

Pukatja/Ernabella and its Environs

Bernard Guerin
Pauline Guerin

Working paper

65

2011



University of
South Australia



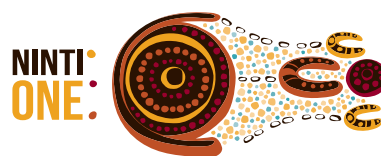
Flinders
UNIVERSITY

**NINTI:
ONE:**



Pukatja/Ernabella and its Environs

Bernard Guerin and Pauline Guerin



Contributing author information

Prof. Bernard Guerin teaches social and community psychology in the School of Psychology, Social Work & Social Policy at the University of South Australia.

Dr Pauline Guerin teaches health psychology in the School of Nursing and Midwifery at Flinders University of South Australia.

Desert Knowledge CRC Working Paper Number 65

ISBN: 978 1 74158 183 4 (Web copy)

ISSN: 1833-7309

Citation

Guerin B and Guerin P. 2011. *Pukatja/Ernabella and its Environs*. DKCRC Working Paper 65. Ninti One Limited, Alice Springs.

For additional information please contact

Ninti One Limited

Publications Officer

PO Box 3971

Alice Springs NT 0871

Australia

Telephone +61 8 8959 6000

Fax +61 8 8959 6048

www.nintione.com.au

© Ninti One Limited 2011

Acknowledgements

The authors wish to acknowledge the good people of Pukatja. Special thanks to Gary Lewis, Sandra Lewis, Makinti Minutjukur, and many others who shared their time and stories with us.

The work reported in this publication was supported by funding from the Australian Government Cooperative Research Centres Program through the Desert Knowledge CRC. The views expressed herein do not necessarily represent the views of Desert Knowledge CRC or its Participants. The Desert Knowledge Cooperative Research Centre (2003–2010) was an unincorporated joint venture with 28 partners whose mission was 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.

Abstract

This paper provides a general profile of Pukatja (Ernabella) and its surroundings. It discusses some of the general features that contribute to sustainability, such as water, fuel, distance and employment. While these are certainly sustainability issues for the region, the paper discusses more of the social or 'people' issues for sustainability, which the authors believe are more urgent. For this region we believe the main problems for sustainability are those of the large youth population and lack of resources to engage them, and the constant changes in government policies and services that disrupt any ongoing planning and can set community members against one another. It is difficult for communities to plan ahead when there is a long history of everything being changed within a year or two. This is especially a problem with service provision, even though service provision is essential for sustainability.

Contents

Abstract	iii
Sustainability: a case study of Pukatja and its environs	1
Overview	1
General characteristics	2
Population pyramids	2
Stocks and flows: an overview	6
Water	6
Power	6
Food	6
Economy	6
Conclusion	7
Challenges for sustainability	7
References	8

List of figures and tables

Figure 1. Map showing part of South Australia, with detail of the APY Lands	1
Table 1. Population estimates of Pukatja, from Coombs (1977) and the 2001 Census	2
Table 2: Population pyramids for Pukatja compared to the rest of the state	3
Table 3. Language spoken by Pukatja residents, taken from the 2006 Census	3
Table 4. Schooling achieved by Pukatja residents from the 2006 Census	4
Table 5. Income for Pukatja residents from the 2006 Census	5
Table 6. Religions of Pukatja residents from the 2006 Census	5

List of shortened forms

AnTEP	Anangu Teacher Education Program
APY Lands	Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara Lands
CDEP	Community Development Employment Project
NT	Northern Territory
SA	South Australia

Sustainability: a case study of Pukatja and its environs

Writing an overview to Pukatja (Ernabella) is daunting because, far from being a remote, little-known settlement, Pukatja has had over a century of regular visits by researchers, missionaries and government officials, and has had many books and papers written on various themes about the settlement and the people (e.g. Bonner 1988; Coombs 1977; Edwards 1966; Hilliard 1968; Mattingley & Hampton 1998; South Australia Centre for Economic Studies 1994; Toyne & Vachon 1984; Yengoyan 1993).

Overview

Pukatja is in the north-west of South Australia (SA), 30 km from the Northern Territory (NT) border, on the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara Lands (APY Lands). It is nestled in the Musgrave Ranges and boasts some beautiful surroundings.

In terms of social location, the area is home to 600–700 mainly Pitjantjatjara speakers, a language community that has occupied the area for centuries. Kin are spread around the area and, significantly, into the north across the NT border and to the south as far as the SA coastline. The nearest large town is Alice Springs, which is about 500 km to the north-east. There is a spread of small towns in and around the APY Lands, including Amata, Iwantja (Indulkana), Kalka, Kaltjiti (Fregon), Mimili, Murputja, Oak Valley, Pipalyatjara, Umoona, Umuwa, Waturu, Yalata and Yunyarinyi (Kenmore Park), as well as many smaller homeland outstations.

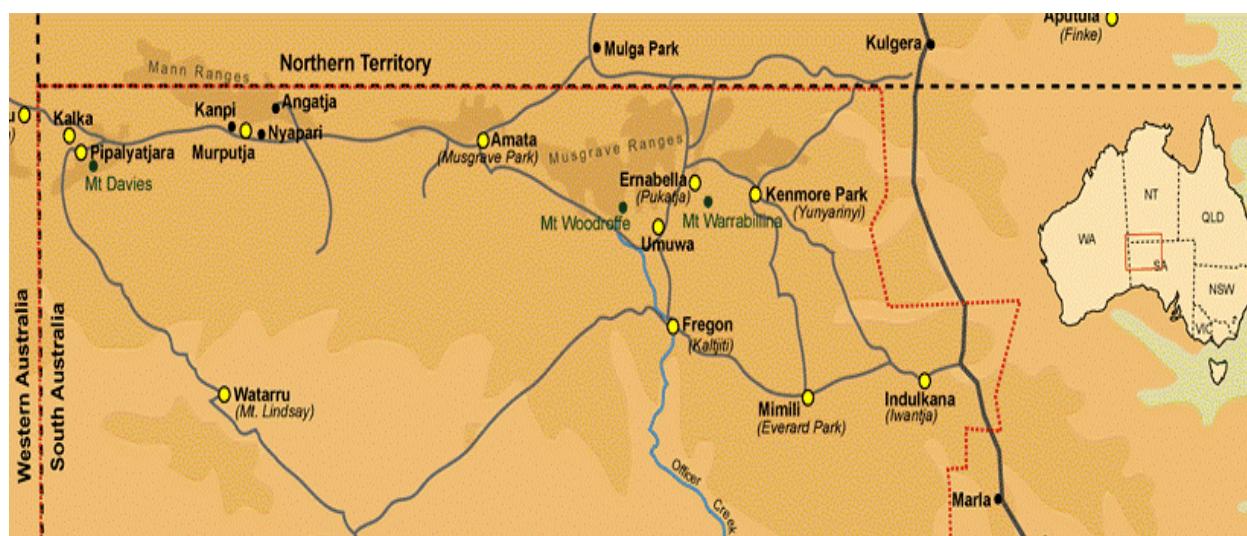


Figure 1. Map showing part of South Australia, with detail of the APY Lands

General characteristics

The demography of the region appears to have been stable for some time, although good data are difficult to achieve. In 1977, Coombs reported 354 residents of Ernabella, as profiled in Table 1.

Table 1. Population estimates of Pukatja, from Coombs (1977) and the 2001 Census

Aged Pensioners		Other Adults		Youth		School children		Pre-school children		Total	
M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
10	10	52	65	15	5	60	70	20	30	157	197
From Coombs (1977, source is uncertain)											
The 2001 Census reported the following:											
Pukatja				446							
Amata				273							
Kaltjiti (Fregon)				300							
Iwantja (Indulkana)				280							
Mimili,				250							
Pipalyatjara				114							

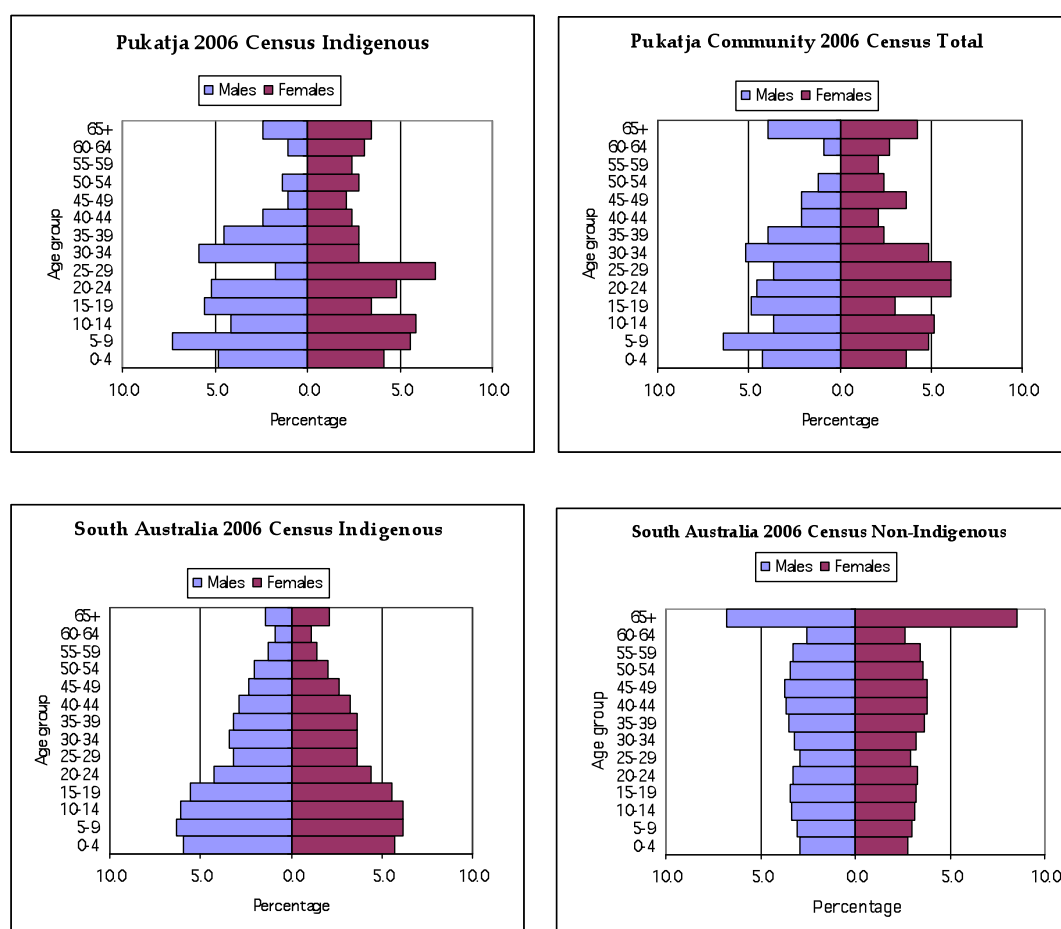
The 2006 Census reported 332 persons in usual residence in Pukatja, with 289 (87%) of the total identifying as Aboriginal.

From these data we can see that the total population of Ernabella has not changed much from the 354 reported by Coombs in 1977 to the 446 reported in the 2001 Census and 332 in the 2006 Census.

Population pyramids

Using the 2006 Census data for a closer breakdown, it can be seen in Table 2 that there were 137 Aboriginal males, 152 Aboriginal females, 13 non-Aboriginal males, and 24 non-Aboriginal females. Of the Aboriginal people recorded as living in Pukatja there were more females (53%) than males (47%). Of the non-Aboriginal people recorded as living in Pukatja, there was a much greater proportion of females (65%) than males (35%).

We can see from the population pyramids that there is a much younger population than for the whole of South Australia.

Table 2: Population pyramids for Pukatja compared to the rest of the state

Language

Details about language usage are given in Table 3. Taken from the 2006 Census, it shows that 7% reported speaking 'English only', with 169 (59%) reported as speaking English 'well or very well' (as well as speaking another language) and 87 (31%) reported as speaking English 'not well or not at all' (as well as speaking another language).

Table 3. Language spoken by Pukatja residents, taken from the 2006 Census

Language spoken at home:	Aboriginal			Non-Aboriginal		
	Males	Females	Persons	Males	Females	Persons
English only	14	9	23	14	25	39
Australian Indigenous Language	123	137	260	0	3	3

Speaks Australian Indigenous Language & speaks English:						
Not well or not at all	40	45	85	0	0	0
Very well or well	81	91	172	0	3	3

Governance

Governance has several layers that sometimes conflict. Pukatja Council has an elected chairperson and formerly, under Community Development Employment Projects (CDEP), had some administrative help in the office. The APY Lands has a council and the APY Executive also has an elected chairperson. This works with AP Services to provide some of the servicing responsibilities such as roads, housing repairs, construction and waste management.

Education

Pukatja has the Ernabella Primary School, which was established in 1970. The University of South Australia has run the Anangu Teacher Education Program (AnTEP) for over 20 years, providing early education qualifications to local Anangu. Most graduates are employed by Ernabella Primary or nearby schools. The school operates bilingually.

Educational attainment data from the 2006 Census in Ernabella (Table 4) shows that a greater number of Aboriginal females had higher levels of schooling completed compared with Aboriginal males and that the majority of non-Aboriginal people had completed Year 12 or equivalent.

Table 4. Schooling achieved by Pukatja residents from the 2006 Census

Highest year of school completed:	Aboriginal			Non-Aboriginal		
	Males	Females	Persons	Males	Females	Persons
Year 12 or equivalent	0	5	5	6	19	25
Year 11 or equivalent	4	6	10	3	0	3
Year 10 or equivalent	4	15	19	3	3	6
Year 9 or equivalent	22	19	41	0	0	0
Year 8 or below	43	48	91	3	0	3
Did not go to school	0	3	3	0	0	0

Health

Nganampa Health runs a series of clinics over the APY Lands, and one is situated in Pukatja. This has consulting doctors and a team of nurses on regular duty.

Households

Table 5 shows that the median individual weekly income was five times greater for non-Aboriginal people than Aboriginal people in Pukatja. The household size was two and a half times greater for Aboriginal than non-Aboriginal households, but the household income for Aboriginal people was about half that of the non-Aboriginal household income.

Table 5. Income for Pukatja residents from the 2006 Census

	Aboriginal persons/ households with Aboriginal persons (a)	Non-Aboriginal persons (b)/ other households
Median age of persons	24	39
Median individual income (\$/weekly)	208	1,075
Median household income (\$/weekly)	850	1,475
Median housing loan repayment (\$/monthly)	0	0
Median rent (\$/weekly)	34	0
Average number of persons per bedroom	2.0	1.2
Average household size	5.0	1.7

(a) A household with Aboriginal person(s) is any household that had at least one person of any age as a resident at the time of the Census who identified as being of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander origin.

(b) Includes persons who did not state their Indigenous status.

Religion

Analysis of religion from the 2006 Census is shown in Table 6. The majority of people in Ernabella were affiliated with the Uniting Church.

Table 6. Religions of Pukatja residents from the 2006 Census

Religion	Number	%
Uniting Church	215	77
Lutheran	13	5
No religion	21	7
Not stated	24	8

Stocks and flows: an overview

‘Stocks’ are aspects of the natural resource base and ‘flows’ are interventions that make these resources productive in sustaining human life. The relationship between stocks and flows requires human intervention and depends upon human capital – and is therefore impacted by political and technical factors. The settlement discussed in this paper has shown some ingenuity and significant determination in translating stocks into flows.

Before CDEP was abolished much of the town servicing was carried out through that scheme by community members. Since then, AP Services and other concerns have taken over with many fewer local employment opportunities.

Water

There is a water and reticulation supply through six main bores pumped into three storage tanks and treated with UV disinfection.

There is an effluent collection system for all houses that is disposed of to the west.

Power

Electricity is generated through diesel generators run through the Electricity Trust of South Australia. Bringing the diesel in is costly and likely to rise with increases in oil costs. This supply also serves Umuwa and Yunyarinyi.

Food

Food is difficult at such a remote distance. There is a store in Pukatja where many people get groceries, and this has recently joined in promoting healthier foods (although a fast food shop is located in the same building). Many people travel to Alice Springs to do shopping at one of the large stores there, and most people eat a number of bush products – although this is not as frequent as in past times.

Economy

There are many organisations and facilities based in Pukatja with various employment opportunities. The arts centre is the major income earner for Anangu, the Aboriginal people who live in Pukatja, as well as teacher employment through the Ernabella Primary School. Some Anangu are employed through the Nganampa Health Council’s Pukatja Health Clinic, and on occasion income can be earned via agistment for cattle. Pukatja also has the AnTEP program, a TAFE and a council office (though staff employed in these organisations are usually not Anangu).

Until mid 2007, CDEP payments kept most families engaged in work and with an income. This program has since been removed without other employment being established. At the same time, major services were allocated to outside interests (run from Umuwa and Port Augusta) which has negatively impacted on the sense of determination and ownership of an economy. While there are opportunities and projects aimed to develop skills and enterprises in the community, the seemingly constant changes to how services are implemented and the instability of employment options are proving to be a burden on the community.

There are some drives and projects to begin establishing a better base of skills and enterprises but the disheartening effect of the ending of CDEP and services removal are proving difficult for the community to overcome.

Conclusion

Challenges for sustainability

The key issues are:

- finding or creating employment opportunities
- building enterprises for employment
- dealing with the constant changes in government policies and services, which makes sensible planning by the community difficult
- maintaining the water supply
- meeting the high costs associated with trucking in diesel for the electricity supply
- providing equitable fuel and food options
- providing more housing and improving the state of housing.

References

- Bonner, NT. 1988. *Always Anangu: A review of the Pitjantjatjara and Yankunytjatjara Aboriginal communities of Central Australia*. Department of Aboriginal Affairs, Adelaide.
- Coombs, HC. 1977. *The Pitjantjatjara Aborigines: A Strategy for Survival*. Centre for Resource and Environmental Studies, Working Paper HCC/1: 1977. Australian National University, Canberra.
- Edwards, WH. 1966. 'Report on Ernabella Labour Export Project, 1965–1966.' In I Sharp & C Tatz (eds.), *Aborigines in the Economy*, Jacaranda Press & Monash University, Melbourne.
- Hilliard, WM. 1968. *The People in Between: The Pitjantjatjara People of Ernabella*. Funk & Wagnalls, New York.
- Mattingley, C & Hampton, K. 1998. *Survival in Our Own Land: 'Aboriginal' Experiences in South Australia Since 1836*. Australian Scholarly Publishing, Melbourne.
- South Australia Centre for Economic Studies. 1994. *Economic Study of the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Lands*. South Australia Centre for Economic Studies, Adelaide.
- Toyne, P & Vachon, D. 1984. *Growing Up the Country: The Pitjantjatjara Struggle for their Land*. Penguin Books, Ringwood, Victoria.
- Yengoyan, AA. 1993. 'Religion, morality, and prophetic traditions: Conversion among the Pitjantjatjara of Central Australia.' In R W Hefner (ed.), *Conversion to Christianity: Historical and Anthropological Perspectives on a Great Transformation*. University of California Press, Berkeley.

DKCRC Partners

