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Anmatjere through the Census:
Profiling an arid zone region

Will Sanders

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Anmatjere through the Census: Profiling an arid zone region

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Contents

Introduction	1
Anmatjere region by Collection Districts	1
ACGC 1996–2006	6
Aboriginal/non-Aboriginal comparisons	8
Concluding comments	14
References	16

Tables

Table 1: Population and other characteristics of Anmatjere CDs, 2006.....	4
Table 2: Populations and other characteristics, ACGC Local Government Area, 1996–2006	7
Table 3: Characteristics of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal populations, ACGC Local Government Area, 2006.....	9
Table 4: Labour force status of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal populations, Anmatjere Indigenous Area, 2001	10
Table 5: Labour force status of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal populations, remote areas of the Northern Territory, 2001 and 2006.....	11
Table 6: Housing tenure of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal households, Anmatjere Indigenous Area, 2001	12
Table 7: Housing tenure of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal households, ACGC Local Government Area, 2006.....	13
Table 8: Rents of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal households, ACGC Local Government Area, 2006.....	13
Table 9: Occupation of employed Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal populations, ACGC Local Government Area, 2006.....	14

Figures

Figure 1: Census Collection Districts in the Anmatjere Region, 2006.....	2
Figure 2: ACGC Land Area 1995–2008 showing Wards.....	3
Figure 3: Ti Tree town showing Creek Camp	5

Introduction

Anmatjere is a non-urban, arid zone region of the Northern Territory which sits astride the Stuart Highway, about 200 kilometres north of Alice Springs and 300 kilometres south of Tennant Creek. For the past four years, my colleague Sarah Holcombe and I have undertaken research with the local government in the area, the Anmatjere Community Government Council (ACGC) (Sanders 2008a). The aim of this paper is to use Census data, publicly available through the website of the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), to provide a simple statistical profile of the Anmatjere region. The paper also draws on general knowledge gleaned from working in the area over the last four years and from other work observing the Census collection (Martin et al. 2002, Morphy 2007). However, the basic research question that guides the paper is simply this: can publicly available Census statistics in 2008 provide a useful characterisation of a relatively small and remote arid zone region such as Anmatjere? The paper is in some sense then simply an exercise in seeing how far available ABS statistics can take us in profiling an arid zone region.

The paper begins by identifying some data relating to the individual Census Collection Districts (CDs) that make up the Anmatjere region. It then focuses primarily on the group of CDs that have made up the ACGC local government area in recent years, drawing primarily from the 2006 Census but also looking back to the 2001 and 1996 Censuses. The paper looks at comparisons between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people in the ACGC area in 2006 and also pays some minor attention to one rather different CD in the Anmatjere region which has been outside the ACGC local government area. This distinction between CDs that have been inside and outside the ACGC local government area is now, however, becoming part of history; as from July 2008 as a result of local government restructuring in the Northern Territory, all these CDs have now become part of the Anmatjere ward of the new Central Desert Shire. While Census profiles of Anmatjere may, as a consequence of this local government restructuring, look somewhat different in the future, it is I think still useful to understand those of the recent past. These past Census profiles tell us quite a lot about the demography and socioeconomic geography of the Anmatjere region, and also something about the local government reform process that is currently underway. This reform process, the paper will argue, is currently pushing into the local government system some non-Aboriginal interests, such as those of pastoralists, horticulturalists and roadhouse owners, who hold title to most of the Anmatjere region's land area but are only a small proportion of its population.

Anmatjere region by Collection Districts

The Anmatjere region contains just one small roadside town, Ti Tree, which is covered by CD 7031120 (see Figure 1). This is surrounded by a larger area of Aboriginal-owned land, the Ahakeye Land Trust (ALT), which accounts for about one-tenth of the region's land area and is covered by CD 7031111. Before being purchased for Aboriginal people in the 1970s and undergoing a land claim in 1980s, the ALT was a pastoral lease referred to as Ti Tree Station. One of the two substantial discrete Aboriginal settlements on the ALT, 17 kilometres to the west of Ti Tree town, is still often referred to as Ti Tree Station, though it is now formally known as Nturiya. The other substantial discrete Aboriginal settlement on the ALT is Pmara Jutunta, also known as Six Mile; which is six miles south of Ti Tree town on the eastern side

of the Stuart Highway. In the ACGC's electoral geography, Nturiya and the western portion of ALT were a separate ward from Pmara Jutunta and the central portion of ALT (see Figure 2). However, in Census geography the two are combined in a single CD, which also covers an eastern portion of the ALT. This eastern portion of ALT contains a third discrete Aboriginal settlement, Woolla or Adelaide Bore, which also used to have separate ward representation on ACGC. However, in the four years that we have been working in the region, this third settlement on the ALT has had no permanent residents and hence has also had a dwindling representation on the ACGC. So while the first row in Table 1 represents the population profile of Ti Tree town, the second row labeled ALT effectively represents the two settlements of Nturiya and Pmara Jutunta, plus a couple of outlying single dwellings on the ALT.

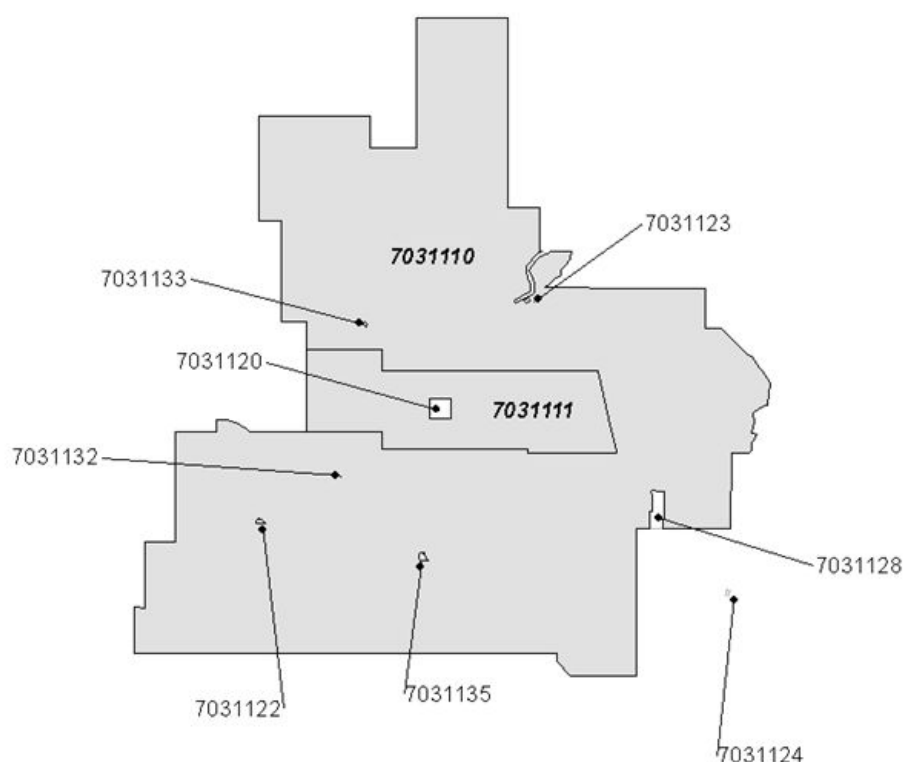


Figure 1: Census Collection Districts in the Anmatjere Region, 2006

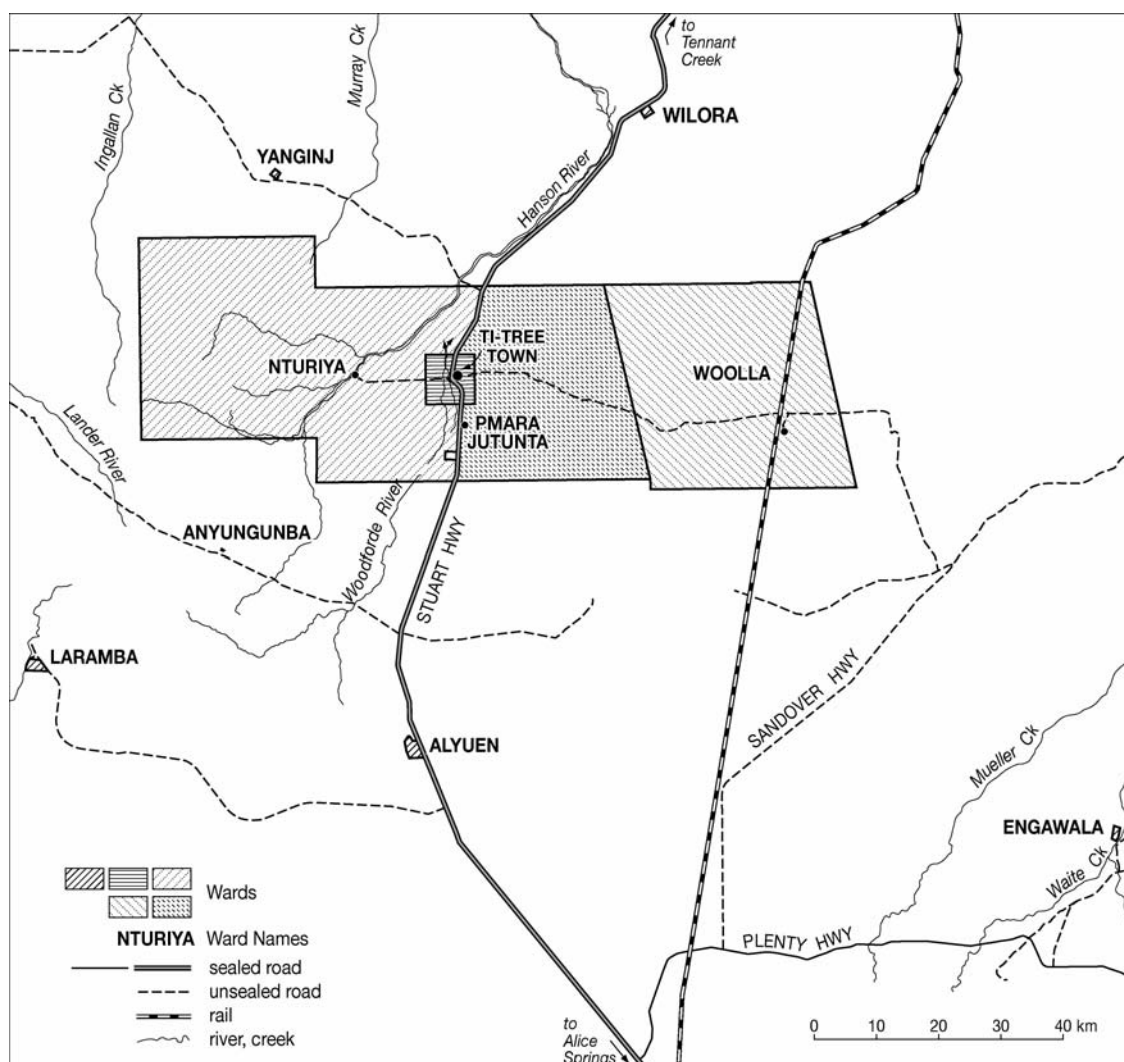


Figure 2: ACGC Land Area 1995–2008 showing Wards

Table 1: Population and other characteristics of Anmatjere CDs, 2006

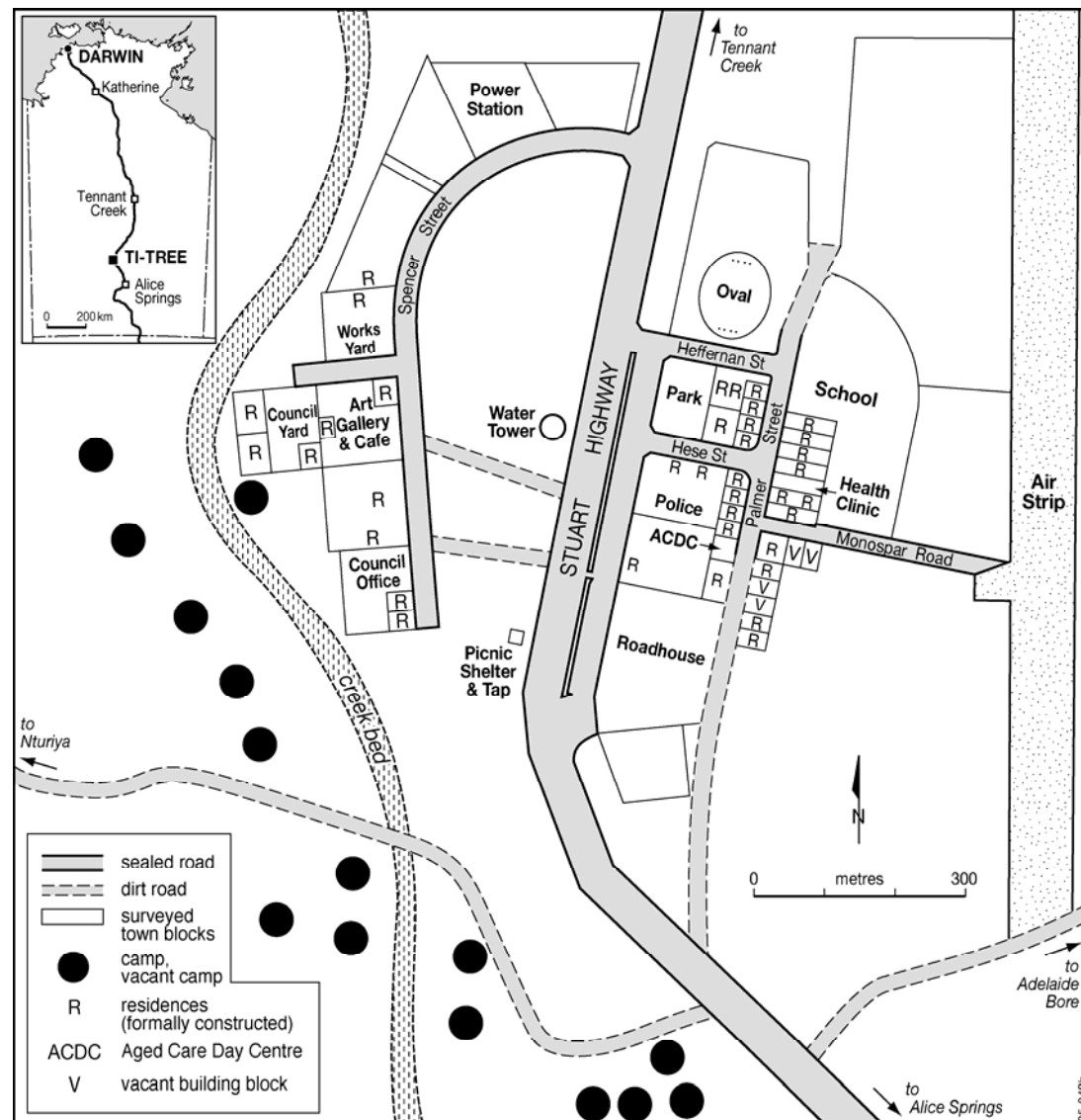
Collection District Number	Name or location description	Area (sq kms)	Usual Resident Population (URP)	Proportion URP Aboriginal	Median age	Median individual income \$/week	Average household size	Proportion URP 15+ employed	Proportion URP at same address as 1 year ago and 5 years ago	Occupied private dwellings (improvised)
7031120	Ti Tree town	64.9	153	66%	30	335	2.8	49%	70% 54%	36 (7)
7031111	Ahakeye Land Trust	3571.4	265	94%	24	235	5.4	20%	87% 74%	47 (0)
7031122	Laramba	5.1	246	97%	23	203	6.0	24%	96% 94%	40 (6)
7031123	Wilora		96							17
7031124	*Engawala	3.0	184	77%	22	238	5.8	65%	90% 69%	29 (0)
7031135	Alyuen		17							5
7031128	Mulga Bore		80							10
7031110	*Hanson Balance	31166.7	94	19%	41	542	2.6	65%	73% 59%	54 (0)

Sources: Figures for the first three rows are drawn from Basic Community Profiles for these CDs. Due to small population numbers, BCPs were not produced for the other five CDs. However, Quickstats provides usual resident numbers and dwelling numbers for these latter CDs. In the two CDs marked with an *, Place of Enumeration Profiles provide the other characteristics.

Comparing these first and second rows of Table 1 immediately demonstrates some key aspects of the social geography of the Anmatjere region. Historically, Ti Tree town has been a predominantly non-Aboriginal residential area, while Aboriginal people have been encouraged to live out of town in the surrounding discrete Aboriginal settlements. This pattern of residence has been challenged and slightly broken down by Aboriginal people camping informally along the western side of Ti Tree town, and also in recent times by a few Aboriginal people gaining access to formal, constructed housing in Ti Tree (See Holcombe & Sanders 2007, Sanders & Holcombe 2007). However, the concentration of non-Aboriginal people in Ti Tree town and of Aboriginal people in outlying settlements is still evident in these first two rows of Table 1. Whereas 94 per cent of the 265 usual residents of the ALT in 2006 were Aboriginal, only 66 per cent of the 153 in Ti Tree town were. The ALT residents were also younger, with an average age of 24 compared with Ti Tree town's average age of 30, and had a lower median income of \$235 per week, compared with \$335 in town. This last can be related to employment levels, which on the ALT were 20 per cent of those aged 15 years and over, compared with 49 per cent in town. Average household size was larger on the

ALT, at 5.4 compared with 2.8 in town. Constancy of address from one year and five years previously was also higher on the ALT at 87 and 74 per cent, compared with 70 and 54 per cent in town. All this suggests a younger, longer-term, less employed, more Aboriginal population with less income in the ALT settlements compared with Ti Tree town with its quite large proportion of non-Aboriginal service employees who often move through the town in a career path. Also note from the first two rows of Table 1 that there were seven households in Ti Tree town in 2006 living in improvised dwellings, compared with none on the ALT. These will have been the Aboriginal households camping informally along the west side of town (See Figure 3).

Figure 3: Ti Tree town showing Creek Camp



The next four rows of Table 1 cover 543 people living in the discrete Aboriginal settlements of Laramba, Wilora, Engawala and Alyuen, which are on small parcels of land excised from pastoral leases.¹ Like the ALT settlements, their populations are predominantly Aboriginal, apart from small numbers of non-Aboriginal service workers, and tend to show similar other characteristics, such as income levels, household size and constancy of address. Interestingly, Engawala shows higher levels of employment and a lower proportion of Aboriginal people, though more detailed study of this settlement suggests that it is much like the other discrete Aboriginal settlements and that these and other Census figures could be somewhat misleading (Moran et al. 2007: 11). As well as being separate Census CDs, these four settlements were also separate 'outlying' wards of ACGC, with their own electoral representation. Laramba and Engawala, in particular, guarded their autonomy within ACGC, as large outliers from the central group of settlements and large block of incorporated land closer to Ti Tree town (see Sanders 2008a, Figure 2).

Two other discrete Aboriginal settlement wards of ACGC, Yanginj represented by CD 7031133 and Anyungunba represented by CD 7031132, had zero population counts in 2006 and are not therefore included in Table 1. As is the case for Woolla, this lack of permanent residents has meant that in the four years we have worked in the region the separate representation of these two wards on ACGC has also been either non-existent or falling away (see Sanders 2008a).

There are also two other CDs at the bottom of Table 1, which have not been part of the ACGC local government area, but which are still part of the Anmatjere region. The first is a discrete Aboriginal settlement of 80 people at Mulga Bore, north-west of Engawala and south-east of Woolla. Mulga Bore and its close associate Angula have relied on ACGC for some administrative support in recent years, even though they were not formally part of ACGC's 'scattered' incorporated area (see Figure 2). The second additional CD is the vast Hanson Balance, covering almost 90 per cent of the land area of the Anmatjere region which was *not* incorporated in the old community government scheme. This CD covers the pastoral leases of the area, plus a roadhouse and a horticultural area. Its population of 94 in the 2006 Census was predominantly *non-Aboriginal* and was just eight per cent of the total usual resident population of the region of 1135. This CD also had far higher average age (41) and income (\$542 per week) levels than those covering the discrete Aboriginal settlements, or even Ti Tree town. Hanson Balance is clearly a very different CD from the rest, which in some sense captures the characteristics of the non-Aboriginal, non-town residents of the Anmatjere region.

ACGC 1996–2006

The ABS website provides a Time Series Profile for the CDs making up the ACGC local government area. This gives a population based on place of enumeration and many characteristics of both individuals and households. Table 2 gives the population of this group of CDs over the ten-year period from 1996 to 2006, plus some demographic and socioeconomic characteristics. The population appears to have been fairly stable, at just under

¹ The Alcoota pastoral lease from which Engawala is excised was purchased for Aboriginal interests in the 1990s and has since been undergoing a land claim process which will eventually see it too become an Aboriginal land trust area (see Moran et al. 2007: 11).

1000, or if anything falling slightly. Other characteristics, such as proportion Aboriginal or proportion speaking an Australian Aboriginal language also seem fairly stable, up in the 80s per cent. Median individual income appears to have increased a little, but perhaps no more than would be expected from indexed growth in wages and social security payments. Median age also appears possibly to have increased a little, from 22 to 25, which is also reflected further down Table 2 in the population 15 years and over increasing slightly both in absolute numbers and as a proportion of the total population. Average household size appears to have fallen a little, from 5.8 to 4.8 people, as too does the proportion of people at the same address as one and five years ago.

Perhaps the clearest change over the ten-year period from 1996 to 2006, which can be observed in Table 2 in the ACGC local government area, is in the numbers of people employed as a proportion of the population aged 15 and over. These have risen from 21 per cent in 1996, to 25 per cent in 2001, to 35 per cent in 2006. Most of this growth, particularly in the second intercensal period, appears to have occurred by drawing people into employment from outside the labour force, rather than from unemployment, as the proportion of people aged 15 and over not in the labour force fell dramatically from 73 per cent to 53 per cent from 2001 to 2006; though note that in the process the Unknown Labour Force Status figure grew from two to seven per cent. I will return to this apparent growth in labour force participation in the next section, relating it both to growth in the Aboriginal-specific Community Development Employment Projects (CDEP) in the Anmatjere region in 2006 and to a more general remote-area policy development.

Table 2: Populations and other characteristics, ACGC Local Government Area, 1996–2006

	1996	2001	2006
Population	983	909	954
Aboriginal %	87	88	86
Speaks Australian Aboriginal language %	84	86	81
Median age	22	26	25
Median individual income \$/w	154	190	227
Average household size	5.8	5.2	4.8
Same address as 1 year ago %	92	90	87
Same address as 5 years ago %	84	84	74
Lutheran %	83	82	60
Population 15+	632	627	643
% of total	64	69	67
Employed %	21	25	35
Unemployed %	4	0.5	5
Not in labour force %	72	73	53
Unknown labour force status v%	4	2	7

One final figure drawn from the Time Series Profile, which is included in Table 2 because it showed significant change over the ten-year period, is the proportion of the total population identifying their religion as Lutheran. While stable from 1996 to 2001, in the low 80s per cent, this figure fell dramatically in 2006 to 60 per cent. I judge, however, that the explanation for this is not some sudden loss of following for the Lutheran church, which has long been the dominant missionary presence in the region. Rather, it is to do with the way in which the

Census was collected, and how this can quite significantly affect the figures that emerge from it.

In 2001 and before, the Census was collected in remote Aboriginal communities using a combination of a Special Indigenous Household Form and a Special Indigenous Personal Form. The religion question on the Personal Form provided a list of tick box answers, which included a variety of Christian denominations including Lutheran, and somewhere towards the bottom of the list the alternatives ‘traditional beliefs’ and ‘no religion’ (see Martin et al. 2002: 111). In 2006 a redesigned single Interviewer Household Form was used and its religion question did not provide tick boxes, except for the ‘no religion’ option. Beyond this one tick box, the Interviewer Household Form asked respondents to write in their religion, providing them with a list of examples which now had ‘traditional beliefs’ at its top (Morphy 2007: 139). Suddenly, from accounting for almost no respondents in 2001, this traditional beliefs option accounted for almost eight per cent in Anmatjere in 2006. Also the ‘no religion’ tick box jumped from accounting for around one per cent of responses in 2001 to eleven per cent in 2006.

These data suggest how even very minor changes in the way in which Census questions are asked, and possible answers to them are specified, can quite significantly affect the figures that emerge. Even asking people to write rather than tick a box, or the prominence of an alternative in a list of examples can make a significant difference. This should of course make us generally cautious about making too much of small changes in population characteristics that emerge over time from consecutive censuses, particularly when collection methods change significantly as between 2001 and 2006 (see Morphy 2007).

Aboriginal/non-Aboriginal comparisons

The ABS website also provides an Indigenous Profile for the ACGC local government area based on the 2006 Census, which separates the usual resident population into ‘Indigenous’ and ‘non-Indigenous’ people.² Table 3 gives some social and economic characteristics of these two population groups and of the total Anmatjere population in 2006. As the Aboriginal population of 847 is 88 per cent of the total population of 966, inevitably the social and economic characteristics of the total population predominantly reflect those of the Aboriginal population. However, what is most noticeable is the stark difference in the social and economic characteristics of the majority Aboriginal population and the minority non-Aboriginal population in the Anmatjere region.

² Although the ABS uses ‘Indigenous’ and ‘non-Indigenous’, we will use the terms ‘Aboriginal’ and ‘non-Aboriginal’.

Table 3: Characteristics of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal populations, ACGC Local Government Area, 2006

	Aboriginal	non-Aboriginal	Total
Population	847	108	966
Row %	88	12	100
Speaks Australian Aboriginal language %	94	0	82
Median age	24	35	25
Median individual income \$/w	213	768	223
Average household size	5.4	2.5	4.8
In private dwelling (e.g. house, flat) %	93	82	92
In improvised dwelling %	6	0	5
In non-private dwelling %	0.4	18	3
Same address as 1 Year Ago %	89	71	87
Same address as 5 Years Ago %	81	32	75
Population 15+	567	84	657
% of total	67	78	68
Employed general %	6	85	16
Employed CDEP %	19	0	16
Self-employed %	0	4	0.5
Unemployed %	6	4	5
Not in labour force %	62	8	55
Labour force status not stated %	8	0	7

Whereas 94 per cent of the Aboriginal population spoke an Australian Aboriginal language in 2006, none of the non-Aboriginal population did. Whereas the median age of the Aboriginal population was 24 years, that of the non-Aboriginal population was 35 years, and this was also reflected in 67 per cent of the Aboriginal population being aged 15 or over compared with 78 per cent of the non-Aboriginal population. Whereas Aboriginal people lived in households with an average size of 5.4 people, the non-Aboriginal population lived in households averaging 2.5 people. Six per cent of the Aboriginal population lived in improvised dwellings and 93 per cent in more formally constructed private dwellings, and none of the non-Aboriginal population lived in improvised dwellings. However, 18 per cent of the non-Aboriginal population lived in non-private dwellings, such as roadhouses, which could be indicative of transience through the region. This last suggestion is reinforced by proportions at the same address one and five years ago, which were 89 and 81 per cent for the Aboriginal population, compared with 71 and 32 per cent for the non-Aboriginal population.

One very large difference was that the median individual income for the Aboriginal population was \$213 per week, but was more than three and a half times that, at \$768 per week, for the non-Aboriginal population. This vast difference in income levels can clearly be related to labour force status. Whereas 85 per cent of the non-Aboriginal population aged 15 and over in Anmatjere were employed in 2006, only six per cent of the Aboriginal population were in general employment and another 19 per cent were in CDEP employment. The majority of the Aboriginal population aged 15 and over were *not* in the labour force (62%), whereas only a small proportion of the non-Aboriginal population (8%) were in that position. As starkly different as these labour force statistics are, the time series analysis back in Table 2 suggested that labour force participation in Anmatjere might in fact have increased quite substantially since 2001. So to investigate further, in Table 4 I have reproduced the labour

force status statistics for 2001 for Anmatjere's Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal populations, much like those in the bottom of Table 3 for 2006.

Table 4: Labour force status of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal populations, Anmatjere Indigenous Area, 2001

	Aboriginal	Non-Aboriginal	Total
Population 15+	537	162	699
Employed general %	7	60	20
Employed CDEP %	12	4	10
Unemployed %	0.5	2	1
Not in labour force %	80	32	69

The labour force status breakdown in the 2001 Indigenous Profiles (Table 4) is somewhat more basic than in 2006 (Table 3). However, it is clear that labour force participation has increased markedly among the Aboriginal population – from 80 per cent being recorded as not in the labour force in 2001 down to 62 per cent in 2006. Note, however, that the biggest category of offsetting growth has been 8 per cent in 'labour force status not stated', which was not used as a category in the 2001 profiles, thus rendering the image of growth somewhat equivocal. The more unequivocal growth in labour force participation among the Aboriginal population in Anmatjere has been in CDEP employment (up from 12 per cent in 2001 to 19 per cent in 2006) and in unemployment (up from 0.5 per cent in 2001 to 6 per cent in 2006). General employment among the Aboriginal population, on the other hand, actually fell slightly from 7 per cent in 2001 to 6 per cent in 2006.

One explanation for these labour force status changes is growth in Anmatjere in 2006 of the CDEP scheme, an Aboriginal-specific work-for-welfare type program. Previously, CDEP had only been present in the outlying ACGC communities of Laramba, Engawala and Wilora. However, in 2006 ACGC became involved with the scheme for the first time as an administering organisation, and CDEP employment was introduced to Pmara Jutunta, Alyuen, Nturiya and Ti Tree town. This growth of CDEP employment in the central Anmatjere area around Ti Tree in 2006 was somewhat unusual, as the scheme had generally not been expanding in recent years. This can be seen in Table 5, which gives the 2001 and 2006 labour force status statistics from the ABS's Indigenous Profiles for the remote, non-urban areas of the Northern Territory as a whole, including Anmatjere. On this larger geographic scale, CDEP employment was fairly stable between 2001 and 2006, at 22 or 21 per cent of a fairly stable Aboriginal population aged 15 and over of around 20,000 people, and so too was general employment at 8 or 9 per cent. The big change in labour force status among Aboriginal people in remote areas of the Northern Territory seemed to be a move from being clearly not in the labour force in 2001 (67%) to a combination of being either not in the labour force (52%) or not clear about labour force status (12%) in 2006. In a somewhat smaller but significant change, unemployment among Aboriginal people in these remote areas of the Northern Territory rose from 3 per cent in 2001 to 6 per cent in 2006.

Table 5: Labour force status of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal populations, remote areas of the Northern Territory, 2001 and 2006

	Aboriginal	Non-Aboriginal	Total
Population 15+ 2001	19,845	13,184	32,246
Employed general %	8	70	33
Employed CDEP %	22	3	15
Unemployed %	3	2	3
Not in labour force %	67	25	52
Population 15+ 2006	20,204	8,046	29,838
Employed general %	9	85	30
Employed CDEP %	21	1	15
Self-employed %	0	2	0.5
Unemployed %	6	1	4
Not in labour force %	52	12	39
Labour force status not stated %	12	2	13

Note: The geography used in this table is the ABS's national remoteness classification for 'very remote', Northern Territory. This essentially covers the remote, non-urban parts of the Northern Territory comparable to and including Anmatjere.

I would suggest that these changes in labour force status among Aboriginal people in remote areas of the Northern Territory between 2001 and 2006 were in fact very unclear and possibly related to a change in approach to 'activity testing' within the income support system for people in these areas. Whereas previously those on Newstart or other unemployment payments in these areas were given exemptions from such 'activity testing', by 2006, with the attempted expansion of Job Network providers into remote areas, there was a concerted attempt to include them in such testing. Hence, in the context of the social security system, income support recipients were increasingly being told that they had to look for employment, or undertake other activities, in order to maintain their eligibility. The implication for the Census and the statistical system was that these same people, while clearly indicating that they did not 'have a paid job' in the last week, might in response to the subsequent question: 'Did the person look for work at any time in the last four weeks?', be increasingly likely to answer 'yes' rather than 'no'. An affirmative answer to this latter question will bring the respondent into the labour force as unemployed, or at least make their status of being not in the labour force less clear. There is a fine, somewhat arbitrary and not very socially relevant distinction being made here between those who are unemployed but still considered part of the workforce and those who are not part of the workforce.

The figures for the non-Aboriginal population columns in Tables 5, 4 and the bottom of Table 3 suggest that this change in labour force status from 2001 to 2006 was very different for non-Aboriginal people in Anmatjere and in remote areas of the Northern Territory more generally. For this decreasing population, down from 13,184 in 2001 to 8,046 in 2006, the rise in labour force participation was reflected in a proportional rise in more general employment, up in Anmatjere from 60 per cent of the population aged 15 and over in 2001 to 85 per cent in 2006 and from 70 to 85 per cent in the remote areas of the Northern Territory more generally.

One further thing to note about the non-Aboriginal population in Anmatjere is the decrease from 162 people aged 15 years and over in 2001 (Table 4) to 84 in 2006 (Table 3). This is due

to a boundary change as much as to population decline, as the 2001 Indigenous Profile was for the Anmatjere Indigenous Area, which includes the Hanson Balance CD, while the 2006 Indigenous Profile was for the more restricted ACGC local government area. Hence, while the 2006 non-Aboriginal population aged 15 years and over in Table 3 is probably dominated by non-Aboriginal people living in Ti Tree town, the 2001 other population in Table 4 includes non-Aboriginal people living on pastoral properties and other out-of-town locations, such as roadhouses and the horticultural farms area. So not too much should be made of changes in the characteristics of the non-Aboriginal populations in these two tables.

This complication about the changing area covered by the Indigenous Profiles for 2001 and 2006 also makes its presence felt in housing tenure statistics, which are presented in Tables 6 and 7. With this change the non-Aboriginal population group decreases significantly from 177 in 2001 to 108 in 2006, though curiously their number of households/dwellings increases slightly from 37 to 40. However, despite these boundary complications, the basic picture in housing tenure is clearly one of major difference between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal households.

Tables 6 and 7 show that Aboriginal households in the Anmatjere region live predominantly in community rental dwellings, with just a few in public, employer and other rental dwellings. Non-Aboriginal households, by contrast, live predominantly either in owned or employer and other rental dwellings, with again just a few in public rental. The prevalence of owned dwellings among non-Aboriginal households is easier to see in the 2001 profile of the Anmatjere Indigenous Area, which included the Hanson Balance CD and 13 owned dwellings out of 37. The prevalence of employer and other rental among these non-Aboriginal households stands out more in the 2006 profile of the more restricted ACGC Local Government Area, which had 17 such dwellings among 40. The 2006 Place of Enumeration profile for the Hanson Balance CD, which in some sense should be added to Table 7 to make it more closely comparable with Table 6, identified another 15 owned dwellings, plus 20 community, employer or other rental dwellings – but it does not distinguish between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal households.

Table 6: Housing tenure of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal households, Anmatjere Indigenous Area, 2001

	Aboriginal	Non-Aboriginal	Total
Population	804	177	995
Households/ dwellings	133	37	170
Owned or being purchased	0	13	13
Public rental	3	3	6
Community rental	106	0	106
Employer and other rental	6	6	12
Other tenure, tenure not stated	18	15	33

Table 7: Housing tenure of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal households, ACGC Local Government Area, 2006

	Aboriginal	Non-Aboriginal	Total
Population	847	108	966
Households/ dwellings	137	40	177
Owned or being purchased	0	4	4
Public rental	6	6	12
Community rental	110	4	114
Employer and other rental	4	17	21
Other tenure, tenure not stated	17	9	26

It is also notable in both the 2001 and 2006 housing tenure profiles that there is a complete lack of private rental dwellings in the Anmatjere region and only a small presence of public rental dwellings. The large numbers of dwellings of a tenure which cannot be clearly stated is also worthy of note (33 in 2001 and 26 in 2006). The dominant housing tenure categories from southern, settled Australia, of owner/purchaser, private rental and public rental clearly do not capture very well the housing tenure patterns of this remote, arid zone region, which seem to be far more dominated by community rental for Aboriginal households and employer and other rental for non-Aboriginal households (see Sanders 2005, 2008b on this point more generally).

Table 8 shows community rental to be less expensive for Aboriginal households than public rental, as well as far more numerous. It also shows employer rental and other rental to be quite inexpensive for both Aboriginal households and non-Aboriginal households, if it can be accessed. Interestingly, public housing for non-Aboriginal households seems to be less expensive than for Aboriginal households, which could reflect household size.

Table 8: Rents of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal households, ACGC Local Government Area, 2006

	Public rental	Community rental	Employer and other rental
Aboriginal households			
<\$100 per week	0	94	4
\$100–\$179 per week	3	9	0
>\$180 per week	3	0	0
Non-Aboriginal households			
<\$100 per week	6	0	13
>\$100 per week	0	0	0

Table 9 presents one final Aboriginal/non-Aboriginal comparison from the 2006 Indigenous Profiles for the ACGC Local Government Area relating to the occupation of employed persons aged 15 years and over. Whereas the Aboriginal employed are predominantly labourers or community and personal service workers (110 out of 139), the non-Aboriginal employed are predominantly managers, professionals, trades and technical workers (46 out of 72). Together with the foregoing housing, income and labour force status comparisons, this seems to suggest a highly economically and socially stratified region. Anmatjere is in many ways divided between a minority, employed, high income, non-Aboriginal managerial population living in owned or employer rental dwellings and a majority Aboriginal population

who live in community rental dwellings on lower incomes derived either from more basic employment or from income support. The data about constancy of residence one and five years ago also suggest an Aboriginal population highly attached to the region and a somewhat more transient Aboriginal population.

Table 9: Occupation of employed Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal populations, ACGC Local Government Area, 2006

	Aboriginal	Non-Aboriginal	Total
Population 15+ Employed	139	72	214
Manager, Technical, Professional, Trades	9	46	58
Community & Personal Services	35	8	43
Sales	3	5	8
Labourers	75	13	88
Inadequately described	17	0	17

Concluding comments

I began this paper by noting that in many ways it was simply an exercise in seeing how far Census statistics available on the ABS website can take us in profiling a small, non-urban, relatively remote arid zone region. The answer is that – despite some complications about changing boundaries, changing collection methods and the limited social relevance of some standard questions and categories of answer in both the labour force status and housing areas – there is still a capacity to use the Census statistics on the ABS website to usefully profile such a region. The image that emerges in Anmatjere is of a highly economically and socially stratified region, both in terms of its spatial organisation into CDs and in terms of Aboriginal/non-Aboriginal comparisons across the region. This, I would argue, is a reasonably truthful image of Anmatjere, which informed observers would have expected. The implications of this stratification for local government reform in the region are, I think quite challenging, and it is to these that I will turn in these concluding comments.

In earlier work I have described the way in which the formation of ACGC as a ‘scattered’ local government back in the 1990s attempted to bring together a regional federation of discrete Aboriginal settlements plus the interests of Ti Tree town, while leaving outside that local government structure the non-town, settler interests of the Anmatjere region such as those of pastoralists, roadhouse operators and horticulturalists. In recently assessing the record of ACGC over its 15-year existence, I have suggested that it was reasonably successful in holding together that regional federation of discrete Aboriginal settlements, but that it was less successful in drawing together Aboriginal and settler–town interests (Sanders 2008a: 303–05). Settler interests in Ti Tree town tended to leave ACGC to the Aboriginal interests. ACGC became an essentially Aboriginal organisation and the settler population in the town and the broader region pursued their interests through other organisational means.

This census-based profile of the Anmatjere region helps us understand this separation of political interests. The starkly contrasting socioeconomic positions of the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal populations in the Anmatjere region are evident not just in Ti Tree town compared with the outlying discrete Aboriginal settlements, but also in the large Hanson Balance CD, which was not part of the former ACGC local government area but is now part of the

Anmatjere ward of the new Central Desert Shire. The census-based profile therefore also helps us to understand just how challenging a task it will be for a local government in an area such as this to genuinely combine and balance the diverse interests of its majority Aboriginal and minority non-Aboriginal populations. Whether Central Desert Shire will be as or any more successful than ACGC in combining and balancing these diverse social and economic interests, only time will tell. Clearly the inclusion of the Hanson Balance CD provides a greater presence in the local government area for settler interests with considerable economic means. But Aboriginal interests will still be numerically the vast majority, though economically less well-off. Whether any local government in a remote area of the Northern Territory with this distribution of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal populations with starkly different socioeconomic characteristics can achieve a unification and balancing of such diverse interests in one organisation must, I think, remain an open question. Census profiles show us the magnitude of the challenge, but other forms of analysis will be needed to examine whether the challenge is being met.

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