

Submission No. 1

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SA Health

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Re: **Submission to the enquiry in to Remote community stores in Aboriginal and Torres Strait communities**

Dear Committee Secretary,

We are a group of workers who visit remote areas of South Australia for nutrition and physical activity promotion. In many remote areas we have trained local volunteers or health workers in basic nutrition promotion, and community members are keen to promote healthy eating amongst their networks. We would like to highlight some of the issues that the local people have identified in collaboration with us, around food supply and accessibility.

Our main concerns are:

1. The cost of healthy food. Stores attribute the higher prices in remote areas to the cost of freight on unsealed roads. However it is not clear how this extra cost is added to each item - eg in one community a 750g packet of pasta in one community was \$6 (around 5 times the metropolitan price, whereas 1 litre of milk was \$3 (around 2 times the metropolitan price). Irrespective of how the cost is attributed, the cost of a healthy diet has been identified as the single biggest barrier to healthy eating. It is simply not possible to consume the requisite number of serves of fruit, vegetables and other healthy choices within a normal budget, in order to prevent chronic disease.
2. The lack of transparency in pricing of goods sold by the kilo. In many stores the prices of vegetables and fruit sold by the kilo are not displayed, leaving consumers unable to make choices around value for money and budgeting before they reach the checkout.

3. The lack of competition- in some towns there is only one store, and many consumers do not have transport available to travel lengthy distances to the next town for supplies.

Some of the ancillary issues are:

- Not all remote areas of SA have a store that is community owned - many are private businesses, operating on a for-profit basis. In another situation there are two stores: a community owned store and a private business/roadhouse servicing both local and tourist needs at prices tourists expect and can afford.
- Some communities are not on the power grid, and face very high power costs (hence operation of refrigeration and cooking equipment may be inconsistent).
- The number of food deliveries per week can be as low as once a week. In order to purchase and store enough food for 1 week a family requires reliable and continuous refrigeration/ freezing facilities. Furthermore it is clear that the delivery trucks and stores do not have capacity to supply the required quantity of fruit and vegetables in one weekly trip. Calculated from first principles, a community of 80 adults requires $5 \times 7 \times 80 \times 75g = 2800$ serves of vegetables per week (210 kilos), and $2 \times 7 \times 80 \times 100g$ serves of fruit per week (112 kg).

We would like to request that the committee includes Oodnadatta, Marree, Oak Valley and Yalata in the scope of their inquiry, in order to address some of the nutritional needs of Aboriginal people living in remote SA.

Yours sincerely,

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