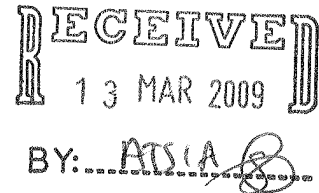


Oodnadatta Community Members
C/- Anthea Amos

To Committee Secretary
House of Representatives Standing Committee on
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs
PO Box 6021
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600
AUSTRALIA



Email: atsia.reps@aph.gov.au

Date Due by 13th March 2009.

RE: Submission to the enquiry into Remote Community Stores in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Communities.

We are a group of Oodnadatta community members; Oodnadatta is the most remote town in South Australia being about 1100kms north of Adelaide. Oodnadatta has a population of about 200 and about 55% of our community identify as Aboriginal.

We are store, crèche, youth and aged care workers and Community Foodies (volunteer peer education around nutrition). Most of us are Aboriginal, parents, primary providers and carers for large families.

We would like to take this opportunity to provide the below information to the Enquiry into Remote Community Stores in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Communities. We very much appreciate the opportunity to express our concerns and issues with food supply to our communities.

Food Supply

- Food supply is limited and sometimes inadequate; it does not provide enough healthy foods for the population of the town.
- Oodnadatta receives one food delivery truck per week on a Thursday afternoon, and fresh food is available for sale on Friday mornings. If the road is closed due to rain we do not get our food delivery until the road reopens. Over Christmas period there is no delivery for 3 weeks or so.
- Food ordered by the store is not always delivered due to the wholesaler not having supplies. For example the store has ordered tinned peas for 3 weeks and the peas have still not arrived.
- The limited buying power of the store means there is a lack of variety of food choices in our store, we have to take what is there.
- The closest alternative shopping is at Coober Pedy 200 kms south west. They get delivery on the same truck on the previous day (Wednesdays). Sometimes Oodnadatta people travel to Coober Pedy to shop because there is more variety

or because they need to be in Coober Pedy for another reason (such as hair cut, dentist or doctor).

- Oodnadatta food is packed in Adelaide and travels over 1100 kms via several other townships, where the truck is opened and the cold chain may be broken.
- Cost of freight over unsealed roads is significantly higher per km than on sealed roads. There are 200kms of unsealed road between Coober Pedy and Oodnadatta.
- Oodnadatta has one community owned store and a privately run roadhouse.
- The purchasing power of the community owned store is limited by what it can afford to buy, and by the requirements to buy bulk. This limits the quantity and variety of foods the store can buy.
- Between store competition does not contribute to pricing however the roadhouse services both tourist and local needs and stock and pricing reflects tourist's needs and affordability.
- Because fresh food is in limited supply and delivery days do not coincide with pay days, people on low incomes often miss the opportunity to purchase fresh foods when they are nice.
- Oodnadatta is a very arid environment, and it is hard to grow our own vegetables and fruits. Our water is of poor quality (high in salt) and our soils are also very poor (saline and hard cracking clay). The local Dunjiba Council plans to establish a community garden adjacent the creek and fresh water dam.

Food Quality

- The fresh fruit and vegetables usually arrive in the store in reasonably good condition but it does not last through the week, within a few days of arriving it is often poor quality, bruised, brown, wilted, soft/overripe.
- Short shelf life foods are often out of date shortly after it arrives in Oodnadatta. The store has trouble getting longer due date supplies (eg fresh milk).

Food Cost

- Food is expensive in our stores. Items are up to 2-3 times the cost in Pt Augusta (the closest regional centre). This is our information, and we would like it backed up by a Market Basket Survey.
- Fuel is also very expensive and there is no local transport between towns for any purpose (shopping, or accessing health services). Many households do not have a car and are therefore unable to travel to do their shopping at a bigger centre.
- The cost of freight is very high, it costs \$15 a box and \$200 a pallet for freight. One person recently bought \$300 of bulk groceries and the freight cost \$80.
- To order from Woolworths in Pt Augusta is costs \$20 for the groceries to be packed, \$10 for delivery to trucking depot, and then \$15 per box for freight to Oodnadatta. Because Woolworths do not pack the boxes tightly there are often more boxes to pay freight on than necessary.
- We therefore need to buy whatever is available in our town at whatever the cost.

Water Supply

- Town water supply in Oodnadatta is not-drinkable. Oodnadatta town water is smelly, salty and dark yellow in colour.
- SA Water have provided Oodnadatta businesses with a letter saying that the water is unsuitable for cleaning teeth.
- We rely on rainwater for drinking and cooking.
- During drought times households run out of rainwater.
- In some households air-conditioning water runs onto roof and into rainwater tanks causing rainwater contamination.

Private Store Ownership

- While the Oodnadatta community store has the objective to provide food to the community at affordable prices, requirements by the accountants for profits and limitations on purchasing power, affect both food prices and variety.
- We like to support our community store, so we prefer to shop there. The Roadhouse is also the Post Office and a community meeting place, so we shop in both places.
- The community store is open 5 ½ days/week. The roadhouse is open 7 days/week so we shop at the roadhouse on weekends and to buy petrol on the weekends.
- If the community store had back-up and weekend management we would use it more.
- The Roadhouse has book-up for aged care pensioners, and this is good because it is open 7days/week. There is no book-up at the community store.
- A lot of people don't really plan or shop ahead so we need a store 7 days/week.

Impacts

- In our culture we have an obligation to share and care for our extended family. Food is always shared among family, and extended family. This makes it hard to make the weekly shop last between food deliveries.
- There are many large low income families in our communities, food prices, makes it hard to make the weekly shop/budget last between food deliveries.
- Because fresh food is in limited supply and delivery days do not coincide with pay days, people on low incomes often miss the opportunity to purchase fresh foods as these are sometimes sold out or not nice within days.
- Lack of food variety for meal options, leads to a lack of interest in food preparation and often we go for the takeaway foods because it is easy and not much more expensive (for hit chips and pies) than home cooked meal.
- We have many low income large families and high prices make it difficult to buy healthy choices such as lean meat, fresh veggies and fruit. This means that we buy cheap foods that 'go around', such as hot chips and pies (tends to be fatty food).
- Electricity Supply - town generator, occasional break downs especially in summer, can lead to food going off.
- Electricity costs, and high demand (Air conditioning, refrigeration and freezers) affects food budget and storage.
- Shopping for fresh foods in Coober Pedy, requires appropriate storage facilities limiting the quantity of fresh foods that can be transported home,

(200kms) for example 4 large families sharing the cost of car fuel to Pt Augusta are not able to keep all their food cool to transport it home as you can't fit 4 big eskies in one small car.

- Some children will miss school if there is no food for lunches.
- The road house has a 'book-up' system for the old people (tjilpi), for aged care pension management.
- Drug, alcohol and gambling problems make a big impact on several household food supplies and budgets.
- We make as much use of bush tucker as we can, but to get kangaroo meat we need a good car, gun and licences, fuel and bullets....good quality meat but not always cheap.
- Our people are dying too young from chronic diseases – this is a BIG issue for us. We know we need to eat healthier, but we can't afford it and food is too dear. We cannot afford 2 fruit and 5 vegetable serves per person per day in our household.
- When the food and money get low, the foods that stretch to the end of the week are: \$10 hot chips, Corned beef curry, bread and sauce, damper jam or golden syrup.
- When rainwater runs out people are tempted to buy other sweet drinks (soft drinks and cordial).

Some Solutions

- We would like the enquiry to commission a market basket survey in Oodnadatta.
- We would like assistance with energy/electricity savings and power management
- Support for local stores to subsidise healthy foods by increasing costs on 'junk foods'.
- Assistance with making agreements with store owners for community members to bulk buy to reduce costs to families and support our store's viability.

We request that the enquiry include Oodnadatta within this enquiry to assist us with providing healthier food to our communities at an affordable cost.

Yours Sincerely

Anthea Amos

Kimberly Amos

Janice Bailes

Maxine Marks

Roseanne Woodforde

Julia Lennon

Christine Lennon

Fran Ames