individuals were almost entirely focused on these town camp recognition and development battles. By contrast, ACGC is a more general local governing body, whose involvement in the Creek Camp issue over the last two years has not been of this character. Rather, as we saw at the outset, ACGC's attention to the Creek Camp issue resulted from a letter of concern from its then local member of the NT Legislative Assembly, albeit a ministerial local member, and our chance presence as a team of governance researchers. Whether this rather more slight level of commitment and focus is enough to drive formal recognition of a new town camp only time will tell. It is also notable here that, after a rush in the 1980s, we are not aware of any new town camps being recognised in the NT in the last decade and a half. Ti Tree Creek Camp will over the next few years be an interesting test case of the formal recognition of new Aboriginal urban living areas in the early twenty first century. Was the recognition of town camps in the NT's urban areas just a phenomenon of the 1970s and 1980s or is it also a possibility in the twenty first century?

Fringe-Dwellers and Welfare: The Aboriginal Response to Bureaucracy (1988); Mary Edmunds, *Frontiers: Discourses of Development in Tennant Creek* (1995).

²⁶ Edmunds, *Ibid* 32–9.

Report to Anmatjere Community Government
Council
on Ti Tree Creek Camp

June 2005

By
Sarah Holcombe and Will Sanders
Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research
Australian National University
and
Desert Knowledge Cooperative Research Centre

1. Introduction.....	1
2. Length of Residence, Previous Residence, Other Residence	2
3. Living in Creek Camp: Attractions, Dislikes and Overall Assessment	3
4. Living in Creek Camp: Meeting Basic Needs	4
5. Future Residence and the Development of Creek Camp	5
6. Networks, Traditional Attachments, Mobility and Visitors.....	7
7. Conclusions.....	8
Map of Ti Tree showing Creek Camp (appendix 1).....	9
Creek Camp Questionnaires (appendix 2)	10

1. Introduction

1.1 At a meeting on March 30, 2005, Anmatjere Community Government Council decided that we should interview current and recent residents of Ti Tree Creek Camp and report back to it on findings. We drafted a questionnaire for interviews and developed this further in consultation with the Council. This questionnaire focused on length of residence at Creek Camp, the attractions and difficulties of living at Creek Camp relative to other places people had lived, the future of Creek Camp and people's preferred future residence (see appendix).

1.2 Over the next ten days we interviewed 32 people who were identified to us as current or recent residents of Creek Camp. Through identifying the co-residents of our interviewees, we arrived at an estimate of 102 current and recent residents of Creek Camp grouped, roughly into 13 camps (see map). These 102 residents were again roughly grouped into 43 core adult residents and 26 core child residents who seemed to be living at Creek Camp full-time or be spending more than half their nights there, plus 33 part-time residents, who seemed to be spending less than half their nights there. We noted 2 campsites which were currently vacant, but had clearly been lived in recently (see map). We also identified 22 visitors at Creek Camp at the time of our interviews.

1.3 What follows is a snapshot of Creek Camp gleaned from these 32 interviews. Most of the time we report findings relating to the camps, rather than individual interviews, though occasionally we point to differences between interviewees within camps. It should also be noted that what we identified as camps was also somewhat arbitrary and ranged in size from 2 to 19 people. Large camps were generally multi-generational extended families, while small camps were generally related individuals. The defining character of a camp was that it shared facilities, like a fire, shelter or water supplies.

1.4 To assist us in this research we employed two Anmatyerr speakers, both also Councilors, to introduce us to Creek Camp residents and assist in interpretation as necessary. These people acted as research facilitators and collaborators. We also paid

each interviewee to undertake the questionnaire, explaining that it was work for the Council.

2. Length of Residence, Previous Residence, Other Residence

2.1 Six of the 13 camps have a connection to Creek Camp that goes back many years, even to their parents and grandparent's generations. Some of the people in these camps appear to have been continuous residents, while others have moved around the region for work and other reasons, but returned in a pattern of circular mobility. Reflecting this, five of these camps could not identify a previous residence, while one identified having lived in a house in Ti Tree town. For these people Creek Camp and Ti Tree were clearly home.

2.2 Four of the camps have lived in Creek Camp for several years, but could still identify a previous residence. These included Willowra, Yanginj and Hanson River/ Petyale.

2.3 A third type of core resident has lived in Creek Camp for several months to approximately one year. There are two such camps, both identifying Willowra and associated outstations as their previous residence.

2.4 The final or thirteenth camp now only contains part-time residents. Members of this camp recently occupied houses at Nturiya, but still use and maintain their camp.

2.5 Nturiya was the only place identified by Creek Camp core residents as another current residence. Three camps had a house at Nturiya which they identified as their own. One camp had limited access to a house at Nturiya through family members who were also part-time residents in Creek Camp. The other nine camps had no other current residence.

3. Living in Creek Camp: Attractions, Dislikes and Overall Assessment

3.1 We asked people if they were attracted to living in Creek Camp because of various services listed in the questionnaire. This did appear to be a factor and the most often cited services were the store, followed by the health clinic, the school and the Council office and associated services such as Centrelink. One unlisted service identified by several camps was the Aged Care Service. The Stuart Highway as a transport link north and south was seen as a key attraction identified by three camps. Interestingly access to the pub was not identified as a key attraction.

3.2 One attraction which was not listed, but which a significant number of people mentioned, was proximity to family and other Aboriginal people for assistance and support. Another attraction, mentioned by nine camps, was that Creek Camp was a quiet and spacious place to live. For the two camps recently moved from Willowra, Creek Camp was a safe haven from community disputation.

3.3 We asked people if there were things they did not like about living in the Creek Camp. Three camps indicated that there was sometimes a bit of 'humbug' from drunks. One camp without access to a vehicle or assistance from close family indicated that lack of running water was a serious problem. Two teenagers (still of school age) both found Creek Camp a difficult place to live, citing lack of facilities and others of their own age to engage with. One of these teenagers, a young girl, stated that there was too much rubbish, too many dogs, not enough shade and that it was too far to walk to school, the store, etc.

3.4 In response to the overall assessment question, ten camps indicated that living in Creek Camp was good for them and, where they had one, that it was better than their previous residence. Most people reiterated the attractions of access to various services and to family, and Creek Camp being a quiet place to live. Within one of the camps, while an elderly lady said Creek Camp was good overall, her school-going granddaughter (as above) said it was bad overall.

4. Living in Creek Camp: Meeting Basic Needs

4.1 We asked a number of questions about access to water. All camps had a water gathering and storage system set up. This entailed numerous jerry cans, so that they would not have to undertake daily trips. Water would variously be accessed from the tap in the park between the Council office and the roadhouse and from family's houses in Ti Tree town or Nturiya. One camp with a vehicle drove to a bore about 5 kms away every few days to replenish their supply. This bore was said to have better quality water than Ti Tree.

4.2 Eleven of the 13 camps indicated that they received the boxed water from the Council. They stated that this was of help to them, particularly over summer. The two camps that didn't receive this water were those relatively recently arrived from Willowra.

4.3 All camps stated that running water would make it easier to live at Creek Camp.

4.4 In response to questions about toilet arrangements, 10 of the 13 camps told us that they routinely walked to the bush for their toilet needs, often varying their location. In three of the camps, however, elderly invalids were not able to do this. In one of these camps the person is driven to the bush, while in the other two they are picked up by the Aged Care Service and tend to use those facilities as far as possible. So for most people lack of toilet facilities was not regarded as a major 'problem'.

4.5 Although we didn't ask specifically about showering and personal hygiene, we noted a bush shower near one camp. We were also taken to the remnants of a bush shower 400 meters south from the most southerly camps. This was adjacent to a mains water tap which had been accessible in the recent past, but was now shut off. Camp residents appeared to be opportunistic with showers, using them at family's houses, the school, workplaces or, if old, the Aged Care Centre.

4.6 We asked people how they cook, store food and what access they had to lighting and electricity.

4.7 All camps cooked on open fires and this was not seen as problem. Fire was also used for heating in winter. Three of the camps had access to a trailer or utility for routinely collecting firewood. The other camps collected firewood on foot or if they were hunting and could fit it in their vehicle.

4.8 Lighting was by firelight, torchlight and moonlight.

4.9 Food storage in the camps was generally restricted to flour, tea and other non-perishables. Camps with access to a house at Nturiya had some other options. One camp shopped regularly for groceries in Alice Springs and stored food requiring refrigeration at Nturiya.

4.10 Two camps had generators, but these were not used for lighting, cooking or food storage. They were used for watching movies.

4.11 Eight of the 13 camps had ready access to a vehicle. Two camps had occasional vehicle access and 3 camps had no, or extremely limited vehicle access. One of these camps used a wheelbarrow for food and water collection, while 2 other camps used a pram as a makeshift water and general goods cart.

4.12 Those with vehicle access indicated that it made living in Creek Camp much easier. But one camp, in particular, without vehicle access, indicated that a key attraction of living at Creek Camp was that services were within walking distance.

5. Future Residence and the Development of Creek Camp

5.1 We asked people where they might like to live in the future. Ten of the 13 camps stated that they wanted to live in Creek Camp in the future, (including the camp that in April only had part-time residents). Two of the camps plan to return to their home country of Willowra as soon as possible in the future. In response to a question

specifically about interest in living in Ti Tree town-ship, only one camp expressed a desire to relocate.

5.2 The ten camps that indicated their preference to remain in Creek Camp, rather than move into Ti Tree town-ship, cited life-style differences with non-Indigenous residents as a major reason. Such differences include having large families, lots of visitors and lots of dogs. The spaciousness of Creek Camp is seen as contrasting with the more enclosed, or 'boxed-up', environment of houses in town.

5.3 We also asked whether people thought Creek Camp should be developed with buildings, water and electricity to something like the town camps in Alice Springs or Tennant Creek. All camps thought that reticulated water and ablution blocks would be a useful development, but beyond this there were differences of opinion.

5.4 Concern was raised by 3 camps that the area would become noisier if it was developed like other town camps and there was general concern for preserving Creek Camp as a quiet retreat. However, most camps were interested in dwellings of some description, on the understanding that these would be widely spaced to assist in maintaining the current domestic order.

5.5 Six camps expressed a desire for simple lockable houses, which might include a storage area, other internal areas, verandahs and an ablution block. Two camps expressed a desire for a more mainstream style brick house, while in another camp interviewees were divided between these two options. One camp was unsure what sort of dwelling they would like, or how they might see the future. The two Willowra camps did not see themselves being in Creek camp in the longer term, but were supportive of the idea of development. The camp that wished to relocate to a house in Ti Tree town-ship was also supportive of development, though not wishing to remain in Creek Camp.

5.6 Some camps also raised the issue of fencing as a way of managing the new demands a house may place on domestic order.

6. Networks, Traditional Attachments, Mobility and Visitors

6.1 Our interviews with residents ranged a little more widely than the formal questionnaire, covering issues about family and country. We became aware of links between, as well as within, camps. The camps are a network of families, through both marriage and shared descent. No camp was without family support from at least one other camp. One indicator of this, as happened earlier this year, is that when a person passes away in one of the camps, the affected family may not necessarily leave Creek Camp, but may move to another camp along the creek.

6.2 We became aware that members of 6 camps appeared to have traditional attachments to land on the surrounding Ahakeye Land Trust and that the majority of camp residents spoke Anmatyerr as their first language, followed by Warlpiri and English.

6.3 Another issue which emerged from wider discussion was regional circular mobility. Members of the six camps which had connections to Ti Tree going back to their parents or grandparents generations had moved around the region for work and other purposes, but had returned to Ti Tree in a pattern of circular mobility that suggested Creek Camp is both home and a convenient central location. Other patterns of frequent circular mobility are evident among people with houses at Nturiya and those who still relate to outlying communities such as Yanginj and Adelaide Bore.

6.4 The 22 visitors we identified in Creek Camp at the time of our interviews had come there from Yuendumu, Willowra, Epenarra and Pmara Jutunta. Some were only staying for a day or overnight, but others had already stayed considerably longer. They all identified somewhere else clearly as home and intended to return there in the near future.

7. Conclusions

7.1 Many residents of Creek Camp have long-term and deep attachments to the place. Even though people have been and are highly mobile, there is a continuity of returning to Creek Camp. For many residents the place is home.

7.2 Ti Tree as a service centre also acts as magnet. It offers many services which people wish to access, such as the store, health clinic, school, aged care service, Centrelink and Council office, plus ready access to the Stuart Highway.

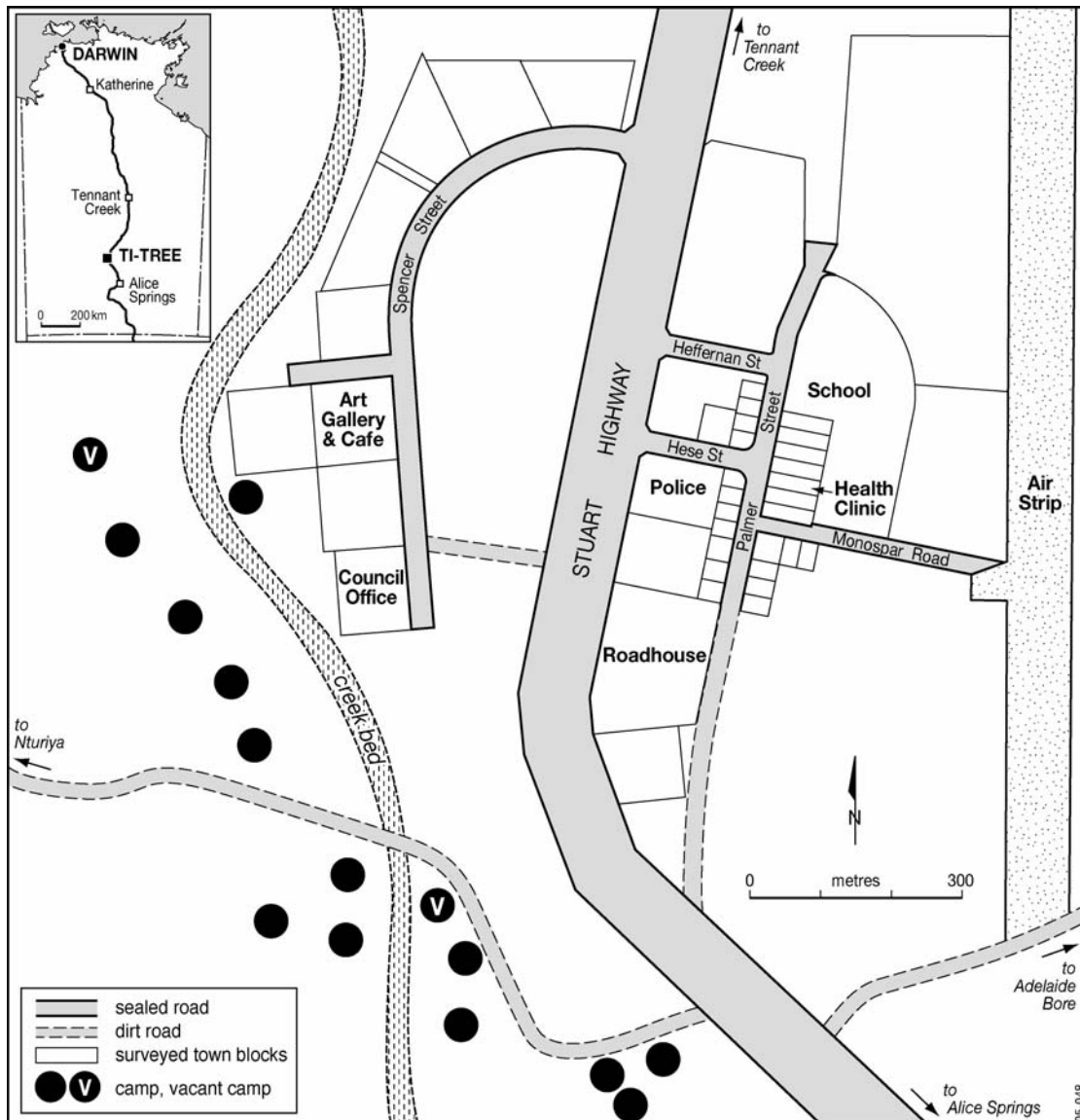
7.3 Creek camp is also a spacious and quiet living environment close to the bush. It allows 'room to move' for big families and their dogs, away from but close to the more regulated town centre.

7.4 It would appear that a stable residential pattern is established at Creek Camp. The significant majority of core Creek Camp residents wish to continue living there in the future.

7.5 All camps stated that reticulated water and ablution facilities would make it easier to live at Creek Camp, but there was some difference of opinion over development of dwellings.

7.6 All of the above factors suggest that, if it is left to the actions of its residents, Creek Camp will continue to exist in something like its current form for the foreseeable and indefinite future.

Map of Ti Tree showing Creek Camp (appendix 1)



Note that access tracks to the camps are not shown.

Creek Camp Questionnaires (appendix 2)

Ti Tree Creek Camp Questionnaire – April 2005

Hello, I'm Will Sanders/ Sarah Holcombe from the Australian National University and the Desert Knowledge Cooperative Research Centre. We're doing some work with the Anmatjere Community Government Council on issues of concern to people relating to service delivery and governance in the Anmatjerr region. We are currently trying to talk to people about Creek Camp in Ti Tree – including to all its residents. This questionnaire is designed for people who are living in Creek Camp, or have done so in the recent past. We'd like to understand what attracts people to Creek Camp at present and how they might see Creek Camp being in the future. Our report will discuss in general terms what people have said to us about Creek Camp, but it will not link particular comments with individual people. Would you be willing to talk to us? If you don't want to answer any of the questions just say so, and you can withdraw from the interview at any time.

How long have you been living here in Ti Tree Creek Camp?

- a few days to couple of weeks
- a few weeks to a couple of months
- several months
- over a year
- several years

Do you live here with other family members? Yes / No

If yes, how many family members and what are there relationships to you?

Is there some other place you and these other family members sometimes live, as well as Creek Camp? Yes / No

If yes, what is the name of that place?

At present do you live mainly HERE or mainly at that other place?

Mainly HERE / mainly THERE

What attracts you to living here at Creek Camp? Is it...

- access to the store
- access to the school
- access to the health clinic
- access to sports facilities
- access to Council chambers
- access to the pub

- access to transport links
- other – please list

Which of these attractions is most important to you?

Are there things you don't like about living at Creek Camp? Yes / No
If yes, please list.....

How do you usually get the water in Creek Camp?

Was the weekly bottled water service over summer of help to you? Yes / No

Is the lack of running water at Creek Camp a problem for you? Yes / No

What toilet arrangements do you generally rely on?

Is the lack of toilets at Creek Camp a problem for you? Yes / No

How do you cook?

Do you store any food that needs cooling? Yes/ No. If yes, how?

What light do you have at night time?

Is the lack of electricity at Creek Camp a problem for you? Yes/ No

Do you have access to a car? Yes/No

(If no), Is that one of the reasons you live here? Yes/ No
(If yes), Does that make a difference? How?

Overall would you say that living at Creek Camp is good for you, or bad? Good/ Bad
What are the main things that make Creek Camp good (or bad) for you?

How does Creek Camp compare with other places you live, or have lived in the past?
Is it better or worse, and why? Better / Worse

Do you think you will be living at Creek Camp for a long time in the future, or just a short time? Long/ short.

What might encourage you to live elsewhere in the future? And where might that be?

What might make you to stay at Creek Camp in the future?

Where else might you like to live in the future? (List if more than one)

Do you think Creek Camp should be developed with buildings, water and electricity to something like the town camps in Alice Springs or Tennant Creek? Yes/ No / Maybe

If it was, would you want to live here? Yes / No

Would you be interested in living in public or community housing in Ti Tree, even if this involved some higher costs like rent and electricity? Yes/ No / Maybe.

I will not put your name on this form, but I would like to record your Age and Sex?
M / F, 20s, 30s, 40s, 50s, 60s

Is there anything else you would like to say to us about living in Creek Camp?

Thank you for talking with us. Here is a card which has our University contact details on the front and those of our Human Research Ethics Committee on the back. If you have any concerns about this research please feel free to contact us, that Committee or the Anmatjere CGC, who are also partners in the research. Thanks again for participating.

Second Report to Anmatjere Community Government Council on Ti Tree Creek Camp

May 2006

By
Will Sanders and Sarah Holcombe
Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research
Australian National University
and
Desert Knowledge Cooperative Research Centre



1. Introduction.....	1
2. Creek Camp Residents: Numbers over the year and Servicing.....	1
3. Other Ti Tree Residents: Characteristics, Experience and Attitudes.....	4
4. Northern Territory Government Officials.....	5
5. Ideas for <i>further</i> action by ACGC.....	8
6. References.....	11
Appendix 1 – Maps of Ti Tree showing Creek Camp.....	12
Appendix 2 – Questionnaires.....	16

1. Introduction

1.1 In June 2005, we reported to the Anmatjere Community Government Council (ACGC) on a survey we had conducted of current and recent residents of Ti Tree Creek Camp in April 2005 (Holcombe and Sanders 2005). This report summarises some findings of that earlier report and adds to them a number of subsequent findings arising from return visits to Creek Camp in June and September 2005 and February 2006. It also reports on a survey conducted with residents of the roughly 35 more formally constructed residences in Ti Tree in February 2006, regarding their understandings and attitudes towards Creek Camp (see maps in Appendix 1).

1.2 A second aspect of this report is that it recounts findings from interviews conducted with senior Northern Territory Government officials in Alice Springs in December 2005 on their understandings and approaches in relation to Creek Camp. The report also draws on more informal discussions with various ACGC members over the year. The final section of this report raises ideas for future action relating to Creek Camp which ACGC may wish to consider in light of all the above findings.

1.3 This study has been undertaken as part of the Australian National University's commitment to the Desert Knowledge Cooperative Research Centre and also as part of a Linkage Project with Reconciliation Australia on Indigenous Community Governance, funded in part by the Australian Research Council. As well as the ACGC, the Northern Territory Department of Local Government, Housing and Sport and the Central Land Council in Alice Springs have been helpful supporters of the study.

2. Creek Camp Residents: Numbers over the year and Servicing

2.1 Through our 32 interviews in April 2005, we identified roughly 100 current and recent residents of Creek Camp grouped into 13 camps, plus another 22 visitors who were present in Creek Camp at that time. Only about 60 of these current and recent residents were present in Creek Camp in April 2005, which together with the visitors gave Creek Camp a population present of a little over 80 people (see April 2005 map, Appendix 1). The larger number of residents, recent residents and visitors identified in

April 2005 at just over 120 could be thought of as a recent 'service population' of Creek Camp (Cook 1996).

2.2 In June 2005, when we returned to Creek Camp with our first report, the number of people present was down to about 45 in 8 camps (see June 2005 map, Appendix 1). There were no visitors present and just two new residents were present who had not been identified in the service population back in April. In contrast to April, when people in four camps noted that they had access to houses at Nturiya 17 kms to the west, none of the people present in June had access to such houses. These 45 residents seemed to represent a fairly hard core 'winter' population with little or no access to housing outside Creek Camp. It was also notable that this core of winter residents was in the southern- and northern-most camps, with a number of camps in the middle being vacant (see June 2005 map, Appendix 1).

2.3 In September 2005, numbers present in Creek Camp were back up to over 80, and possibly even 100 people. This was partly due to a recent death at Nturiya and people moving away from there for a while. This resulted in large numbers of people being present in the two camps immediately north of the Nturiya road, which had been vacant back in June (compare June 2005 and September 2005 maps, Appendix 1). These camps, which are adjacent to the end of an informal road system to Nturiya used by unregistered vehicles, seem to have a role as a useful, ongoing, if sporadic 'in-town' presence for people living at Nturiya.

2.4 There had also been some re-arrangement of camps south of the Nturiya road and east of the Hanson River creek bed by September 2005, due to a recent death in one of these camps. One new camp had developed at the south-eastern extremity of Creek Camp and another slightly expanded, while two camps slightly further west had been left vacant, or abandoned, as a result of the death (see September 2005 map, Appendix 1).

2.5 In February 2006, the number of residents in Creek Camp was down to 25 people in 6 camps, though one night in the week we were in town there was also a group of 7 visitors present who were avoiding some trouble at Pmara Jutunta (see February 2006 map, Appendix 1). This core 'summer' population was lower than the 45 core

‘winter’ population from the previous June due to one large camp with links to Willowra returning out that way in the interim. These 25 core ‘summer’ residents had all been present in Creek Camp throughout the period of our study from April 2005 to February 2006. They included four people who worked for ACGC, one other employed person, about ten elderly or disabled people and a small number of children and carers.

2.6 In our previous report we noted the length and depth of attachment to Creek Camp of many of its residents. We also noted an apparently fairly stable residential pattern, with many camps quite well established and many people seeing themselves as continuing to live in Creek Camp for some considerable time in the future. A year on, we would repeat these views, though with some refinement. It appears to be the northern and south-eastern most camps within Creek Camp which are the most stable and constantly occupied residences for people. In the middle of Creek Camp near the Nturiya road, there are a number of camps which are more occasionally occupied by people who also have access to houses at Nturiya, but who for one reason or another find Creek Camp a useful and convenient place to be from time to time.

2.7 In our previous report we noted how people serviced themselves with water in Creek Camp through the use of numerous jerry cans. We also noted that during the summer of 2004-2005 ACGC employees had delivered boxed water to all but two of the camps. In our brief questionnaire with Creek Camp residents in February 2006 (see Appendix 2), we ascertained that this boxed water service was not occurring in the summer of 2005-2006 and that people were totally reliant for water on their jerry can systems. We had also, by this time, come to appreciate the importance to the daily life of Creek Camp of the ACGC’s Aged Care service, as it brought meals for elderly people into the camps and often helped with the carting of jerry cans for water. The Aged Care centre also provided a place for some elderly people to go outside Creek Camp during the day for washing, ablutions and other activities. This is a significant finding, given that about 10 of the 25 core ‘summer’ residents in Creek Camp in February 2006 were elderly people.

3. Other Ti Tree residents: Characteristics, Experience and Attitudes

3.1 In February 2006, as well as re-interviewing 8 Creek Camp residents, we also interviewed 16 residents living in Ti Tree's roughly 35 more formally constructed residences, regarding their experiences of and attitudes towards Creek Camp (see maps in Appendix 1). We also tried to ascertain some of the basic demographic and social characteristics of these interviewees, such as how long they had lived in Ti Tree and what had brought them there, if they were not locals.

3.2 Three of our interviewees living in these more formally constructed residences were essentially locals who had lived in Ti Tree for indeterminately long periods of time. Another two were from nearby areas of the Northern Territory and had family connections in the Ti Tree area which had seen them come and go from the area over the years in conjunction with work opportunities. Our other 11 interviewees were essentially non-locals who had come to Ti Tree because of employment opportunities. Some of these interviewees had been in Ti Tree as long as 5, or even 10 years, but the majority had been there for briefer periods of a year or three, or even in a couple of instances down to just a few weeks. Some saw themselves staying in Ti Tree for a substantial number of years to come, but most saw themselves as moving on within the next few years, through the termination or further development of their employment opportunities.

3.3 Most of our interviewees, through their employment, had interaction with people who were living in Creek Camp. Only a minority, however, actually visited Creek Camp in the course of these interactions and were familiar with particular Creek Camp residences and who occupied them. More interaction occurred through Creek Camp residents coming into service centres within Ti Tree and dealing with our interviewees there. There was thus, widespread general knowledge and experience of Creek Camp among these interviewees, but much more restricted specific knowledge.

3.4 Three of these interviewees from Ti Tree's more formally constructed residences thought that Creek Camp should not be serviced with reticulated water or electricity, and definitely not with buildings. They were aware of vacant houses elsewhere, that they thought people should use, at places like Yanginj, Adelaide Bore and

Anyungumba, all about 50 kms out of town. However, the vast majority of our interviewees from the more formally constructed residences were supportive of the idea that at least reticulated water should be supplied to Creek Camp. Some noted that people had lived in Creek Camp for many years and didn't look like moving on, so it seemed sensible and prudent to provide water there. Most also thought that buildings and electricity in Creek Camp would be okay, but many emphasized that it should be up to the residents of Creek Camp themselves to decide what they wanted.

3.5 When our questionnaire identified the alternative possibility of building houses in Ti Tree town to accommodate Creek Camps residents, our interviewees offered a range of responses. One noted the lack of available serviced blocks of land on which to build in Ti Tree town. Another noted the current plans to build aged care accommodation units close to the Aged Care centre, but wondered whether people from Creek Camp would find this attractive, as they seemed to like to live spread-out and around structures rather than in closely adjacent, restricted internal spaces. Most people returned to the point that it was up to the residents of Creek Camp themselves to articulate what they wanted. But there was clear majority support among our interviewees for built accommodation for Creek Camp residents either in Creek Camp or Ti Tree town, if that was what Creek Camp residents sought.

3.6 Our earlier report found a variety of attitudes and aspirations among Creek Camp residents themselves in regards to dwellings. Most preferred the idea of remaining in Creek Camp, with buildings and services being developed there in a spread out fashion. However, one camp liked the idea of moving out of Creek Camp into accommodation in Ti Tree town and has since applied for Northern Territory public housing in an attempt to achieve this aspiration. This variety of accommodation aspirations among Creek Camp residents may develop in time in response to what emerges as realistic accommodation possibilities.

4. Northern Territory Government Officials

4.1 In December 2005, one of us interviewed senior Northern Territory Government officials in Alice Springs about their understanding of, and approaches to, Creek Camp. These interviews referred back to a Background Paper on Ti Tree Creek Camp

which had been presented to the Northern Territory Government's southern, (or Alice Springs), Regional Executive Coordination Committee in November 2004, by Andre Burgess of the then Department of Community Development, Sport and Cultural Affairs; and called for the government 'to develop a measured and coordinated long-term response' to Creek Camp 'in partnership' with ACGC and 'the people at Creek Camp' (Burgess 2004). Being over a year since that Background Paper, and with our own first Report to ACGC on Creek Camp in the public domain, it was thought necessary and desirable to attempt to ascertain the developing attitudes and approaches to Creek Camp of relevant Northern Territory Government officials.

4.2 The most important insight to emerge from these interviews with Northern Territory Government officials was that the tenure of the land on which Creek Camp is situated is the single most important factor behind its current lack of reticulated water and electricity services and any associated formal development. Because the Northern Territory Government views the land on which Creek Camp is situated as unallocated 'vacant crown land' there is no obvious, regular government mechanism or program through which Creek Camp can be easily serviced with reticulated water and electricity. For such servicing to become a possibility, some organisation, such as the ACGC, would have to apply for and obtain an 'appropriate title' or tenure over the land. This title would probably be either a perpetual or a term 'crown lease' and the application for it would need to specify the purpose for which it was being sought, such as to provide services and accommodation for members of the local community residing on it.

4.3 Were some organisation, like ACGC, to consider that providing reticulated services and accommodation to Creek Camp residents was a priority, and to successfully apply for such a perpetual or term 'crown lease' over the land on which Creek Camp is situated, this would not of itself ensure that reticulated water and electricity would then be provided. Northern Territory Power and Water officials pointed out that a source of funding for the provision of such reticulated services would still need to be found, as the Power and Water Authority does not generally provide for such reticulation on blocks of land over which others have tenure. One possible source of funding identified for such reticulation was the Indigenous

Essential Services group within the Northern Territory Department of Infrastructure Planning and Environment under its Connecting Neighbours Program.

4.4 Because of the issue of land tenure, Northern Territory Government officials were not generally all that optimistic about the possibility of providing reticulated water and electricity services to Creek Camp, let alone the possibility of providing housing or other buildings there. Most were focused on the possibilities and requirements of including Creek Camp residents among the clientele of central-place services, such as the school and the health clinic, or on providing some basic level of mobile, non-reticulated services to Creek Camp, such as police surveillance or aged and disabled care support. None of the Northern Territory Government officials interviewed in December 2005 knew whether the mobile boxed water service to Creek Camp of the previous summer was to be repeated in the forthcoming summer, but a number undertook to investigate the possibility. It became clear from our return visit to Creek Camp in February 2006 that the boxed water service did not eventuate in the summer of 2005-2006.

4.5 Many of the Northern Territory Government officials interviewed were more focused on ways in which Creek Camp residents could possibly be encouraged to move elsewhere. The initiative most commonly identified in this regard was the planned provision of a number of aged care accommodation units in Ti Tree. This was talked of by some Northern Territory Government officials as if planning was well advanced and as if construction might proceed quite soon. However, there was also some acknowledgement that neither the precise funding arrangements for the project - shared with the Commonwealth - nor the precise siting and design of the project had yet been finalised. So there was also the possibility acknowledged that any potential addressing of Creek Camp servicing and accommodation issues through the provision of aged care accommodation units in Ti Tree was still some time away. (We would note that consultation with elderly Creek Camp residents may reveal varying and not always positive levels of interest in this option.)

4.6 It was also ascertained through interviews of Territory Housing officials that of the 11 residences owned and managed by them in Ti Tree, nine were in the government employees housing pool and two were in the public housing pool. No

current applications for public housing were awaiting allocation at December 2005, though as noted above as part of this study one such application has since been lodged. In the absence of a waiting list of public housing applicants, there has been little or no attempt in recent years to use the Northern Territory Government's role in the provision of public housing as a way to address Creek Camp issues.

4.7 There was general understanding among Northern Territory Government officials that Creek Camp, as observed in our earlier report, was not a 'drinkers camp'. To the extent that there were seen to be problems of alcohol use in the Ti Tree region, these were seen to be elsewhere. Creek Camp was seen as occasionally impacted by such problems, through unwanted visits of non-residents affected by alcohol. However, generally Creek Camp was seen as a quiet living environment where people largely avoided such problems.

5. Ideas for *further* action by ACGC

5.1 We have titled this last section of the report 'Ideas for *further* action by ACGC' in recognition that ACGC service activities are already having an impact on Creek Camp residents in a number of different ways. The most obvious of these, noted above, is the importance of the ACGC's Aged Care service in providing meals to aged Creek Camp residents, helping with their water supplies and also providing a place away from the Creek Camp which they can visit during the day for ablutions, washing and other basic services. With these Aged Care services already being provided to Creek Camp residents by ACGC, there seems no reason in principle why other mobile ACGC services, like garbage collection for example, could not also be provided to Creek Camp residents. Such mobile services are far easier for ACGC to provide to Creek Camp than reticulated services as they do not raise the difficult land tenure issue.

5.2 A second less obvious service impact that ACGC has on Creek Camp is through its Housing Section, which has been renovating houses at Nturiya during the period of this study. This renovation activity has probably encouraged people with access to houses at Nturiya to use them more, and hence to some lessening during the study period of the numbers of people resident in Creek Camp who also have access to

houses at Nturiya. However, there are still problems of lack of services at Nturiya, and other outlying places, which lead to people using Creek Camp as a convenient place to stay in order to access services, like the store, the health clinic and the Centrelink agency office at ACGC. Hence there are also other things that ACGC could do in order to service people better at Nturiya which could, in turn, contribute to keeping down the numbers of residents at Creek Camp. One idea here would be to use ACGC's newly acquired CDEP workforce to run some form of regular transport service between Nturiya and Ti Tree, in order to give people there a way of both accessing services in Ti Tree and returning to their residences soon thereafter. This should not, however, be seen as a way of totally reducing the use of Creek Camp by Nturiya residents as, for a number of reasons, Creek Camp is clearly at times an attractive alternative place to stay for people with residences at Nturiya. The idea of a CDEP-based transport service to and from Ti Tree may also be of relevance to people at Pmara Jutunta, though during the course of this study we only became aware of two groups who had access to residences at Pmara Jutunta staying over night in Creek Camp.

5.3 A third idea that ACGC could pursue in order to address some issues at Creek Camp is to attempt to increase the housing supply in Ti Tree, Nturiya and Pmara Jutunta. A recent report to ACGC on housing stock in these and two others communities argued that the current need was for 26 additional houses in these three communities (Sam Miles & Associates 2005). Meeting this need could be pursued by ACGC through applications for grant funding from the Indigenous Housing Authority of the Northern Territory, but also possibly by supporting people to apply for public housing in Ti Tree, as has been done in one instance in the course of this study. Even a very substantial increase in the supply of housing in Ti Tree, Nturiya and Pmara Jutunta may not, however, address all of the accommodation needs of people living in Creek Camp. So it also important for ACGC to think about what can be done in Creek Camp itself.

5.4 The most significant thing that the ACGC could do to provide services to residents of Creek Camp would be to apply for some appropriate form of tenure over the land on which Creek Camp is situated in order to provide reticulated services, such as water and electricity to residents, and also possibly in time some dwellings.

This would be a major initiative for ACGC and it would be complex to execute. While it would gain substantial support from many Creek Camp residents and Ti Tree residents more generally, such an initiative would also encounter considerable obstacles and concerns, as well as some opposition. There would be Native Title issues to deal with, as well as town planning and funding concerns. There would be concerns, including among Creek Camp residents and ACGC members, that Creek Camp may become too attractive in comparison to places like Nturiya and Pmara Jutunta, and that it may lose its current character as a quiet, spread-out, but convenient place to live.

5.5 Against these concerns could be placed the desirability of doing something to assist some long-term residents of Ti Tree and constituents of the ACGC who have only been given limited assistance in the past. There would seem to be quite a strong basis of support for doing something in Creek Camp among ACGC members, among Creek Camp residents themselves and among Ti Tree residents more generally. Providing reticulated services and possibly dwellings at Creek Camp would be a complex task involving much ongoing consultation and political effort, as well as detailed administrative and technical processes. However, as the cover photo for this report suggests, water and electricity infrastructure already runs through Creek Camp, so the extension of these reticulated services to Creek Camp residents should be possible. The first step towards this would be for the ACGC to apply for ‘appropriate tenure’ over the land on which Creek Camp is situated.

6. References

Burgess, A. 2004. "Background Paper: Creek Camp at Ti Tree", Department of Community Development Sport and Cultural Affairs, 1 November.

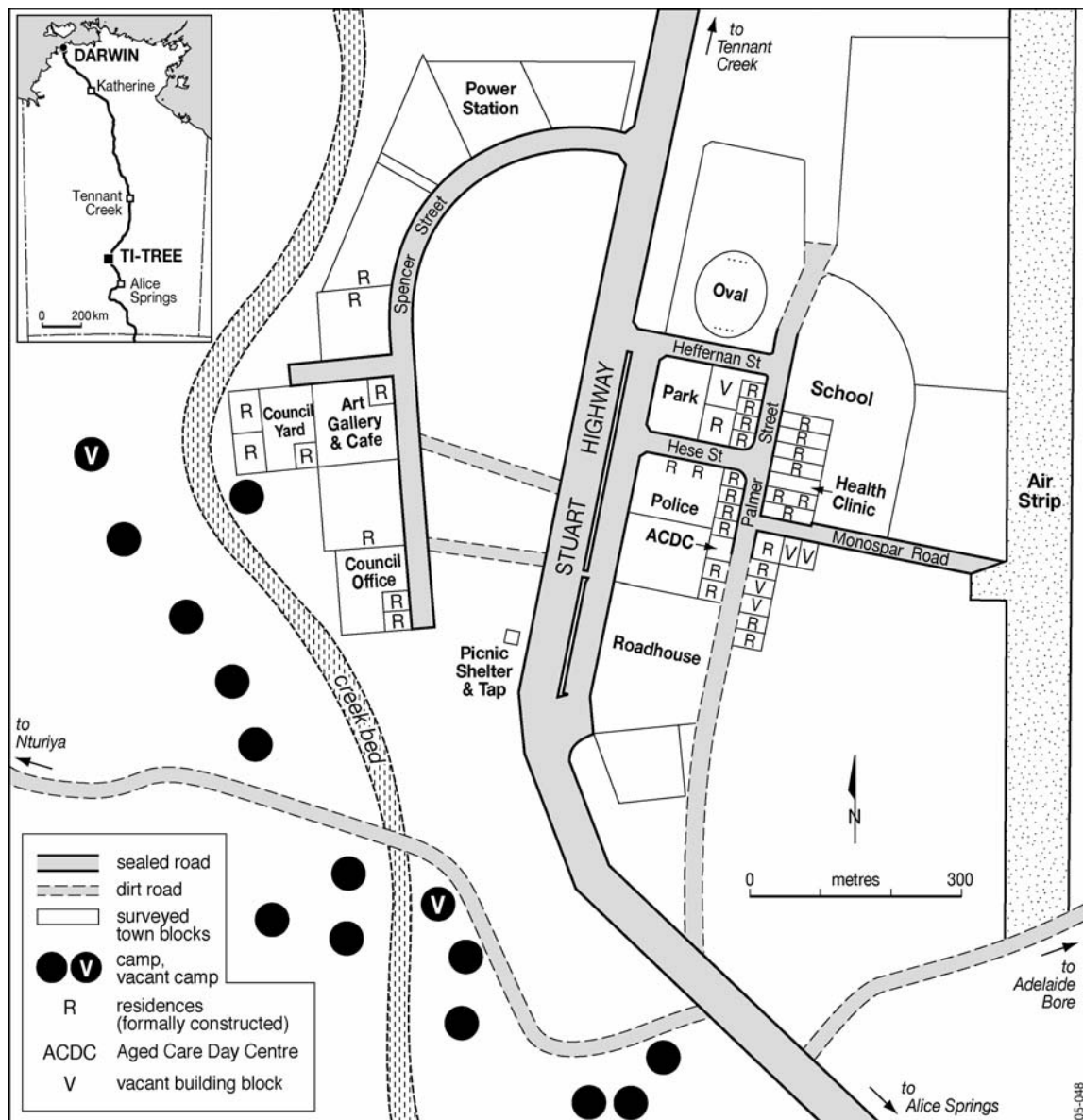
Cook, T. 1996. "When ERPs aren't enough: a discussion of issues associated with service population estimation" Demography Working Paper 96/4, Australian Bureau of Statistics, Belconnen ACT, Catalogue Number 3112.0. (ERPs = Estimates of Resident Populations)

Holcombe, S. and Sanders W. 2005. "Report to the Anmatjere Community Government Council on Ti Tree Creek Camp" June.

Miles, S. 2005. "Review of existing Anmatjere Housing Stock at Ti Tree and Alyuen, Pmara Jutunta, Nturiya and Yanginj Communities' June.

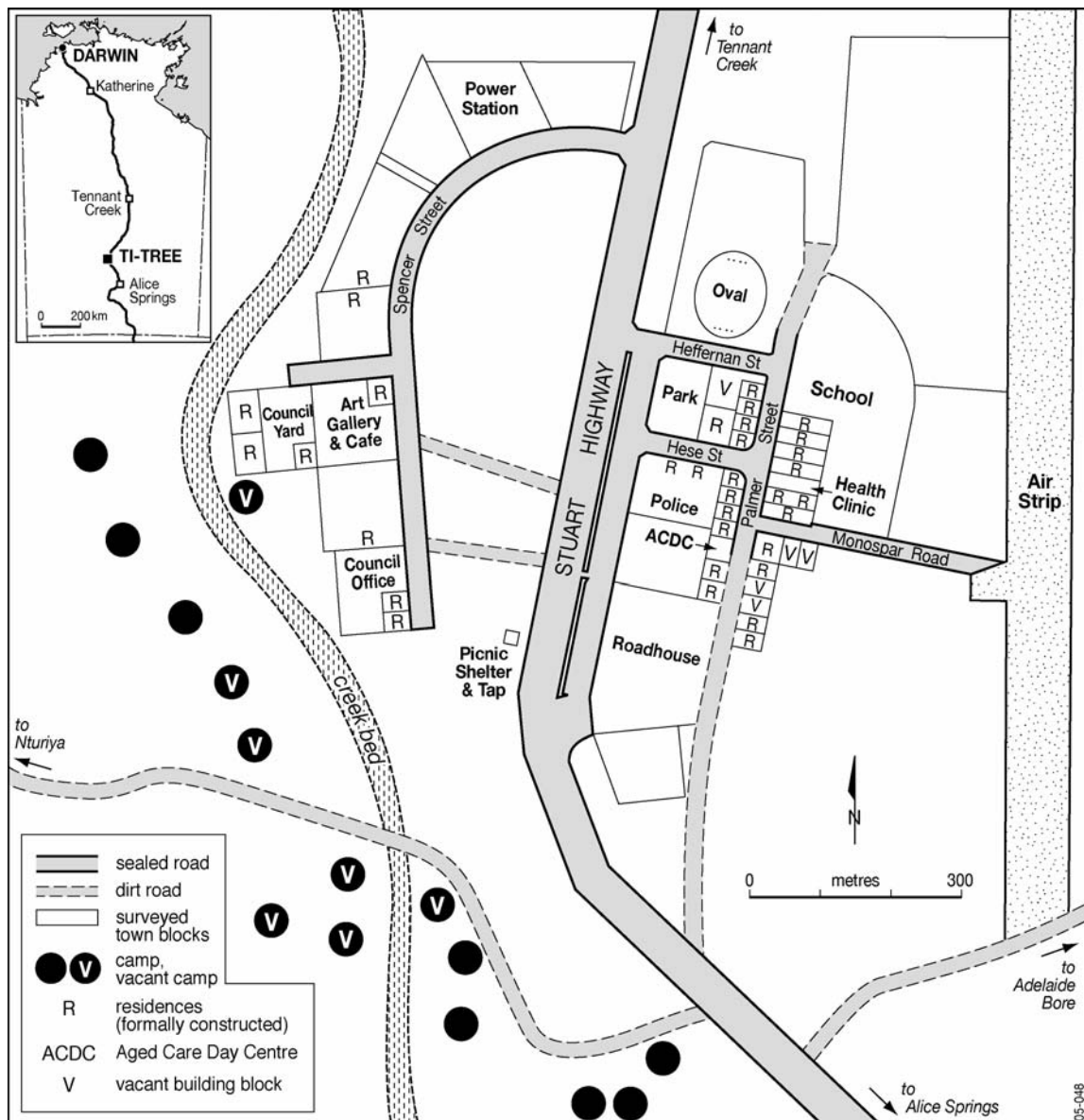
Appendix 1

Map of Ti Tree Town showing Creek Camp – April 2005



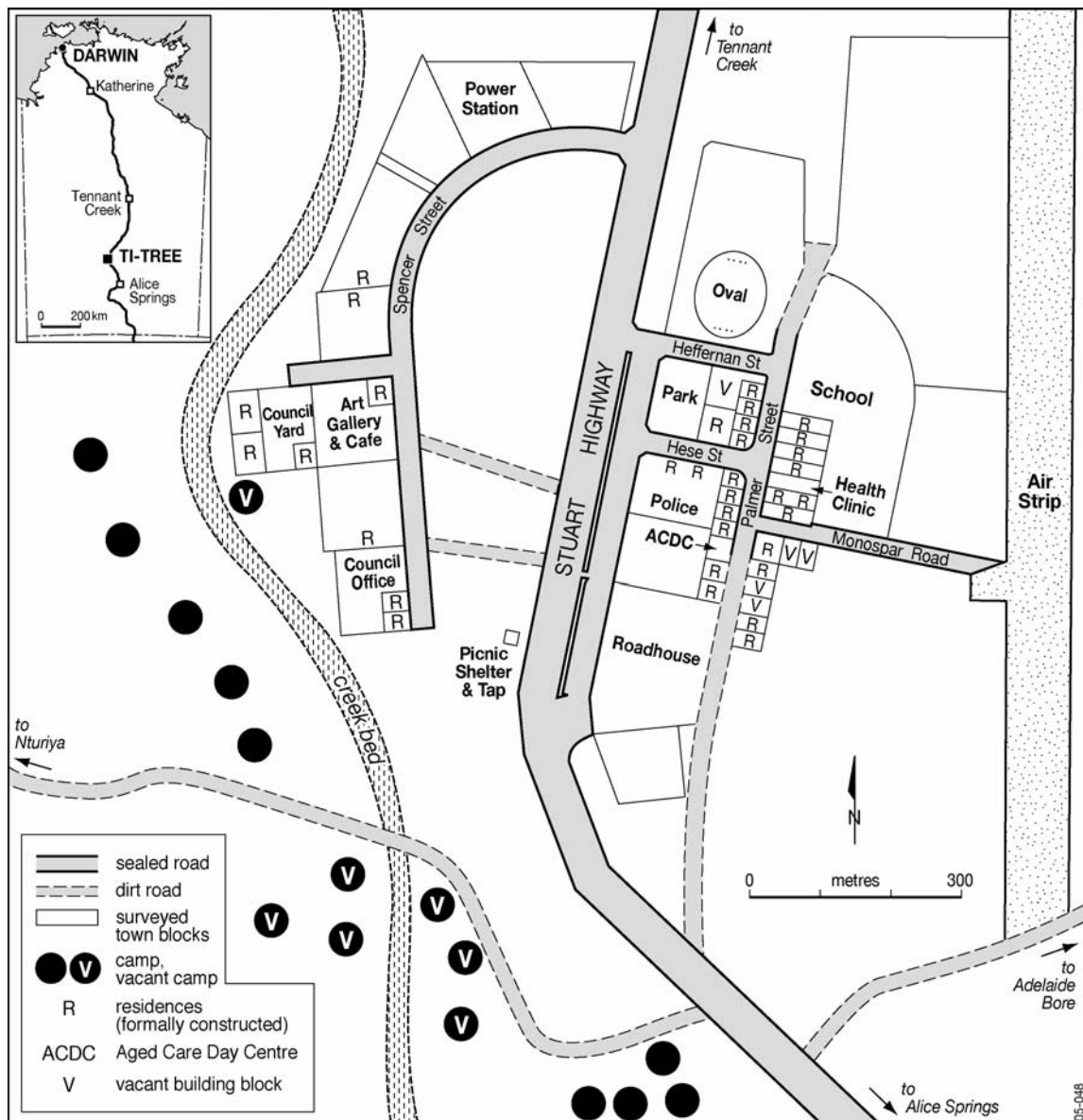
Approximately 80 people in 13 camps

Map of Ti Tree Town showing Creek Camp – June 2005



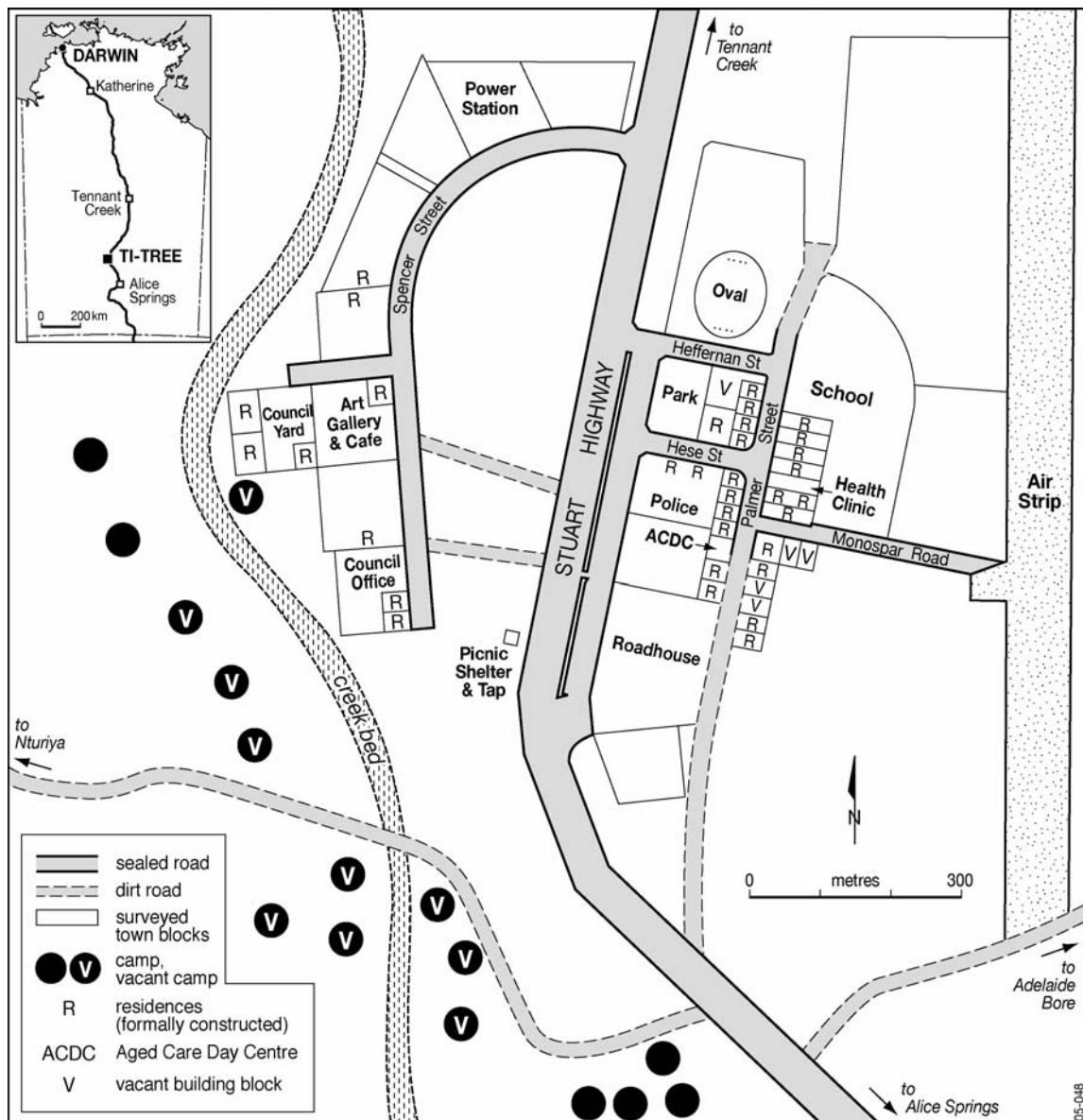
Approximately 45 people in 8 camps

Map of Ti Tree Town showing Creek Camp – September 2005



80-100 people in 9 camps

Map of Ti Tree Town showing Creek Camp – February 2006



Approximately 25 people in 6 camps

Appendix 2 – Questionnaire

Ti Tree Creek Camp Questionnaire – February 2006

Hello, I'm Will Sanders/ Sarah Holcombe from the Australian National University and the Desert Knowledge Cooperative Research Centre. We're doing some work with the Anmatjere Community Government Council on issues of concern to people relating to service delivery and governance in the Anmatjerr region. Last April we interviewed residents and recent residents of Creek Camp in Ti Tree about how and why they live here and how they saw the future of Creek Camp and their own living arrangements. We reported our findings to Council and to residents in June. Now we are trying to talk to people again about Creek Camp – about how it has been here the last year and if anything has changed. This will form the basis of a second report to Council and to residents on Creek Camp. As last time, our report will discuss in general terms what people have said to us about Creek Camp, but it will not link particular comments with individual people. Would you be willing to talk to us? If you don't want to answer any of the questions just say so, and you can withdraw from the interview at any time.

Did we interview you, like this, last April? Yes/No
(if No – were you here last April and were you aware of others being interviewed?
Yes/No)

Since that time, almost a year ago, how much of the time have you been living in Creek Camp?

- All or almost all the time, including sleeping here all or almost all nights
- About half the time, including lots of nights
- Only a little bit – less than half the time and only a few nights.

If you haven't been living and sleeping here all or almost all the time, where else have you been living and sleeping?

And what made you move around between Creek Camp and there?

How long have you been living here in Ti Tree Creek Camp?

- a few days to couple of weeks
- a few weeks to a couple of months
- several months
- over a year
- several years

Have you moved camp within Creek Camp over the last year? Yes/No

If yes, what was the reason for this?

How many people do you share your camp/ fire with at present?

Are they related to you and, if so, how?

Have the people you share your camp/ fire with changed in the last year?

Are you getting the boxed water service this summer?

What is the thing you most like about living in Creek Camp?

What is the thing you most dislike about living in Creek Camp?

Do you think you will be living at Creek Camp for a long time in the future, or just a short time? Long/ short.

What might encourage you to live elsewhere in the future? And where might that be?

What might make you stay at Creek Camp in the future?

I will not put your name on this form, but I would like to record your Age and Sex?
M / F, 20s, 30s, 40s, 50s, 60s

Is there anything else you would like to say to us about living in Creek Camp?

Thank you for talking with us. Here is a card which has our University contact details on the front and those of our Human Research Ethics Committee on the back. If you have any concerns about this research please feel free to contact us, that Committee or the Anmatjere CGC, who are also partners in the research. Thanks again for participating.

Questionnaire for the residents of the Ti Tree town – February 2006

Hello, we're Will Sanders and Sarah Holcombe from the Australian National University and the Desert Knowledge Cooperative Research Centre. For the last year we have been doing some work with the Anmatjere community government council

on issues of concern relating to service delivery and governance. The issue we are focused on is creek camp. We have in the past interviewed creek camp residents and councilors and presented our findings to the council. We are now seeking to talk to other residents of Ti Tree and will again report to the council. As last time, our report will discuss in general terms what people have said to us about Creek Camp, but it will not link particular comments with individual people. Would you be willing to talk with us? If you don't want to answer any of the questions just say so, and you can withdraw from the interview at any time?

How long have you been living in Ti-Tree?

Weeks / months / years

For how long in the future can you see yourself living here?

Weeks / Months / years

What led you to be living here?

Work / family / other

Have you had any interactions with people from creek camp?

Yes / no

Do you ever visit creek camp?

Yes – frequently / yes – occasionally / No

Do you have any views on whether creek camp should be serviced with water and electricity?

Do you have any views on whether creek camp should be developed with buildings?

What do you think of the idea of building more housing in Ti Tree town-ship to accommodate creek camp residents?

I will not put your name on this form, but I would like to record your age and sex?

M / F 20s, 30s, 40s, 50s, 60s

Is there any thing else you would like to say to us about creek camp?

Third Report to Anmatjere Community Government Council on Ti Tree Creek Camp

July 2006

By
Will Sanders and Sarah Holcombe
Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research
Australian National University
and
Desert Knowledge Cooperative Research Centre



1.Provision of reticulated services under licence or permissive occupancy.....	1
2.Funding reticulated services.....	2
3.Maintaining quietness and alcohol management.....	2
4.Conclusion.....	3

1. Provision of reticulated services under licence or permissive occupancy

1.1 In our second report to Anmatjere Community Government Council on Ti Tree Creek Camp in May 2006 we argued that land tenure was a major obstacle to the provision of reticulated water and electricity services. We noted that the Northern Territory Government views Creek Camp as situated on unallocated 'vacant crown land'. We also noted that for reticulated servicing to become a possibility on such land some organization, such as ACGC, would probably have to apply for and obtain an 'appropriate title' or tenure over the land, such as a perpetual or term 'crown lease'.

1.2 In circulating that second report to Northern Territory Government officials, another possibility became apparent. Officials of the Department of Planning and Infrastructure indicated that it might be possible to provide certain basic reticulated services on unallocated crown land under licence or permissive occupancy. This would not require a change in the title or tenure of the land. A licence or permissive occupancy arrangement could probably avoid becoming involved in native title processes, as the documentation could simply state that the arrangement did not extinguish native title. The arrangement would also protect the assets of the organization providing those services on the unallocated crown land.

1.3 If ACGC was interested in exploring this possibility of providing reticulated services to Creek Camp under licence or permissive occupancy, the next technical and administrative step in the process would be to develop detailed engineering drawings and costings of what was proposed to be provided and to submit these to the Department of Planning and Infrastructure seeking permission to construct and operate these facilities on unallocated crown land under licence or permissive occupancy. Clearly this would need to be preceded by a clear decision from

Council to proceed in this direction and by extensive consultation with Creek Camp residents about the precise nature of the reticulated services to be provided. In these processes it would need to be made clear to all concerned that the potential for providing services under license or permissive occupancy is restricted and that this would not lead to ACGC providing residential buildings in Creek Camp, only some basic reticulated services.

2. Funding reticulated services

2.1 It should also be noted that obtaining a licence or permissive occupancy to provide basic reticulated services in Creek Camp is entirely separate from the issue of obtaining funding to provide such services. Our second report to Council identified the Connecting Neighbours Program of the former Northern Territory Department of Infrastructure Planning and Environment as one potential source of funding, but there may be others as well.

2.2 We would venture to suggest that, if a licence or permissive occupancy was obtained to provide reticulated services in Creek Camp in accordance with a Council decision, resident consultation and engineering drawings, then some funding source could probably be found.

3. Maintaining quietness and alcohol management

3.1 In our previous reports we noted that Creek Camp is appreciated by its residents as a quiet, spread-out place to live close to services, and away from some of the noise and trouble which sometimes develops in other more crowded Aboriginal living areas in the region, like Nturiya, Pmara Jutunta or Willowra. There was a desire among Creek Camp residents to maintain this quiet, spread-out nature of the place and some concern to avoid Creek Camp becoming too attractive to people currently residing elsewhere. The possibility of providing reticulated services under licence or permissive occupancy to Creek Camp, rather

than obtaining a change of land tenure, may be a positive resource in relation to these desires and concerns. It may provide a limit to the level of development at Creek Camp which roughly accords with these desires and concerns.

3.2 Another positive aspect of providing services under licence or permissive occupancy might be in relation to alcohol management. As noted in our earlier reports, Creek Camp is not generally seen as a drinkers' camp and it is partly protected from this by being a public place in a town within two kilometres of a licensed alcohol outlet. These characteristics provide a degree of protection for Creek Camp in relation to alcohol issues under the Northern Territory Government's so-called two kilometre law. If reticulated services were provided at Creek Camp under license or permissive occupancy, this basic mechanism for alcohol management would remain in place. If a change of land tenure was sought and obtained, however, rather different alcohol management issues on alienated or non-public land would then come into play.

4. Conclusion

4.1 Our overall conclusion is that the possible provision of reticulated services in Creek Camp under licence or permissive occupancy may be a useful and manageable option for ACGC and other stakeholders. It may indeed offer a better ability to balance the interests of diverse stakeholders in the Creek Camp issue than either the current situation or land tenure change. We commend this newly revealed option to ACGC, and to other stakeholders, for further consideration.