

ABORIGINAL TOWN CAMPS AND TANGENTYERE COUNCIL
THE BATTLE FOR SELF-DETERMINATION IN ALICE SPRINGS

by

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Abbreviations

ADC	Aboriginal Development Commission (1980-90)
AGPS	Australian Government Publishing Service
AHP	Aboriginal Housing Panel
AIAS	Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, Canberra
ALP	Australian Labor Party
ATSIC	Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islanders Commission (established in 1990)
CAAC	Central Australian Aboriginal Congress
CAALAS	Central Australian Aboriginal Legal Aid Service
CDEP	Community Development Employment Project (administered by DAA)
CLC	Central Land Council
CLP	Country Liberal Party (NT)
COFA	Committee of Funding Agencies (1989)
DAA	Department of Aboriginal Affairs (Commonwealth) (1972-90)
DCD	Department of Community Development (NT)
DEET	Department of Education, Employment and Training (Commonwealth) (Replaced DEIR)
DHC	Department of Housing and Construction (Commonwealth)
DEIR	Department of Employment and Industrial Relations (Commonwealth)
DONT	Department of the Northern Territory (Commonwealth)
IAD	Institute for Aboriginal Development, Alice Springs
NTH	Northern Territory Health Department
NTHC	Northern Territory Housing Commission

Summary

This thesis documents the history of the Alice Springs Aboriginal town camp movement, and examines the town camper's struggle for independence and the right to control their own lives.

Town camps, or fringe camps, have always been a feature of Alice Springs - they were there before the town was gazetted in 1888, in the then name of Stuart. Throughout the 1900s the official policy was to rid the town of their presence, and they only survived because town campers persistently resisted this policy.

With the advent of a more progressive attitude towards Aboriginal people in this country in the 1970s, the Alice Springs town camp struggle changed from resistance, to actively asserting their right to exist as legitimate communities. They successfully negotiated land tenure and services, and in 1977 established their own representative and resource organisation, Tangentyere Council.

However, despite an undeniable improvement in town camp conditions - from illegal squatters to land tenure, from humpies and bits of tin to houses - and despite an official policy of self-determination, the right to control their own lives is still a right which town campers must constantly assert, and which is resisted and undermined by both Commonwealth and Northern Territory governments, and their bureaucracies, including the recently restructured and renamed Department of Aboriginal Affairs.

Statement of Authorship

Except where reference is made in the text of the thesis, this thesis contains no material published elsewhere or extracted in whole or in part from a thesis presented by me for another degree or diploma.

No other person's work has been used without due acknowledgement in the main text of the thesis.

This thesis has not been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any other tertiary institution.

Signed:

Date: March 1991

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Finally, without the trust, support and patience of the Alice Springs town camp mob and the workers at Tangentyere Council, this thesis would not have been possible. I thank them, and hope that their trust and time has not been in vain, and that this final report is of use to them in their struggle. In particular my thanks must go to Geoff Shaw and Bob Durnan.

In thanking people, I also note that too many of those with whom I worked and made friendships in Central Australia, young and old, have since passed away. It is a stark reminder that life and conditions for town campers, and indeed Aboriginal people throughout this country, are still horribly inequitable.

Chapter One

INTRODUCTION

We got lost in the welfare days. ... Then we started Tangentyere Council. We picked up people out of the drain. We asked for Traditional Land from NT Government (Wenten Rubuntja, 5 July 1990).

This thesis is one story of Aboriginal people's struggle to survive, as individuals, families and communities, set in the Aboriginal town camps or fringe camps in Alice Springs, in Central Australia. It is both a documentary study of the town camp movement, and an examination of the concept of self-determination today.

TOWN CAMPS, ALICE SPRINGS AND TANGENTYERE

The town camps began in Alice Springs in the 1880s, even before the town was gazetted,¹ as a direct result of Aboriginal people being dispossessed of their traditional lands by the invasion and occupation of non-Aboriginal settlers. Although initially accepted as convenient ration distribution points and labour camps, as the town grew in the 1900s, so did opposition to them. But the camps survived, initially by resisting or avoiding measures set up to remove or assimilate them. Such measures included at least four official roundups and forced evacuations of town campers to bush settlements between the years of 1929 and 1960, and the declaration of the town as an area prohibited to Aboriginal people from 1928-64. From the 1970s however, along with a change in attitude to Aboriginal people generally throughout this country, the town camp struggle began to change from resistance to actively asserting their rights. With the assistance of external groups, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, town campers began to demand land tenure, shelter and services, and in 1977 established their own representative and resource organisation, which they called Tangentyere Council, 'tangentyere' being an Arrernte word meaning 'all speaking together'. From 1977 the town camp struggle has been a movement for independence and control - for self-determination.

¹ On 28 November 1888 the town of Stuart was gazetted in the SA Government Gazette (SA, Gazette 1888). On 30 August 1933 the town of Stuart was renamed Alice Springs in the Commonwealth Gazette (Australia, Gazette 1933). In this thesis the town is referred to as Alice Springs throughout.

Table 1: Alice Springs Town Camp Populations - 1985 and 1987

	Camp	1985	1987	
			resident	visitor
01	Ilperle-Tyathe	39	46	4
02	Aper-Alwerrkngge	7	9	3
03	Basso's Farm	2	2	0
04	Mt Nancy	57	52	8
05	Anthelk-Ewlpaye	188	135+	16+
06	Nyewente	89	100	13
07	Akngwertnarre	56	48	2
08	Ewyenper-Atwatye	112	* 118	20
09	Yarrenyty-Arltere	112	* 77	0
10	Anthepe	45	19	2
11	Inarlenge	127	64	8
12	Ilyperenye	27	* 26	7
13	Ilparpa	52	60	6
14	Mpwetyere	24	39	4
15	Ilpiye-Ilpiye	30	47	9
16	Karnte	59	* 57	10
18	Lhenpe Artnwe	20		
19	Anhelke	19		
	Motor Bike camp	10		
	Total	1,075	1,057	124
			1,192 *	

NB A more intense individual camp study carried out in 1989-90 suggests that in fact the town camp population is much higher. For example, Camp number 16, Karnte, was surveyed in April 1990 over a one week period. This survey revealed a permanent population of 68, a visitor population of 53, bringing the total population to 121.

* Total population counted was 1,192. This figure includes 1,057 permanent residents, 124 visitors, and 11 unknown from Ewyenper-Atwatye, Yarrenyty-Arltere, Ilyperenye and Karnte.

Today Central Australia has an Aboriginal population of over 10,000 people, many of whom would generally use Alice Springs as a major service centre. The population of Alice Springs itself is about 22,500 people, three and a half thousand, or fifteen per cent of whom are Aboriginal.² Just over 1,000 of these Aboriginal people live on the town camps, but the camps also play host to a constant visitor population from surrounding bush communities. (See Table 1.) The town campers include Arrernte people, many of whom are traditional owners for the Alice Springs area which is known to them as Mparntwe, plus Aboriginal people from different language groups throughout Central Australia, including Warlpiri, Anmatjera, Kaytej, Pitjantjatjara, Luritja, Alyawarre and Pintupi.

² These figures are from the Australian Bureau of Statistics survey of 1986, and quoted in Khalidi (1989:3,140).

The camps themselves are located in and around the city of Alice Springs. (See Map 1.) In 1989 sixteen of them have land tenure in the form of long term leases, while several other groups still have outstanding lease applications. A total of 167 housing units have been built, along with other services including power, water and sewerage, roads, communal facilities and ablution blocks, landscaping, parks, playgrounds and street lighting.

From the early 1970s Aboriginal Housing Associations became a major feature of the Federal government's Aboriginal housing policy (Heppell 1979: 21). Housing Associations were seen as a way of accelerating the provision of housing and maintaining local community interest and responsibility for that housing (Welfare Division of NT Administration 1973: 15). It thus became a necessary prerequisite for land tenure and services that individual town camp communities become legally incorporated bodies.

Until 1978, Aboriginal communities in the NT were incorporated under the NT Associations Incorporation Act. Then the Commonwealth government passed the Aboriginal Councils and Associations Act 1976, which, while it remained necessary for communities to legally incorporate, was an attempt to institute rules and objectives that were more in harmony with traditional Aboriginal aspirations and structures. Applications for incorporation under this Act, which did not come into operation until 14 July 1979 (DAA 1987a:83), are processed through Canberra. Of the seventeen currently incorporated Aboriginal town camps in Alice Springs, eleven are incorporated under the NT Act and six under the newer Commonwealth Act, all camps incorporated after 1978 having done so under the latter.³ Tangentyere Council incorporation is under the NT legislation.

Whilst there is individual variation between the Alice Springs Aboriginal town camp incorporations, in general all Aboriginal adult residents over the age of eighteen years are eligible for membership, though some camps may nominate a person who is not a resident as a member, and any camp can allow residency without granting membership. Membership lists are updated at least annually, and committee and office bearers are elected from the membership. The body is legally bound to hold an Annual General Meeting each year, and in most cases, committee meetings at least once every three of four months.⁴ Each incorporation holds its lease and is responsible for the development, management and maintenance of that land.

³ See Table 5 & 6. Although nineteen camps are listed, Basso's Farm is not a separate incorporation, but is managed by Mt Nancy, and Ilwemp-Akerte incorporation has been dissolved.

⁴ Camp constitutions vary on this point. Mt Nancy and Anthelk-Ewlpaye, for example, require committee meetings at least every three months; Ilparpa every four months; whilst the requirement for Anhelke and Lhenpe-Artuwe is only as often as required.

In practice committee meetings take the form of general meetings, all available members attending. They are held in the camp and Tangentyere provides organisational assistance which includes notifying members, preparation of minutes and agendas, financial reports and other documentation. These meetings deal with such business as election of the camp's representative on Tangentyere's executive, lease layout, number and allocation of housing, repairs and maintenance of houses, membership of the association, budgets, rent reports and general planning and problem solving. Problems can range from such things as neighborhood complaints about dogs, to resolving appropriate action to take following the death of a member, to dealing with poor rent payers, to criticisms of Tangentyere's performance. In instances where camps have a small budget to employ hygiene workers to clean communal ablution blocks, meetings also make staff appointments.

Tangentyere is both an Aboriginal community council whose membership includes the members of the seventeen incorporated town camps in Alice Springs,⁵ and a Resource organisation. The Council's constitution sets out that its membership must meet at least ten times a year, and is responsible to determine the policies of Tangentyere which are to be implemented by the Executive (Tangentyere Council 1986a: S.16, S.17(1)). The Executive is made up of one Aboriginal member elected from each member community, plus three representatives from the Women's Committee (Tangentyere Council 1986a: S14(4)). It meets at least monthly (Tangentyere Council 1986a: S.13(1)), usually at Tangentyere, but occasionally on camps, for example if there is a camp with specific problems that the Executive wishes to focus on. It has even been convened in the Alice Springs gaol when this provided the only practicable means of ensuring the attendance of a key member. The Executive is responsible for the ongoing management of Tangentyere's business and affairs within the policy guidelines set down by the Council (Tangentyere Council 1986a: S.7)). The current executive has twenty one members. It manages the organisation and its staff, which in 1988 numbered 130 (Tangentyere Council 1987-88:2) through the General Manager, Geoff Shaw and Assistant General Manager, Bob Durnan. The organisation is divided up into eight departments, as outlined in Figure 1.

⁵ Member communities include all incorporated town camps, plus Hoppy's camp which although located within, is separately represented from Anthelk-Ewlpaye. Other camps that are not incorporated bodies are also eligible as member communities if they are approved at Tangentyere Council meetings (Tangentyere Council 1986a: S. 6(1)). It is important to note that unlike some town camps, membership of Tangentyere and therefore its executive, is limited to people who normally reside on a town camp (Tangentyere Council 1986a: S.6(2)).

Incorporated town camps are funded individually in order to carry out their functions. Budgets are divided into capital items for such things as new houses, major renovations or fencing; and recurrent items for such things as insurance, rates, and ongoing maintenance needs. House rents are payments to the recurrent budgets and deducted from ADC's payments. Town camps commission Tangentyere formally at each annual general meeting, to carry out various functions, including design consultation, supervision of building contracts, community development work, book keeping, repairs and maintenance, land management, research and community service work.

Since 1984-85 ADC has argued that rent should cover all camp recurrent funding needs, despite the fact that its own review on Tangentyere in 1985 recommended that this was an unrealistic target for any 'welfare' housing group. It has been a great stress to the camps and to Tangentyere that ADC has proceeded with its plans to implement this measure, which has resulted in the running down of house maintenance programmes and a gradual decline in the conditions of the camp housing stock.

Tangentyere receives some direct funding to carry out some functions, in particular those services developed after 1982, for example training, community services and homemakers. A major problem that has developed with these programmes has been that Tangentyere has been forced to deal with a multitude of funding agencies, which places considerable stress on administration and financial reporting systems. Tangentyere's 1987-88 annual report listed fifteen funding bodies, plus \$113,342 received from assorted other small grants (Tangentyere Council 1987-88: 35).

The process whereby town campers decide on the allocation of new house budgets provides an excellent illustration of the working relationship between the camps and Tangentyere, and of the value of the umbrella organisation in supporting and promoting self-determination. At the time when budgets are being prepared for submission to ADC, each camp meets and discusses its own housing needs, and produces a list which includes the number of new houses needed, the prospective tenants, and the number of bedrooms the house is to contain. After every camp has produced its own list, architects work out a rough estimate of the cost of each house according to its size, and all of the houses and their details are listed on one large board. Once ADC has informed Tangentyere of the total budget that will be available for new houses for the Alice Springs town camps in the following financial year, this sum is also written on the board. Then, at a full Tangentyere Council meeting, members discuss the various applications, and decide which camps should have priority over others. Members are able to take into account the total budget available, the rough cost of particular houses, the need of the prospective tenants, a particular camp's rent record, and issues such as the tenants traditional and historical relationship to the town camps. Once a resolution is reached, ADC is notified, and the specified camps are allocated the required capital funding in the following financial year.

THE PROPOSITION OF THIS THESIS

In this thesis I examine the meaning and development of Aboriginal independence and control, broadly referred to in the literature as self-determination. The thesis will show that in developing the Alice Springs town camps with housing, and essential, support and social services, largely dependant upon government funding, new problems regarding the relationship between Aboriginal people and government agencies have arisen. The policy of assimilation - that Aboriginal people become indistinguishable from other Australians, holding the same customs, beliefs, hopes and loyalties (Moy 1963:8-9) - has changed significantly from its earlier mode of physical destruction, for example, destruction of the Aboriginal family with the forcible removal of Aboriginal children, but its days are clearly not over. Nowadays, while Aboriginal people are not asked to deny their culture, new processes of incorporation, such as demands by government agencies regarding economic performance and policies of mainstreaming, create a new threat to Aboriginal self-determination.

In other words, while the moves to develop the town camps and establish Tangentyere Council were clearly moves towards Aboriginal self-determination, new modes of assimilation threaten that self-determination. Self-determination is therefore not a static concept or a static practice. It is no longer simply an opposition to old assimilation, but must re-define itself in relationship to these new modes.

In developing this argument, the first section of the thesis sets out the situation in which Aboriginal people found themselves, as a result of dispossession, paternalism, racism and attempts to wipe out Aboriginal culture. It is a story for many years of Aboriginal resistance to destructive policies and practices which threatened initially to wipe out Aboriginal people altogether under the general guise of pacifying them; Aboriginal families under the guise of protecting children; and Aboriginal communities in order to clean up the town. The Alice Springs institution to which Aboriginal children of mixed origin throughout Central Australia were interned, known as the Bungalow, is of particular significance to the development of the town camps, and its history is also documented in Chapter Two. Although Aboriginal people suffered much under these programmes, they survived by an ad hoc process of resisting and avoiding the authorities.

The Aboriginal struggle throughout Australia began to change in the 1960s and 1970s, with the 1967 Constitutional Referendum giving the Commonwealth government the power to legislate on behalf of Aboriginal people in the States, the new Whitlam Labor Government, and a commitment to justice, land rights and self-determination for Aboriginal people. Chapter Three describes this turning point. In Central Australia, town camper's resistance changed to an assertion of their rights, including a claim for land rights. Many town campers wished to remain in their own independent extended family group, rather than be completely assimilated into the larger Alice Springs urban community. The town camp land hearings before Justice Ward, although abruptly terminated by Fraser's Liberal-Country Party interim government at the end of 1975, went a long way toward establishing the legitimacy of these claims. This change in the Aboriginal struggle led to the development of camps as permanent and serviced communities, and the establishment of their own umbrella organisation, Tangentyere Council, in 1977.

Chapter Four, Five and Six examine the development of town camps and Tangentyere since 1977. Throughout this period, the Aboriginal struggle has clearly remained a struggle for control and independence, or self-determination. As town campers continue to aspire to the right to set their own priorities, including for employment, training and education, and to control their own services, these aspirations continue to be thwarted by Government agencies who themselves wish to set the town camp agenda. In accepting Government funding, the independence of town campers is restricted. While they accept some restrictions as reasonable and fair, for example, that they must pay rent to their own housing associations to help cover such costs as repairs, insurance and rates, that they must maintain investments, and that they must pay for power, water and sewerage services to houses like other Australian citizens; they do not accept that Government agencies have either the right to set their priorities at any one time, for example that the need for new houses has priority over support services or employment; or the right to take existing services that they control, for example the garbage service, and place it under the control of another body such as the Alice Springs Town Council.

Chapter Seven examines a new body of literature on Aboriginal housing. After twenty years of Commonwealth government funding, with Aboriginal housing taking up one quarter of Aboriginal budgets, the question is being asked: 'Why so little progress?'. The literature supports Tangentyere's response to this question. Tangentyere asserts that housing Aboriginal people is a process which involves consultation, careful design, research, the development of maintenance, management and social support services, and education, training and employment opportunities. Despite the evidence to support this, Governments continue to resist, preferring instead their own agenda of capital investment and 'one off' solutions, focussed narrowly on numbers of houses in isolation from the broader political and social problems Tangentyere and its members are facing.

Chapter eight concludes this thesis identifying the primary principles involved in successful Aboriginal housing compatible with self-determination, and the consequences of ongoing government rejection of them.

THE CONCEPT OF SELF-DETERMINATION

Four Policies Towards Aboriginal People

In very broad terms, Aboriginal policy in this country can be divided into four periods, or perhaps four modes, for while a policy dominates over a historical period, that policy often continues in a subsidiary fashion, into the next mode. The first can be labelled as 'Dispossession, and Pacification or Extermination', the period of invasion and occupation by non-Aboriginal settlers. The law and the police were there, according to the SA Commissioner of Police in 1888, "to protect the settlers from outrages of the natives" (quoted in Hartwig 1965:424), and Aboriginal rights under the law, for example, rights of land ownership, were totally ignored. It is well documented that during this period, which began around Sydney Cove in 1788 and not until the 1870s in Central Australia, Aboriginal depopulation was rapid and extensive. So effective was the programme in Tasmania, that after just seventy two years of official settlement, Aboriginal people were declared extinct in 1876 (Clark 1978:218). Although this claim is now known to be incorrect, it illustrates the brutality and devastation of this period.

The second period has been called 'Protection', and it began in the Northern Territory in 1910, although dispossession and slaughter continued. After the settlers had secured the land, and Aboriginal survivors were pacified and no longer seen as a physical threat, they were to be protected under the law. In fact, the mortality rate of Aboriginal people at this time was so high that it was generally believed that the race was to become extinct. Protection policies were introduced "to make their passing easier" (Clark 1987:157). It was a neat solution, hampered only by the threat of growing numbers of Aboriginal people of mixed origin. Under the name of Protection, legislation in the Northern Territory from 1910⁶ segregated Aboriginal people on isolated settlements and missions out bush away from non-Aboriginal society; restricted liaisons between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people in an attempt to prevent the conception of children of mixed origin; and from 1915 in Central Australia, removed children of mixed origin from their families, and reared them in an institution in Alice Springs, known as the Bungalow.

The third policy, 'Assimilation', was endorsed at the first inter-government conference on Aboriginal Affairs in 1937 and officially adopted at the second conference in 1951 (Rowley 1970:145; DAA 1974:4; Hanks 1984:22). This policy can be related to the realisation that Aboriginal people were not, in fact, going to die out. In the Northern Territory, according to Smith (1980:179), the decline in the Aboriginal population continued until 1933. It remained relatively stable until 1947, and only then began to increase quite rapidly. Rowley (1970:286), Marcus (1988:4) and others have argued that Aboriginal people were seen to have two choices. They could die out, or they, in particular those of mixed origin, could choose to become absorbed into and indistinguishable from non-Aboriginal society. In the Northern Territory the segregation of Aboriginal people on missions and settlements continued, but now these were called training camps. Aboriginal people were to abandon their own culture and language, and with training, graduate into the wider society. The Lutheran Hermannsburg mission, the Catholic Santa Teresa mission, and some of the government run settlements in Central Australia, for example Papunya and Yuendumu, went so far as to remove children from their families and grow them up in segregated dormitories in order to break down traditional Aboriginal family and culture. This policy of assimilation, later referred to as integration, continued officially until 1972. It can be argued, as we shall later consider, that integration in a new form continues today, under the name of self-determination.

The fourth policy on Aboriginal affairs is called 'Self-determination'.

Self-determination

Aboriginal self-determination was formally adopted as a policy by Australian governments from around 1972, with the election of a Labor Federal Government after twenty three years of conservative rule in this country. While in an Australia Day address early in 1972 the Liberal-Country Party Prime Minister, McMahon, conceded that Aboriginal people had the right to choose not to assimilate, Coombs (1976) points out that it was only with the election of the Labor government and Prime Minister Whitlam, later in 1972, that self-determination became the official policy.

⁶ South Australia passed The Northern Territory Aboriginals Act 1910, on which the Commonwealth Aboriginals Ordinance 1911-18, was based.

However, one of the major problems with this so called policy of self-determination, is that no government in the last twenty years has clearly defined what is meant by it. It is a complex concept which is understood to entail some commitment to land rights; to equality in employment, health, education, housing and before the law; to cultural protection; and to Aboriginal people being involved in the process of determining, controlling and providing programmes for their own benefit. The terms self-management and self-sufficiency have also been used, apparently without clear definition and interchangeably with self-determination, to describe Australian government Aboriginal policies.

Ditton (1988) discusses the concept of self-determination from a legal position. She argues that self-determination is a legal concept used with regard to colonised peoples. In relation to people colonised externally, the argument is less complex. The struggle for self-determination ultimately leads to self government or independence. For those colonised internally, as in Australia, the concept 'internal self-determination' is one growing in legal authority. According to the United Nations Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities 1983 report, self-determination is a basic pre-condition for the enjoyment by indigenous people such as Aboriginal people, of their fundamental rights, and the determination of their own future. However, the report argues, self-determination does not have to lead to the right to secede from the State (Ditton 1988: 94).

A 1989 House of Representatives Standing Committee On Aboriginal Affairs report discusses the policy of self-determination and its definition, arguing that self-management and self-sufficiency are "subsidiary objectives" to self-determination. This report defined self-determination thus:

Self-determination means Aboriginal people having the authority, resources and capacity to control the future of their own communities within the legal structure common to all Australians (Australia. House of Representatives Standing Committee On Aboriginal Affairs 1989: 3).

If self-determination were implemented, the report argued, then other objectives such as self-management, cultural protection, and improved economic status would follow. This definition raises the important point that if self-determination is to be a reality, Aboriginal people must first be given the necessary authority, resources and capacity. Otherwise it is a meaningless policy.

An argument develops around the issue of the limits of internal self-determination. Ditton argues that it must include the right of a self-determining unit to determine the measures to be taken to progressively gain internal self-determination, even if such measures contravene general community regulations, for example, criminal legislation (Ditton 1988: 97; ⁷); whereas the 1989 House of Representatives report quoted above limited its definition to actions within the general Australian law. Paul Everingham ⁸ raised this dilemma of how far internal self-determination should go, in a radio speech he gave on 17 March 1985. He attacked the ALP National conference decision to maintain a block on the establishment of further uranium mines in Kakadu, arguing that the ALP made a mockery of Aboriginal self-determination because the decision went against the wishes of traditional owners and the Northern Land Council, who wished to establish their own economy and become independent of government hand outs (Everingham 1985). Although Everingham's argument was opportunistic - he has demonstrated no commitment to self-determination and has in fact been a fierce opponent of Aboriginal land rights, but favours further uranium mines - the point remains. Internal self-determination must have limits. Ditton argues that currently self-determination is limited anyway by the fact that it is not accepted in this country; but she has suggested, in personal discussions with me, that in seeking a limit one should look towards the 1989 United Nations draft Declaration on Indigenous Rights, which concedes that indigenous nations and peoples are subjects of international law. That is, the bottom line generally recognised by the indigenous movement to their right to self-determination, is that the right must be exercised within the norms of international law. Such international law includes the International Declaration of Human Rights and other human rights treaties. It is not the purpose of this thesis to take this legal issue further. Whatever the theoretical parameters of self-determination, in practice no Aboriginal groups in Central Australia, the scene of great activity in land rights and associated self-determining acts, have argued separate nationhood, self-government or independence. Indeed they regularly re-affirm their commitment to both the NT and Australian governments and their agencies, through funding and services, and participation in political processes including elections. ⁹

A further discussion which throws light on this policy of self-determination, is that raised by Coombs et al (1989), regarding consultation and negotiation. Coombs and his co-authors state that:

However genuinely or generously consultation is conducted, it is a process in which initiative and power lies almost wholly on one side; that side proposes, listens to responses and then decides by itself. Negotiation, in contrast, implies that both parties are essential to reaching a decision - neither can achieve its aim alone. Both parties have the right and opportunity to propose alternative approaches to issues being considered. (Coombs et al 1989: 132)

⁷ In personal discussions Ditton has given the example of marriage laws. While the criminal laws of this country may make it illegal for one to marry under the age of eighteen years, indigenous law may not do so.

⁸ Paul Everingham was the CLP Chief Minister of the NT from self-government in 1978, until the end of 1984.

⁹ Some Aboriginal activists elsewhere in this country have advocated separate nationhood for Aboriginal people, in particular Michael Mansell of Tasmania. However this has not been an action with which Central Australian Aboriginal people have identified.

In my view this difference is central to a policy of self-determination. Aboriginal people must be in a position whereby they negotiate with, rather than are consulted by governments and other agencies, if self-determination is said to exist. Generally this does not occur, and the interests of the colonisers continue to take precedence over Aboriginal interests, except in instances where Aboriginal people own the land under inalienable title. Then, and only then, do they negotiate regarding mining, roads, and other enterprises on their land. There are many examples where Aboriginal people have not had negotiation power, including the current conflict over mining at Coronation Hill; the bulldozing of the Ntyarlkele-Tyarneme registered sacred site in Alice Springs to make a new road to the Casino; delays in granting excisions to Aboriginal people on NT pastoral lands; and the NT government's reluctance to limit alcohol sales to support Aboriginal initiatives in reducing alcohol abuse.

Consultation is accepted as a self-determining process only in situations where power is not an issue. For example, architects employed by Tangentyere consult with town campers regarding house designs. In such instances, town campers are employing architects to consult them, there is no conflict, and they remain in control of the decision making process. However, it would be entirely different if, for example, the NT government were to wish to 'consult' with town campers regarding their land needs, or sacred site protection, or even house designs. The initiative and decision making power would be entirely outside the authority of the town campers.

The issue of Governments' incorporating Aboriginal people into their agencies, and then declaring that such agencies demonstrate a commitment to Aboriginal self-determination, must also be raised. Aboriginalising staff positions in DAA and ADC, and appointing ten Aboriginal Commissioners to control the ADC, are good illustrations of this practice. Whilst the practice of providing Aboriginal employment within government agencies, and even sensitising such agencies to the needs and issues of concern to Aboriginal people by their employment, and in the case of the ADC Commissioners, their input at a management level, is of value, this should not be confused with self-determination. Firstly, whereas self-determination has the requirement that Aboriginal people determine their own needs and priorities, government agencies, including Aboriginal agents within them, are bound primarily by Acts of Parliament and by departmental regulations. The consequence of this is that the Act or regulation is in danger of determining the action of the agent, over and above the stated Aboriginal need or priority. The significant issue becomes not the racial origins of the government agent, but the level of personal commitment of that agent to the concept of Aboriginal self-determination, and that person's ability to adapt and manipulate guidelines and regulations to support Aboriginal initiatives. Secondly, self-determination demands maximum independence for individual, local Aboriginal communities. When decisions are made in a central government agency, on their behalf, about their priorities and needs, it is of little comfort to Alice Springs town campers that the agents making the decisions are Aboriginal agents, particularly when the decisions taken are contrary to their actual priorities and needs. Tangentyere's experience with ADC for example, has ultimately not been substantially different to its dealings with other government agencies. It remains to be seen whether ATSIC, with its elected Aboriginal Commissioners and its regional orientation, will promote the advancement of self-determination.

Tangentyere's mode of operation has stressed that both individual town camp community autonomy and control, and its role as an agent of the town campers to promote their cause as they direct, are central to its practice of self-determination.

In summary, a definition of self-determination therefore must include Aboriginal people having the power and sufficient resources to:

- negotiate with, rather than be consulted by, governments and their agencies;
- determine their own priorities and needs, including on a local community level; and
- determine and control the means by which those needs or priorities will be met.

Self-determining acts are limited by international human rights treaties; and internal self-determining acts, in political reality, also exclude the right to total self-government and are limited by national security and budget constraints.

METHODOLOGY

I lived in Alice Springs from the end of 1978 until October 1986 and was employed there first by the Central Australian Aboriginal Congress and later, from 1981, by Tangentyere Council. The idea of writing this thesis however, only developed after I left Central Australia and came to live in Melbourne. I have subsequently returned to Alice Springs several times since 1986, both to further the research, and to work for Tangentyere.

Data for this thesis has therefore been collected, in retrospect sometimes, from the time of my first working at Tangentyere. The proposition to do the study was put to the Tangentyere Coordinator, Geoff Shaw, in 1987, and he was very supportive. It then went to Tangentyere's Executive meeting. Initially the Executive was reluctant to agree to the study. It was explained that some members had decided that they were sick of people coming around and asking them questions, counting them and their children, filling out questionnaires. While I was reluctant to undermine the Executive's authority to make such a decision, or to exert pressure because people knew me and might feel under an obligation to be kind, I spoke again with Shaw and assured him that the study did not involve that type of research. I would not be counting people, and would be able to make use of such material already collected by Tangentyere. However, I would be taking up time of some Executive, Council and staff members with interviews and discussions. The Executive reconsidered its decision, and the research was allowed.

Detailed interviews with senior Tangentyere staff, Council and Executive minutes, and minutes of meeting between Tangentyere members and government departments and members, along with discussions with staff, Council and Executive members, submissions, reports and other materials produced by Tangentyere, form the base-line data for this thesis. Additional historical and official information has been obtained from reference material and interviews with Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people, and archival material.

The thesis was referred back to Tangentyere for comments, suggestions and criticism, before the final draft was prepared, and submitted for examination.

Chapter Two

THE HISTORY OF THE ALICE SPRINGS ABORIGINAL FRINGE CAMPS

Aboriginal town camps, or fringe camps, have always been a feature of Alice Springs, a town first gazetted in 1888, and now a city of some 24,000 people. The town camps are a direct result of the spread of the pastoral industry throughout Central Australia from the 1870s and 1880s, when Aboriginal people were dispossessed of their lands. Mparntwe, as the Alice Springs area is called by them, is the traditional country of Arrernte people.

Since the occupation by non-Aboriginal settlers in the 1870s, the NT has been governed first by the SA government, and from 1911, by the Commonwealth government. (See Table 2.) The first legislation, and subsequent government department, dealing specifically with Aboriginal residents of the NT, was established in 1910. Since that time there have been a number of changes in both legislations and departments relating to the changing policies outlined in Chapter One. (See Table 3 & 4 for a summary of legislations and departments.)

Throughout the 1900s policy, legislation and practices were directed towards ridding the town of the presence of the town camps, but these steps failed. From 1928 until 1964 the town area was a prohibited area for Aboriginal people, and on at least four occasions town campers were physically rounded up and shifted away, in 1928 to Hermannsburg, in 1940 to Jay Creek, in 1942 to Arltunga, and in 1960 to Amoonguna.

One reason for the failure to eradicate the camps was the inconsistency of regulations brought into force, so that some regulations had the direct effect of drawing Aboriginal people into town, rather than the reverse. In particular, the practice of removing Aboriginal children of mixed origin from Aboriginal families and placing them in the Bungalow, an institution in Alice Springs, served to draw families into town. Despite the fact that the Bungalow conditions were consistently condemned at all three sites at which it was located, this practice continued for twenty eight years, from 1914 (Finlayson 1925) until 1942 (Heppell & Wigley 1981:16).

Table 2: Government of the Northern Territory (NT)

prior to 1863	NSW Administration
1863 - 1910	SA Administration
January 1911	Commonwealth Administration
February 1927	NT divided into 2 Territories: North & Central Australia
1931	NT reunited as one Territory
1978	NT Self-Government

Table 3: Legislation for Aboriginal Residents of the NT**SA Administration**

1910	The Northern Territory Aboriginals Act
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Commonwealth Administration

1911-18	Aboriginals Ordinance
1918-53	Aboriginals Ordinance
1953-64	Welfare Ordinance
1953-71	Wards Employment Ordinance
1964-72	Social Welfare Ordinance
1973	Aboriginal Affairs (Arrangements with the States) Act
1989	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission Bill

Table 4: Government Departments Responsible for Aboriginal Residents of the NT

1864 on	Aboriginal Protectors
1910-39	Aboriginals Department (headed by Chief Protector)
1939-53	Native Affairs Branch (headed by Director)
1953-71	Welfare Branch of NT Administration
1971-72	Welfare Division of NT Administration
1972-90	Department of Aboriginal Affairs (DAA)
1990 on	Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC)

Aboriginal people were also attracted into town because the settlements and missions established to hold them out bush from the 1940s to the 1960s were badly managed, overcrowded, underfunded and destructive to Aboriginal cultural values. Despite the fact that town camps were blitzed with Welfare, Health, Police Department and Town Management Board raids during this period, culminating in the establishment of a new settlement, Amoonguna, in 1960 (Shaw, Geoff, 1988, personal interview, 28 March; Hocking 1963:30), and the final forced muster and trucking of town campers, town camps remained.

By the end of the 1960s town campers began to shift from quiet resistance of government policies and practices, to an assertion of their right to exist as legitimate communities within the town.

INVASION AND OCCUPATION FROM 1860

Although the first white occupation of the continent began at Sydney Cove in 1788, it was not until 1860 that the first white explorer, John McDouall Stuart, entered Central Australian country (Sturt 1899:342; Clark 1978:145). He made three trips, and in 1862 succeeded in his goal to cross the continent from south to north, travelling from Adelaide, through Central Australia, and on to the north coast.¹⁰ Stuart's journey established that it was possible to erect an overland telegraph cable from the south to the north of the continent, and thus link Australia by telegraph to the outside world via a submarine cable to Java (Clark 1978:238). It was the construction of this telegraph line, which commenced transmission on 22 August 1872 (Blackwell & Lockwood 1965:84), which precipitated exploration and the white occupation of Aboriginal country in Central Australia.

The clear consequence of the non-Aboriginal invasion and occupation throughout this continent was Aboriginal depopulation, and Central Australia was no exception. Dispossession, violence, disease and malnutrition were to take their toll. Dispossession began when pastoralists arrived with the telegraph line construction teams and established their pastoral stations on Aboriginal land around permanent water supplies. The first two were established in 1872, Undoolya station around the Telegraph Station and the spring known as the Alice Spring, and Owen Springs station nearby, together covering an area of 3,200 sq miles (Hartwig 1965:128,287,292). By 1881 Hartwig estimates that maybe the whole of Central Australia was either held under pastoral lease or under lease application (Hartwig 1965:321).¹¹

Protection was offered the traditional Aboriginal owners of the country only on the basis that they cooperated with the invasion and occupation of their lands. They were seen as having no rights of their own to land ownership, sacred sites, traditional food and water sources, or traditional law. In 1877 the SA government appointed sub-protectors of NT Aborigines, whose main task in practice was to hand out limited rations to the old and infirm (Rowley 1970:216). Rowley (1970:216) argues that these sub-protectors were usually police officers or telegraph station managers whose position was compromised. While on the one hand they were responsible for the protection of Aborigines, on the other hand they were either the very perpetrators of injustices, or dependent on such perpetrators, in particular the pastoralists, "for social acceptance and approval". In 1877 the first Aboriginal mission in Central Australia, Hermannsburg mission station, was established about eighty three miles west of the Alice Springs telegraph station by the Lutheran Church (Bleakley 1961:239). From 1879 the mission began to hand out regular rations the need for which was highlighted by an immediate increase in the mission's Aboriginal population from about nine to one hundred (Hartwig 1965:441,499).

¹⁰ Burke and Wills, travelling from Melbourne, Victoria, and east of Central Australia, were the first white explorers to cross the continent from south to north, but they perished on their return journey in 1861 (Clark 1978:159).

¹¹ SA Government regulations required a pastoral lease to be stocked within one year of application in 1871, and from 1874, three years. During this stocking period a pastoral lease was said to be under application (Hartwig 1965:285,288). Therefore, unless a pastoralist was prepared to forfeit the lease, it made little difference to the Aboriginal traditional owners if the country was actually under lease or lease application. Both entailed occupation and stocking, and thus Aboriginal dispossession.

Aboriginal resistance became more fierce in Central Australia as the invasion and occupation of their lands, and the loss of food and water sources spread. Hartwig argues that from the early 1880s Aborigines in the Alice Springs district began killing cattle and raiding homesteads on a large scale (Hartwig 1965:280). In response, pastoralists carried out their own punitive raids and the SA government ceased to dwell on 'protection' and despatched police, in the words of the SA Commissioner of Police in 1885, "to protect the settlers from the outrages of the natives" (Hartwig 1965:424). The names of two police officers in particular are associated with the brutality of this period of Central Australian history, Constable Willshire who arrived in Central Australia in December 1881 (Willshire 1888:4), and Constable Wurmbrand who arrived in 1884 (Hartwig 1965:398). Strehlow (1971,1978) and Hartwig (1965) give details of many raids and atrocities carried out against Aboriginal groups under the name of the law by these two officers and their charges, throughout the 1880s

some with the open, some with the tacit, support of the Resident; and some of which he would not know (Rowley 1970:216-217).

There were many incidents. At a place now known as Wurmbrand's Rockhole, west of Alice Springs, Wurmbrand came across a camp of men, women and children and without warning, identification of offenders, or charges being laid, simply shot all of those not fast enough to escape (Strehlow 1978:7). At another incident at Glen Helen, also west of Alice Springs, Wurmbrand captured and chained three prisoners, and then he shot them as they were allegedly attempting to escape. On the same excursion four others were shot as they 'resisted' arrest (Hartwig 1965:398). In a later raid Wurmbrand reported shooting two offenders. However a station hand who had accompanied the raid reported seventeen Aboriginal people shot dead (Hartwig 1965:399). At Blackfellow's Bones, near Mt Riddock, about seventy miles north east of Alice Springs as the crow flies, a party of police, trackers and settlers shot a large number of Anmatjera people who had gathered together for ceremonies. The details of this murder are not clear but it is understood that between fifty to one hundred people were massacred (Hartwig 1965:397-8). The casualness of this programme of pacification is illustrated by an entry in 1884 in the Hermannsburg Station journal:

During sheep shearing in October Constable Wurmbrandt (sic) arrived here with his party, arrested three natives on the station, took them to the MacDonnell Ranges, and shot them there (Quoted in Strehlow 1971:588).

By about 1886 Hartwig (1965:400) estimates that the resistance movement for most Aboriginal groups within about an eighty mile radius of the Alice Springs telegraph station was over, only to begin on an even larger scale further out.

Constable Willshire was finally arrested in 1890 by Frank J. Gillen¹², a Justice of the Peace at the telegraph station, and committed for trial in Port Augusta (Willshire 1895; Strehlow 1978:47-8). His arrest resulted from an incident near Tempe Downs Station, on the Finke River west of Alice Springs in February 1890. Willshire and his native police ambushed an Aboriginal camp at dawn, shot two men, had breakfast at the station, and then returned and burned the bodies (Strehlow 1978:46-8). Although Willshire was not convicted at his trial in July, he did not return to the Alice Springs district (Strehlow 1971:xxxiv). The same year, following Hermannsburg mission complaints of police shooting Aboriginal prisoners and entering Aboriginal camps and shooting all in sight, and of sexual abuse of Aboriginal women by police and pastoralists, the SA Parliament commissioned a report on police activities in Central Australia. As with Willshire's trial this report found no evidence to support the mission accusations. It found that

owing to the absence of any large number of waterholes in the interior, it becomes a matter of importance, in many cases to the leaseholder the blacks should be kept away from them, as cattle will not approach water besides which blacks are camped, and for this reason the natives are ordered off their hunting grounds; but there is no evidence to lead us to suppose that any violence is practised on such occasions. On the contrary, we have evidence that they are persuaded to move with little trouble (Swan & Taplin 1890: 1).

Although the report offered no criticism of police and pastoralist activities, it did recommend that Constable Willshire's camp be relocated away from Hermannsburg mission station (Swan & Taplin 1890:2).

FRINGE CAMPS, 1880s

The Alice Springs Aboriginal fringe camps began in the 1880s as a direct result of this white occupation of Aboriginal lands. Aboriginal people were driven off their lands and access to their traditional food and water sources was denied them. Their population ravaged not only by the kinds of atrocities mentioned above,¹³ but also by disease and malnutrition, the survivors were left with no alternative but the fringes of white settlements. In 1885, when the police station moved away from the Telegraph Station by the Alice Spring, about seven kilometres south to Heavitree Gap, there were 200 "natives" regularly camped at Heavitree Gap (Willshire 1888:5). This camp has endured through the years and today the Inarlenge Community Incorporated holds a Special Purpose Lease over the camp, and is a member of Tangentyere Council.

By 1888 Willshire reported that there were camps of "semi-civilized blacks" around all of the white settlements in Central Australia, the telegraph stations and cattle stations (Willshire 1888:3). It is not clear when regular ration distribution to these camps officially began in Central Australia, but Willshire described the campers in 1888:

At all the stations on the Transcontinental telegraph line there are aboriginal camps, occupied by numbers of semi-civilised natives, who almost invariably wear shirts, beg inveterately for "tucker" and tobacco, and who for the most part are exceedingly lazy and cunning (Willshire 1888:8).

¹² Gillen of Spencer (Sir) B. & Gillen, F. J. fame. These two researched and wrote The Native Tribes of Central Australia, published in 1899, and several other books after that.

¹³ Dick Kimber, an Alice Springs historian, suggests that between 500 and 1,000 Aboriginal people were murdered during the most violent period between 1881 and 1891 by police and pastoralists (Rowse 1989:7).

Aboriginal people were therefore seeking food and possibly receiving rations by 1888. Hartwig suggests that at least by 1894 rations were regularly distributed from the Alice Springs telegraph station (Hartwig 1965:442), and in 1965 Blackwell recalled rations being handed out from the telegraph station on Saturday mornings in 1899, to about 150 Aboriginal people (Blackwell & Lockwood 1965:93). The camps were also used as a labour pool for domestic and other manual labour at the telegraph station and in the town.

The important fact for the purpose of this study is that Aboriginal fringe camps, or town camps, have been a feature of the original town of Alice Springs since before it was gazetted as a town in 1888.¹⁴ At first they were viewed as a sign of victory - Aboriginal people had left their lands, and a means of management and control - rations were distributed from certain points and labour was hired from them. However throughout the 1900s this attitude changed and the town sought to rid itself of the camps which increasingly came to be seen by the white townspeople as potential sources of disease and vice, and unsightly. Various references are made to at least six different camps that existed throughout this period, and some are still there today.

- 1) The Heavitree camp by the original police station just south of Heavitree Gap, since at least 1885 (Willshire 1888:5), now Inarlenge Special Purpose Lease. Willshire referred to a camp of 200 people.
- 2) The camp around the original telegraph station from at least 1888 (Willshire 1888:3,8). Blackwell recalled a camp of about 150 'natives' on the bank of the Todd river at the telegraph station in 1899 (Blackwell & Lockwood 1965:51-52). Baldwin Spencer began observing this camp from 1894 to 1901 (Spencer 1928). In 1932 the old telegraph station site was declared an Aboriginal reserve (Hocking 1963:26), and it became the site of the 'half-caste' children's institution, the Bungalow, until 1942. After the war it was used as a reserve for Aboriginal people with permits to be in the town area, until its closure in 1960 (Hocking 1963:30; Heppell & Wigley 1981:16,22-23).
- 3) Middle Park camp, along Charles Creek between the telegraph station and the town, referred to in 1914 (Finlayson 1925). This camp could be described as an extension of the telegraph station camp, another fringe camp or series of fringe camps around the telegraph station and within the 1932 Reserve. It included the site of the Little Flower Catholic mission from 1937-42 (O'Grady 1977:33,42,75-78), and is now part of the Anthelk-Ewlpaye Special Purpose Lease.

¹⁴ The original town of Alice Springs was first gazetted in 1888 under the name of Stuart (SA, Gazette 1888:1293). The town was based about four kilometres from the telegraph station, which continued to operate under the name of Alice Springs. In 1932 the telegraph station moved to the town and in 1933 the town of Stuart was officially renamed Alice Springs (Australia, Gazette 1933:1225). Although the town did not formally change its name to Alice Springs until 1933, the town and its district were generally referred to as Alice Springs (Kimber 1986:17). Even some formal documents followed this practice. For example, the NT Administration 1913 report referred to Alice Springs not Stuart (Australia, Parliamentary Papers, 1914b:1310-1316); a 1928 Gazette declared the "Town District to be known as the Alice Springs Town District" under the Aboriginals Ordinance 1918 (Australia, Gazette 1928a:2102); and the Gazette declaring Alice Springs and the railway line a prohibited area for Aboriginal people in 1928 referred to Alice Springs rather than to Stuart (Australia, Gazette 1928b:2391).

- 4) A camp just south of the town near Billy Goat Hill in 1921 referred to in the memoirs of a town resident, Bob Laver (Donovan 1988:107). This camp was disbanded by the authorities in 1927. Officially its residents shifted to the camp on the Eastside, though some appear to have shifted west to the Morris Soak camp.
- 5) A camp on the eastern side of the Todd River, near the current casino site, also referred to by Laver in 1921 (Donovan 1988:107). Camps in the town area, including the Billy Goat Hill camp were apparently moved here in 1927 (Bleakley 1929). Bleakley commented on the "clean and sanitary condition" of this camp in 1928, where about "60 indigent natives are regularly supplied with relief", but because of its close proximity to the town which was soon to be connected by rail to the south, recommended that it be shifted out to Hermannsburg (Bleakley 1929). It was not moved however, and in 1933 was gazetted as an "Aboriginal Camping Ground" (Surveyor-General map, in Donovan 1988:180; Rowse 1989:25). The Aboriginal medical hut, described in 1935 as a four roomed galvanized iron hut about two miles from the town (O'Grady 1977:14), which was erected "at the official camp for Aborigines", following approval from the Commonwealth government in August 1933 (Rowse 1989:35), may have been at this camp.
- 6) Morris Soak camp for station workers on leave in town in the 1920s and referred to by Bleakley in 1929 as a "Holiday Camp for Working Natives" (Bleakley 1929:161). According to Bob Durnan, Musty Siddeek, an Anmatjera-Afghan man who was still a camper at Morris Soak in the early 1980s, was born in this camp in the 1920s (Durnan, Bob, 1987, Interview with Paul Memmott), and it is now Akngwertnarre Special Purpose Lease.

An attempt to accurately document the history and movements of Alice Springs town campers is like walking through a maze. There has always been a lot of fluidity in the form of both camp locations, and of members between different camps. Geoff Shaw, for example, was born in the Todd River bed just south of Heavitree Gap in 1945, but at different times in his childhood camping on Eastside, and at different locations along the Todd and Charles Rivers. As the drive to eradicate camps grew, the authorities were also prone to 'shift' camps. In 1931 for example, a town citizen, Mr Ballingal, wrote to the Minister for Home Affairs and Territories and received a reply from the Minister which indicated the Administration's plans to move the Morris Soak camp to the old Telegraph Station site. In his letter this Mr Ballingal also indicated that the Morris Soak camp had been established because of a request from the Administration that the "abos" camp about one mile south of Stuart, probably the Billy Goat Hill camp, be moved to the more isolated spot in 1928 (Ballingal 1931; Kirkland 1931). Other sources tell us that the Billy Goat Hill camp moved to the Eastside camp, as mentioned above. Probably both are right. Some campers may have gone to each of the new sites, and there was continuous movement backwards and forwards by members of each of the camps. Various circumstances today still result in new camps being established at different sites around the town of Alice Springs, much to the consternation of the authorities.

Central Australian administration throughout the 1900s, up until the 1970s, is marked by attempts to rid the town of the Aboriginal fringe camps or town camps. Measures included:

- legislation restricting the movement of Aboriginal people;
- the forced removal of Aboriginal people from the town area, and destruction of camps;
- declaring the town a prohibited area from 1928;
- the denial of basic services, such as water taps, to camp areas; and
- the establishment of settlements, ration depots and missions out bush on which to hold Aboriginal people.

However town camps remained, and in part some administrative regulations and procedures worked to reinforce their presence. For example:

- settlements and missions set up away from the town were so unattractive with their regimentation and inadequate funding, that Aboriginal people did all they could to leave them;
- children of mixed racial origin were taken from their families and placed in an institution in town, the Bungalow, and this in turn attracted the families to come to the town where they lived on fringe camps;
- the town itself was an attraction to some Aboriginal people who came for employment - it was used as a place where stations hired stockmen, and during the war years Aboriginal people were actually brought in from the bush to work for the army;
- the lack of any recognition of land needs for local traditional owners meant that the camps were their only avenue for remaining on their country, unless they worked on pastoral stations;
- dispossession was an ongoing process, right up until 1968 when, as a result of Aboriginal workers being included in the NT Cattle Industries Award and therefore becoming eligible for the same pay as white station hands, NT pastoralists responded by phasing out Aboriginal labour and progressively driving Aboriginal communities off their traditional lands (Welfare Branch of the NT Administration 1968:11; Land Rights News, January 1988:29); and
- town residents were also hostile to Aboriginal people living in the town proper. As late as 1979 a group of town citizens, the Citizens for Civilized Living, succeeded in bringing to a halt a NT Housing Commission program of building twenty houses for Aboriginal people throughout the town. Only ten of the houses were built (Centralian Advocate, 7 June 1979).

Camps also remained attractive to Aboriginal people because although they lacked services in the early years, they were never regimented like missions and settlements. For example, children were never placed in dormitories on town camps, Aboriginal languages were not forbidden, cooking was not done in communal dining rooms. In short, cultural destruction programmes were not carried out on the town camps in the same way as they were on government settlements and church run missions.

THE 'PROBLEM' OF CHILDREN OF MIXED RACIAL DESCENT ¹⁵

By the early 1900s the Aboriginal 'problem' became more complex. Up until that time the role of the Administration had been basically to facilitate the occupation of Aboriginal lands by the pastoralists, and to subdue any Aboriginal resistance to this process. The widely held belief was that the Aboriginal race was on the road to extinction. Willshire wrote in 1888 of

an aboriginal race which dies out wherever the white man obtains a firm footing (Willshire 1888: 3).

He referred to

the elder and more settled colonies, where the blacks have either died out, or exist as a half-caste race in process of extinction (Willshire 1888: 3).

In the SA colony, which had been established in 1836 (Clark 1979:55), a select committee enquiry was appointed in 1860 (Rowley 1970:203), to look at the Aboriginal problem. By then, just twenty four years after settlement, it was assumed that "reasonable effort had been made and that all positive steps had failed: that Aborigines defeated welfare policies by dying out" (Rowley 1970:203). The Australian Board of Missions Review in 1920 announced that nothing seemed able to avert "their proudly gloomy progress towards a certain and utter extinction" (Clark 1987:232). As Elkin noted, there was no suggestion of any future for the Aborigines in the 1920s (Elkin 1944:11). Daisy Bates' book, The Passing of the Aborigines was published in 1938. It was a foregone conclusion that the Aboriginal problem would naturally resolve itself.

The new complexity was that the 'half-caste' population, the children of mixed origin, was growing, and this was a matter of concern to the Administration. A 1913-15 Royal Commission into the situation of SA Aborigines had announced in an interim report in 1913 that while the 'full-blood' Aboriginal population was continuing to decrease, the 'half-caste' population was on the increase (Gale 1964:104-106; Rowley 1970:219). And this was more and more apparent in Central Australia.

Willshire noted in 1896 that there was now a 'half-caste' population at every station in Central Australia (Willshire 1896: 35). He wrote of the "mongrel half-caste" whose mental capacity was inferior.

If it is a male he is born for the gallows or to be shot; if a female, she becomes a wanton devoid of shame (Willshire 1896: 35).

The 1913 NT Administration report indicates a concern not only at the numbers of children of mixed origin living in the camps around Alice Springs and bush settlements, but also at the conditions under which they were being brought up

I was impressed by the large number of half-caste, and even quadroon, children in the native quarter at Alice Springs growing up without education or any moral control. One half-caste mother has five quadroon children - four of school age - yet, although white in complexion, these children are developing under conditions worse than those of their native ancestors and disgraceful to their European relations (Australia, Parliamentary Papers 1914b: 1310-16).

¹⁵ The terminology used at this time is today considered racist and offensive. Legislation such as the Aborigines Ordinances referred to 'half-castes'; reports such as the NT of Australia, Report of the Administration for the years 1915-16 and 1916-17 refer to 'quarter-castes' and 'octoroon caste' (Australia, Parliamentary Papers 1917-19a:53); the Report of The Administration for the year 1913 refers to 'quadroons' (Australia, Parliamentary Papers 1914b:1310-1316). I have avoided this terminology in this thesis, except where the intention is to portray the attitude of the day. Similarly, I have avoided the non-capital 'A' for 'Aborigine' or 'Aboriginal' except when directly quoting such.

The shock and shame of seeing such white looking children living in the camps, coupled with the belief of some "that the half castes are capable of reaching a higher stage of development than the pure-blood blacks" (Spencer 1923:18), led the administration to concentrate on them. Despite Willshire's opinion in 1896, the Chief Protector optimistically wrote that

the children are entirely different from the true blacks, in fact it would be difficult, in the case of some of the quadroons especially, to distinguish between them and white children (Spencer 1923: 19).

In Alice Springs, measures to deal with this were to have a profound effect on the town camps and their future. The 1913 NT Administration's report hoped that

the establishment of a school with a qualified teacher, who, although primarily required for the white children previously denied a State School education, will also hold classes for the quadroons and half-castes (Australia, Parliamentary Papers 1914b: 1310-16),

which would be a first step in remedying the 'disgraceful' conditions under which these children were being brought up.

Legislation: The Aboriginals Ordinance 1911-18 and the Aboriginals Ordinance 1918-53

Legislation designed to restrict associations between Aboriginal people and Europeans, and thus discourage the conception of children of mixed descent was in place in the NT from 1910.¹⁶ It made a distinction between Aboriginal 'natives' and 'half-castes'. For the purposes of the legislation and who was to be covered by it, it defined an Aboriginal person as

- any Aboriginal 'native'
- any 'half caste', that is any person with a parent who was Aboriginal, or whose parent had a parent who was Aboriginal, and who
 - was under sixteen years of age, or
 - habitually associated with Aboriginal people.

The legislation established an Aboriginals Department with a Chief Protector as its head, and it gave the administration enormous powers over Aboriginal people, including:

- the Chief Protector was declared:
 - the legal guardian of every aboriginal and every half-caste child, notwithstanding that any such child has a parent or other relative living, until such child attains the age of eighteen years (S.9(1))
- the power to send and detain Aboriginal children in institutions
- to send, detain or remove any Aboriginal person to or from a reserve or institution
- to declare any area prohibited to Aboriginal people
- to remove Aboriginal camps from the vicinity of town areas
- to control employment of Aboriginals.

The entry of non-Aboriginal people to any Aboriginal camp or reserve was prohibited, and any marriage between a female Aboriginal and 'any person other than an aboriginal' had to first be authorised by the Minister.

¹⁶ The Aboriginals Ordinance 1911 was passed by the Commonwealth government after it took control of the NT in January 1911. Prior to that, from 1863, the NT had been under SA control. In 1910 the SA government passed The Northern Territory Aboriginals Act which formed the basis of the 1911 Ordinance (McCorquodale 1984:290; Rowley 1970:230-4).

In 1918 the Aboriginals Ordinance 1911-18 was replaced by the Aboriginals Ordinance 1918-53. Under this legislation, State powers over the Aboriginal population were gradually increased. It became an offence, for example, from 1918, for any non-Aboriginal person to 'habitually consort' with an Aboriginal woman (S.53(1)); and the definition of an Aboriginal was gradually extended. By 1918 the definition of an Aboriginal person, and thus a person subject to the legislation included

- any female 'half caste' who was not legally married to a person who is substantially of European origin or descent and living with her husband (S.3).

By 1924 it included

- any male 'half-caste' until the age of twenty one years;

and from 1927

- any male 'half-caste' for the whole of his life unless the Chief Protector thought him capable of managing his own affairs (Rowley 1970: 238; McCorquodale 1984: 275-276).

In 1939 the Aboriginals Department was replaced by the Native Affairs Branch, and the Chief Protector by the Director. In 1953, the same year the Aboriginals Ordinance 1918-53 was repealed and replaced by the Welfare Ordinance 1953-64, an amendment to the Aboriginals Ordinance deleted the word "half-caste" from the legislation, referring to all as Aboriginal.

The Bungalow by the Stuart Hotel 1914-28

The town school opened in 1914 on a block of land at the corner of Parsons and Bath streets owned by the police department and shared with the police station and the gaol. To complement the school a 'half-caste' children's institution, which became known as the Bungalow, was established also in 1914 and on the police station land, to house the children of mixed descent brought in from the bush to attend the school (Finlayson 1925; Rowse 1989: 11; Donovan 1988: 126).

According to the Chief Protector, W.B. Spencer, in his 1923 report on the 'Half Castes and Aboriginals' of the Southern Division of the NT, the Bungalow originated thus:

In 1914, after the death of a miner with whom she had been living at Altunga, a native woman named Topsy Smith came to Stuart bringing with her seven (7) half caste children. A tent was put up for her by Sergeant Stott, who informed the Administrator in Darwin that there was no accommodation for her children, and suggested that two township allotments near the Police Station should be reserved for half castes. The Administrator agreed to this, and authorised the building of an iron shed. This was done, and Topsy Smith placed in charge of it under the supervision of Sergeant Stott. Rations were supplied from the general Aboriginals grant. In 1915 the Administrator, after visiting the Bungalow, authorised the extension of the building to accommodate half castes from outside districts, Topsy Smith still remaining in charge. In the same year, Mrs. Stanley, the school teacher in Stuart was asked and agreed to accept the position of matron with an extra remuneration of £50 per annum (Spencer 1923: 1).¹⁷

¹⁷ It is interesting that such special attention was paid to Topsy Smith and her family. R.G. Kimber, an Alice Springs historian, has written a book, Man from Arltunga, (1986), on the life of Walter Smith who was the eldest child of Topsy and her husband Bill Smith. Bill was a hard worker, a good miner, and respected in the white community despite his relationship with a black woman. He also had a brother, Jack Smith, who was a butcher in Alice Springs. Topsy was the daughter of Mary and an Oodnadatta police officer. Mary was the daughter of an Arabana woman, from the north of SA, and a white man whom Kimber assumes must have been one of Stuart's early exploration team members. Unlike other white men who had relationships with Aboriginal women and then turned 'respectable', Bill, as Kimber puts it "had

Using powers given under the Aboriginals Ordinance 1911, the Administration engaged in a programme of forcibly removing Aboriginal children of mixed descent from their families throughout Central Australia, and placed them in the Bungalow institution in Alice Springs. Children were usually removed by police officers, who simply rode into camps on horseback and grabbed those with light skins (Rowley 1970:231; Heppell & Wigley 1981:15; White, Jessie, 1988, personal interview, 25 March).

By 1916 the Bungalow housed thirty children, eight boys and twenty two girls ranging in age from three to fifteen years. Sixty children attended the school, thirty four white and twenty six 'coloured'. While generally classes were segregated, white children in the mornings and 'coloured' children in the afternoons, Ida Standley had the more "advanced coloured attend the morning school with the white children" (Australia, Parliamentary Papers 1917-1919b:53; Donovan 1988:123-124).

W.B. Spencer's report on the Bungalow stated that by 1923 it consisted of three corrugated iron sheds and housed

some 60 children ... their ages varying from a few months to 15 or 16 years. A few of them are in the employ of residents in Stuart during the day time, but return to the Bungalow at night (Spencer 1923:3).

The children slept "huddled together on the ground" (Spencer 1923:2). Staff included the matron, Ida Stanley,

two goat shepherds and a gardener and his lubra ... (and) Three half caste women, who receive clothes and rations but no pay (Spencer 1923:1).

The idea of the Bungalow was to keep the children "going towards whites and give them their future chance, among whites" (Ballinalg n.d.). Ballinalg, an interested town citizen, went on to argue that

it was obvious that that was their destination after they left the school, to give them a chance to rise, and no inducement to go back, with their education and modern bringing up in the school, to uneducated full aboriginals of the bush with their mutilating customs which may suit them, but unthinkable to these scholars, with a little abo. in their blood (Ballinalg n.d.).

In response, many Aboriginal families left their bush communities and came to live in the fringe camps of Alice Springs to be closer to their interned children. Spencer stated in his report that

The children are not allowed to go into the native camps, but their mothers can and do visit them (Spencer 1923:3).

But according to Ballinalg, families were not given such easy access to their children, in fact, when they did dare intrude "and Sergeant Stott caught them, they would get a vigorous application of his fist and boot and would make a very hasty departure, never game to risk returning" (Ballinalg n.d.).

fallen in love with Topsy and wasn't ashamed of it, he accepted old Mary as his mother-in-law and provided and cared for her, and he did his best by his children", eleven in all (Kimber 1986:20). The white community appears to have felt some responsibility for the family after Bill's death. Kimber describes how Mrs John Hayes of Undoolya Station drove out to meet Topsy and the children "with food and plenty of water" (Kimber 1986:32) when the family was making their journey into Alice Springs in a dray, following the death of their husband and father. It appears that this sense of responsibility included a belief that the family should be found somewhere to live other than the Aboriginal camps around the town.

The conditions at the Bungalow were condemned as inadequate in reports of the time. The Chief Protector, Baldwin Spencer concluded that although the children were given adequate rations, and their health and education were of good standard, the buildings were totally inadequate

both in regard to size and equipment, (and) the position is eminently unsuitable (Spencer 1923: 3).

The Bungalow was positioned just sixty five feet from the Stuart Hotel, with an open gate between the two, which, Spencer rather delicately concluded, "was a very serious matter" (Spencer 1923:2). The matron did not remain on the premises at night, and therefore

could not be responsible for the moral welfare of the children except during such time in the day when they were under her personal supervision. ... Under present conditions adequate supervision is impossible (Spencer 1923:3).

Spencer recommended that the Bungalow be closed, and an appropriate reserve be established that would provide "for the housing of the half castes and their training in industrial and domestic work" (Spencer 1923:20).

Jessie White was born in 1922 at the Arltunga ration depot (White, Jessie, 1988, personal interview, 25 March), the goldfield town about 110 kilometres east of Alice Springs, deserted by miners around 1894 (Hartwig 1965:567). ¹⁸ Under the 1918 Aboriginals Ordinance, the Chief Protector was her legal guardian, and her birth was recorded by the local Protector, a policeman.

There was a police station there, kids were registered there, and it was a ration depot (White, Jessie, 1988, personal interview, 25 March).

As the 'part-Aboriginal' children turned five or six years of age, they would be taken from their families, and brought in to the Bungalow. Light skinned children were seen as more likely candidates for successful 'training' and 'education' (Rowley 1970:232), so families attempted to make their children look blacker.

The police would bring us kids in to town. My mother and family did a lot of putting charcoal on me, so the police would not take me. They'd try to hide me when the police came. But old Mary Bray and Bessie Sharpe would say "Don't paint her every time the police comes, because she's still in the book". ... It happened to most of us (White, Jessie, 1988, personal interview, 25 March).

In 1927, at five years of age, Jessie was brought into the Bungalow. Her mother, grandmother and grandfather would visit, camping nearby. When her younger brother followed her a year or so later the family moved permanently into town and worked at the Bungalow looking after the goats (White, Jessie, 1988, personal interview, 25 March). Maggie Ross's two children were also taken to the Bungalow at this time.

I never worked here, I just came to see my kids that's all, in the school. Son and daughter. ... "I want to go back mummy now". "You got to stop", that Mrs Standley all day tellem. She had the Bungalow kids. "Mummy I want to go back now". "Mate you're in the school now, you can't get away", I tell them like that (Ross, Maggie, 1988, IAD interview).

¹⁸ This is also where Topsy Smith and her family lived before they moved into Alice Springs following Bill Smith's death in 1914.

The Bleakley Report 1929

In 1928 J.W. Bleakley, the Chief Protector of Aborigines in Queensland, was commissioned by the Australian government to undertake an inquiry into Aboriginal and 'part-Aboriginal' status and conditions in the NT (Bleakley 1961:241). Bleakley's task was to examine the 'half-caste problem', and find a solution. He argued that the problem was two-fold:

how to check the breeding of them and how best to deal with those now with us (Bleakley 1929: 156).

Of the latter, that of 'those now with us', Bleakley argued that the children must be 'rescued' from the degradation of the camps, and brought into institutions "for care and training" (Bleakley 1929:157). However, like others before him he found conditions at the Bungalow, the Alice Springs institution for 'care and training', completely unsatisfactory, overcrowded and unhygienic (Bleakley 1961:242). He and the Aborigines Department were in agreement that both the buildings and the site beside the Stuart Arms pub were unsuitable, and that the Bungalow should be closed immediately (Bleakley 1929:159). Bleakley rejected Spencer's 1923 plan to establish a large institution

a separate mission or colony for all crossbreeds of aboriginal blood who are to be segregated from both whites and blacks (Bleakley 1929: 159)

at Jay Creek ¹⁹ (Bleakley 1929:160-161). Instead he argued that the sixty four children now at the Bungalow should be divided up:

- a) Those with 50% or more Aboriginal blood should be sent to the Hermannsburg mission;
- b) Those with less should be sent to European institutions down south; and
- c) Suitable employment should be found "for another 12 between the ages of 13 and 30".

A reception centre, which could cater for about thirty children should be established as a home for those who could not be suitably placed elsewhere, and to receive and hold new children as they were brought in from the camps and processed (Bleakley 1929:159-160).

The move to Hermannsburg had been considered for some time. In 1922 the Alice Springs police sergeant, Sergeant Stott, and the NT Administrator, Mr Urquhart had recommended that the Bungalow be closed and the residents shifted out to Hermannsburg.

You know what a problem Mrs Standley and we are having with them. ... They do no good here. At the Mission Station they would at least learn to fear God and learn the higher ideals of life (Mrs Stott quoted in Strehlow 1978:208).

However the Reverend Carl Strehlow at Hermannsburg opposed the plan on the grounds that the two groups could not be mixed. That is

a legally underprivileged and segregated Aboriginal population and a privileged half-caste school population that was to be trained for absorption into the white community (Strehlow 1978:208).

Strehlow left Hermannsburg in 1922 (Strehlow 1978:1), and according to Bleakley the mission was now

willing to receive all half-caste children of 50 per cent. or more aboriginal blood, provided a reasonable extra allowance is made for expenses (Bleakley 1929: 159).

¹⁹ Jay Creek is today known as Iwupataka.

The possibility of sending children down to SA had also been investigated before. Marcus (1990:28-9) cites documents including a letter from Prime Minister S. M. Bruce to the SA Premier in 1927, asking him if his State could accept 'quadroon' and 'octoroon' children under five years of age, who

could be hardly distinguished from ordinary white children ... (and) they would not know in later life that they had aboriginal blood and would probably be absorbed into the white population and become useful citizens (Marcus 1990:28).

SA rejected the request on the grounds that "it would be increasing an undesirable element in the population" (SA Premier in Marcus 1990:28).

In 1923 when Spencer was making his investigations, he commented on attempts by Sergeant Stott to send working girls to Adelaide for "domestic service in private houses". Spencer concluded that

the advisability of this system is open to grave doubt. The girls are isolated, they have no friends on their own footing and, with their peculiar natures, may be very easily led astray and ruined (Spencer 1923: 18).

Of the former problem that Bleakley was to consider, that is 'how to check their breeding', Bleakley argued that until there were sufficient numbers of white women in the Territory, no amount of Acts and Regulations could prevent sexual relationships with Aboriginal women occurring (Bleakley 1929:157). He suggested that while this sex imbalance existed, although some white men "not able to get wives of their own colour" (Bleakley 1929:157) might marry

superior half-caste or quadroons ... The best type of white man is not anxious to outcast himself in this way, preferring, if he must, to satisfy his lust with casual lubras until able to return to white society (Bleakley 1929: 158).

ABORIGINAL - WHITE RELATIONS 1928

Aboriginal - non-Aboriginal relations in 1928 can best be highlighted by two events that occurred in that year in Central Australia: firstly, the Conniston Massacre, and secondly, the declaration of the town of Alice Springs as an area prohibited to Aboriginal people.

The Conniston Massacre 1928

The last publicly reported and documented massacre of a large group of Aboriginal people in Central Australia, took place in 1928 (Clark 1987:276-277), on what is now known as Conniston station, about seventy kilometres east of Yuendumu (Michaels 1989:39). The massacre followed the murder of Freddie Brooks, a dingo trapper, who was killed by Aboriginal men during an altercation over an Aboriginal woman (Clark 1987:276-277). It is known as the Conniston Massacre, and its victims were Warlpiri people. According to survivors and their descendents at Yuendumu community, who speak of it as the 'Killing Time', perhaps one hundred men, women and children were murdered by police in the punitive raid that followed (Michaels 1989:39-41).²⁰ In February 1929, a Board of Inquiry exonerated Mounted Constable William George Murray, who was responsible for the raid, and despite an outcry from missionaries, in April 1929, the Home and Territories Department upheld the findings of the Inquiry (Clark 1987:299).

²⁰ In 1985-86 a video of this story, Conniston Story, was made by Warlpiri people at Yuendumu. The film records an old man, Japangardi, describing the events of the massacre, events as he witnessed them as a child hiding terrified in a cave nearby, waiting for the police to leave. Michael's figure of one hundred, comes from the people's own account of the story, as described in the video (Michaels 1989:39).

Alice Springs as an Area Prohibited to Aboriginal People 1928-1965

The same year, 1928, Alice Springs was declared a prohibited area for Aboriginal people under the Aboriginals Ordinance 1918 (S.11). On 23 July 1928 the Government Resident, J.C. Cawood, did

hereby declare that area of land within a radius of 5 miles from the proposed line of railway from the northern boundary of the State of South Australia to Alice Springs, to be a prohibited area (Australia, Gazette 1928b:2391).

On 2 January 1930 this order was revoked, and the Government Resident, V.G. Carrington declared just

that portion of the Territory of Central Australia within a radius of 2 miles from the office of the Government Resident at Alice Springs to be a prohibited area for aboriginals (Australia, Gazette 1930:88).

Under this prohibition Aboriginal people were not allowed to enter the town area at all between sunset and sunrise, thereby ensuring that fringe camps were outside the town boundaries (Bleakley 1929:154). Only those Aboriginal people who were issued with permits were permitted to enter the town, and only during day light hours. Permits were issued for the purpose of employment. Aboriginal people have vivid memories of this time:

We were only allowed to go as far as that hill over there, we weren't allowed to go to the township. They used to hunt us away from the town because they didn't like blackfellas going there. It was very nasty time. Old policeman Stott was like that. They were jealous over their grog. They left the people who were going to work alone. But the others they chased back home. ... The working men and women could go. But they had to come back after dinner; they weren't allowed to stay till nighttime. ... Aboriginal men and women were not allowed to be in the town past dinner time. They weren't allowed and the policeman used to chase them, the poor things (Bird, Mirira, 1988, IAD interview).

The Opening of the Railway Line in 1929 and Removal of Aboriginal Town Camps

In 1929 the railway line from Oodnadatta to Alice Springs was completed, thereby linking Alice Springs by rail to Adelaide, and the first train reached Alice Springs on the 6 August 1929 (Hocking 1963:26). The line had previously reached Oodnadatta and camel trains brought supplies up to Alice Springs from there (Blackwell & Lockwood 1965:50).

At the time of his investigations in 1928, Bleakley argued that the approaching railway construction camps posed a moral threat to both the residents in the Bungalow and the Aboriginal camp near the town. In his report he noted the camp on the eastern side of the Todd river. It was

a fairly large camp of aboriginals about half a mile from the town, where about 60 indigent natives are regularly supplied with relief. Although this camp is in a creditably clean and sanitary condition, it is obvious that its proximity to what, shortly, will be a fairly busy centre with the coming railway construction camps, makes it a certain source of trouble (Bleakley 1929:160).

In the interests of discouraging possible liaisons between the railway workers and Aboriginal women from this camp, and thereby discouraging the conception of more children of mixed origin, and noting that many in the camp were the parents of children in the Bungalow, Bleakley recommended that the whole camp also be shifted to Hermannsburg, along with the 'darker' of the Bungalow children (Bleakley 1929:160-161). In November 1928 however, the Bungalow institution was temporarily transferred to Jay Creek rather than to Hermannsburg (Australia, Parliamentary Papers 1929-31:2896).

It is difficult to work out exactly what happened to the various camps. According to the Government Resident's 1928-29 annual report on Central Australia

The aboriginals camped at Alice Springs were removed to Hermannsburg Mission Station with the concurrence of the Mission authorities (Australia, Parliamentary Papers 1929-31:2895).

This was the first formal, organised removal of town campers. However their ongoing presence in the town meant that many did not make the move, or if they did, they did not remain away. According to Rowse, rations for about seventy people camped at Heavitree Gap ceased and they were ordered to walk to Hermannsburg (Rowse 1989:25).

A major problem, that was to recur throughout the settlements and missions, was that conditions at Hermannsburg were extremely unfavourable in the late 1920s. There was a drought so severe it brought famine conditions to the mission station. Pastor Albrecht found that of forty nine child deaths at the mission between 1926 and 1930, thirty could be attributed to the drought conditions (Albrecht n.d.). A medical investigation indicated that forty 'natives' at the mission had died of scurvy in the eight months from January to August 1929. The prolonged drought had left virtually no indigenous foods, and the mission rations consisting mainly of white flour, plus some sugar, rice, pearl barley and split peas were inadequate in both quantity and nutrition quality (Cleyland & Fry 1930). Rowse's collection of documents also includes an account by a University of Hawaii psychologist studying 'primitive people' at Hermannsburg in 1929 (Rowse 1989:20). It provides an insight into both the well established practice of segregating Aboriginal children from their families, a practice just beginning at the Bungalow, and the desperation of Aboriginal people in the region facing starvation. The psychologist, apparently with the cooperation of the mission, exploited the subjects of his study without any sense of shame.

After the girls and boys had been locked up in their respective dormitories for the night, each child with its blanket on the sand floor and usually with its own fire stick, we would walk over towards the store-room and soon some dark forms would disengage themselves from the deeper shadows and come hesitantly forward. It would be some of the men with implements, weapons or churinga to sell or exchange for the mission stores of tea, sugar and flour. In this way I was able to acquire a fine collection of aboriginal weapons and tools (Porteous 1931).

Under such conditions it is therefore not surprising that town campers were not enthusiastic about such a move. And on top of these conditions, under Aboriginal custom and law, people from different language or tribal groups do not willingly move onto each others country. Although Bleakley argued that the town campers were of the same 'tribe' as the Arrernte people living at Hermannsburg (Bleakley 1929:160), he failed to recognise the divisions that exist within this broad group: Western, Eastern and Central Arrernte. Finally, for Aboriginal families who had come into town to be close to their children in the Bungalow, there was absolutely no incentive to move to Hermannsburg when the institution had been moved to Jay Creek.

The Bungalow at Jay Creek 1928-1932

The Bungalow remained at Jay Creek for four years, from November 1928 (Australia, Parliamentary Papers 1929-31:2893-9), until 17 November 1932 (Marcus 1990:33). Jessie White remembers greater freedom there, especially going camping at rock holes, including Standley Chasm. She remembers Old Stormy and Nancy Campbell, whose children, grandchildren and great grandchildren live on town camps today, brought out the stores and then would load the children into their truck and take them camping (White, Jessie, 1988, personal interview, 25 March). Some families, like Jessie White's, moved with the Bungalow to Jay Creek and continued as goat shepherds. Other children were less fortunate. Marcus (1990:30) quotes from a Northern Standard report on 13 October 1931:

Their mothers come to see them sometimes in the institution, mute lubras from far-off stations, a little scared, wholly alien.

Jay Creek was always a temporary site for the institution, and its facilities and location again came under heavy criticism (Rowse 1989:24; Morley n.d.; Marcus 1990:29-32). In particular, no adequate supply of permanent water was available at this site. Marcus has reproduced a photograph of the main building at the school which was never completed (Marcus 1990:opposite 134). It consisted of a timber frame, cement floor, and was partly enclosed with galvanised iron salvaged from the old Bungalow building in town. In 1929, forty eight children slept on the floor in this room. By 1931, fifty six children were housed there, and a further sixteen were on a waiting list for admission. Poor lighting, cooking facilities and diet, the lack of medical facilities, no means of communicating with Alice Springs and inadequate space, all came under criticism. Older girls who had been sent out to work from the Bungalow, and who returned pregnant, were forced to have their babies in the main dormitory, in a section partitioned off with flour bags (Marcus 1990:30-31).

According to the Minister, the plan was that during its temporary relocation at Jay Creek, a new institution at Temple Bar, about eleven kilometres west of Alice Springs, would be built (Morley n.d.).²¹ In April 1930 Cabinet approved construction plans for a new institution, and in May a contract was let. However this site was also dogged by the lack of a suitable permanent water supply, and construction was delayed, then halted (Hocking 1963:26; White, Jessie, 1988, personal interview, 25 March).

In the meantime, the railway station had been located in the main town area, about four kilometres from the original telegraph station, and in order to consolidate the town, in early 1932 a new post office was opened in the town centre and the telegraph station transferred there (Hocking 1963:26). The vacated telegraph station buildings were then taken over as the location of the Bungalow which continued operating there, under the control of the Aboriginals Department, from 1932-42.

PRE-WAR YEARS 1932-1940

The pre-war years are probably most notable for the number of criticisms and attacks levelled at the Bungalow and the fringe camps, their presence, condition and proximity to the town; and the establishment of a Catholic mission on the town camps.

²¹ Roe Creek, which runs into the Todd River, was previously called Temple Bar Creek. I assume the proposed site was somewhere along this creek, on the western side of the town.

The Bungalow at The Telegraph Station 1932-42

The new Bungalow contained dormitories, a school, clinic, staff quarters and offices (Heppell & Wigley 1981:16). Jessie White, now ten years old and in her fifth year as a Bungalow kid, remembers this third move with some pleasure.

We had new homes, and our own hospital there. We had our own school and teachers, tennis courts, gramophones, cricket pitch (White, Jessie, 1988, personal interview, 25 March).

Adelaide doctor, Dr Charles Duguid, who visited the Bungalow in 1934, was not so impressed. The children "were not allowed to attend the local school, but remained at the Compound in the care of a white married couple" (Duguid 1978:23). He was also concerned about the future of the children, commenting that at sixteen years of age the girls were sent out to work, often as domestics in private homes, in towns and on stations, where they were subject to both sexual and employment exploitation (Duguid 1978:23). In 1936, when she turned fourteen, Jessie White was sent to work at the hospital in Darwin, and later in Pine Creek (White, Jessie, 1988, personal interview, 25 March).

The boys had to go out on the stations. ... I also worked for the government officers and their wives, doing domestic work, looking after kids (White, Jessie, 1988, personal interview, 25 March).

Mr J. McEwen, the Federal government Minister for the Interior (Bleakley 1961:244), visited the Bungalow in 1937.

There I saw a state of affairs which honorable members will find it difficult to believe - 120 half-caste children, and 13 or 14 adult full-blooded and half-caste women, the parents of some of the young half-caste children, living in that most deplorable old building, which, when it rained heavily, took in the water almost as if there were no roof at all. The dormitories were a disgrace. ... 120 children were being accommodated in two dormitories, where they slept on two sets of wire mattresses. The first set, which accommodated 36 children, stood 1ft. 9in. from the floor, and 2ft. 4in. above their heads as they lay was another set of mattresses accommodating another 36 children. The building was roofed with corrugated iron, and had a concrete floor, so that it must certainly have been too hot in summer and almost unbearably cold in winter. I know many stud stock breeders who would not dream of crowding their stock in the way that these half-caste children were huddled in this institution in Alice Springs (Australia, House of Representatives Parliamentary Debates 1939:181).

In 1935 the Bungalow held 180 children (O'Grady 1977:14). According to a rather desperate teacher, in February of the same year eighty one children were enrolled in the Bungalow school, and a further twenty four already at the Bungalow would commence schooling in the next three years. Throughout the year their numbers would be further boosted by new children being brought into the institution by Mounted Police doing patrols through the bush. The school consisted of one small classroom, one teacher and eighty one pupils, many of whom did not speak English (Robb 1935).

Harold Ross remembers this time with sadness:

If they saw any half caste kids at their camp, they would grab them and take them away. After taking them away they would put the whole lot in the Bungalow school, the whole lot. Any half caste kids seen anywhere were taken and put in the Bungalow school. And the mothers and fathers just watched helplessly as their children were taken away. The policeman used to grab them. They left us alone, so we didn't have to worry about being taken (Ross, Harold, 1988, IAD interview).

The move to the telegraph station site in 1932 saw a rapid rise in the number of children being brought in from the camps, from about sixty in 1932 to about 130 in 1935 (Marcus 1990: 33). And children were not the only ones being housed there. A report in 1938 indicates that it was also

used as a home for females of more mature age who are out of employment; are about to have babies; have young children; and some even who are married but are not supported by their husbands (Carrington 1938).

The Camps

A policy that aimed on the one hand to remove the presence of Aboriginal people and fringe camps from the town, except for a small labour pool, yet on the other, to forcibly remove children from their bush communities and families, and bring them to the town, was inherently contradictory. Families, in particular mothers followed their children in from the bush, and many worked at the Bungalow in order to get rations.

All the mothers worked with the nanny goats too, because they wanted the rations. My mother used to go on foot and come back carrying loads. It was like that at the Bungalow, living in tiny little shelters, at this place here, under this pepper tree. ... We used to be good workers, me and Auntie Mary and Mrs Hettie. They used to wash the kids' clothes and I used to wash the kids. We used to do a lot of hard work. We also used to look after the little sick ones. We worked for money and for food (Bird, Mirira, 1988, IAD interview).

Mrs Hettie referred to above, was Hettie Perkins, mother of Charles Perkins, who also did time at the Bungalow.

The poverty and unhealthy conditions of the Aboriginal camps on the outskirts of the town drew criticism as well. In 1934 Dr Duguid was horrified at what he saw.

Beyond the township, full-blood old men and women lived in the most miserable 'humpies' built of scrap iron, old bags, or hessian. One had to stoop down to enter these hovels. Embers burned in the centre of the earth floor. Sunshine was effectively shut out, but there was little protection against rain (Duguid 1978: 23).

He was also disturbed by the lack of interest and in some cases, the racism, shown by ministers of the Christian churches (with one exception), towards Aborigines. Of one church, the Australian Inland Mission, he wrote that every padre "regarded the natives as unworthy of attention, and they treated them accordingly - with contempt and scorn" (Duguid 1978: 23-24).

In March 1935 a Catholic lay missionary, Frank McGarry, arrived in Alice Springs. His self-appointed task was to establish a Catholic mission for Aborigines in Central Australia (O'Grady 1977: 9-10). Much thought went into where such a mission should be situated, and various sites including Whistleduck, the site of a gold mine south east of Tennant Creek, and Lake Amadeus, 400 miles south west of Alice Springs, were considered (O'Grady 1977: 16-17). In the meantime, McGarry also noted the poverty on the outskirts of the town:

... men, women and children, some camping in rough bush wurlies, some in the sand of the creek beds, some in the dust beside the roads. Fire wood was scarce so warmth at night was obtained from an old blanket or coat, but for some natives, more frequently from the company of a few mangy, flea-bitten dogs (O'Grady 1977: 15).

Even the gazetted camp was to come under fire. In 1937 patrol officer Strehlow argued that the conditions of the camps were deplorable.

The present gazetted area is barren and rocky, devoid of shade and firewood. The huts and tin shacks are disgraceful structures. ... Employment can be found by only a small percentage of the natives in the camp. The rest receive scanty Government rations, and rely for their living very largely on begging, gambling and the proceeds of various forms of immorality and procuring (Strehlow 1937a).

Strehlow was extremely forceful in his condemnation of the fringe camps. In November 1937 he wrote:

The Alice Springs ration depot even now is attracting natives from reserves by whole clans; and it will become increasingly difficult to remove these immigrants back into their own country the longer they have been staying around the sordid precincts of the Alice Springs native camps. It is a disgrace to the Aboriginals Department that all these dirty camps are allowed not only to exist but to increase at a place rich in press-reporters and frequented by crowds of tourists (Strehlow 1937b).

He saw the camps as degrading and disgraceful places which led to begging, gambling and immorality, and that caused "natives (to) rapidly degenerate and turn into a band of unemployed hooligans, beggars and wasters" (Strehlow 1937a).

The Little Flower Mission at the Presbytery 1935-36

The Catholic missionary began taking classes at the presbytery in "religion, counting and alphabet" for some of the children from the camps in 1935, and the decision to base the 'Little Flower' mission in the town with town camp people grew out of this exercise (O'Grady 1977:24).

However the Alice Springs non-Aboriginal population was growing. In 1932 it was 200 (Heppell & Wigley 1981: 1), and by the beginning of World War II in 1939, it was 600 (Rowley 1971b: 36; O'Grady 1977: 70). Almost immediately, members of the white town community, including the police and members of the Catholic church, began to oppose the mission activities at the presbytery.

What is this McGarry doing with a crowd of blacks around him, and what are the blacks doing at the presbytery? If this doesn't stop I'll arrest McGarry (O'Grady 1977:25).

Catholic parents complained when their white children were mixed with Aboriginal children at Sunday school, as they prepared for their first communions (O'Grady 1977:20). The Alice Springs Protector of Aborigines, the town doctor, was supportive of the mission, but warned the Church that

you would be wise in considering the deep rooted feeling against the blacks. And though, as Protector, I gave you permission to start your black school, I think it would be wiser to go out to their camps and teach there (O'Grady 1977:25-26).

By December 1935, thirty two Aborigines, including adults, were coming to the presbytery for classes and emergency welfare assistance (O'Grady 1977:25,27,30). The numbers grew in 1936, with about seventy Aborigines attending Sunday mass and instruction, followed by a meal (O'Grady 1977:35). White opposition and police harassment also grew. In December 1936 the police informed the church that adult "lubras" who assisted in the school were not to be brought into the town, and two days later they confronted the presbytery and four old women. The situation was resolved when the Protector authorised the presence of adult Aborigines at the presbytery for assistance at the school, but the police complained that

Father Maloney's objective was to make Alice Springs a semi-black town (O'Grady 1977:36).

In 1935 the town boundary, and thereby the prohibited area, had been extended to include the area from the southern Boundary of the Bungalow, right through the town area to Heavitree Gap (Australia, Gazette 1935:1059; Hocking 1963:26), which would have given the authorities the necessary legal power to force the camps south of the Bungalow boundary to move. However, in December 1936 the Bungalow reserve was extended by 425 acres within the northern boundary of the town (Hocking 1963:26), and in 1936 a decision was also made to move the mission from the presbytery to the southern part of the Bungalow reserve (O'Grady 1977:33,37). Given town opposition to the presence of Aboriginal camps, it is not clear why the reserve was extended at this time, unless it was specifically to accommodate the mission.

The Little Flower Mission on the Bungalow Reserve

1937-42

The Little Flower mission established itself on the southern end of the Bungalow reserve, north of Anzac Hill in an area known as the Tjuritja camp, today known as the Anthelk-Ewlpaye Extension (Shaw, Geoff, 1988, personal interview, 28 March). By the end of 1936 a building which was to operate as both the mission church and school room was completed and the Public Works Department erected two toilets (O'Grady 1977:33,49). The Tjuritja campers were organised to build their humpies out of scavenged timber, bits of galvanised iron and flattened kerosene tins, in neat rows by the main building (O'Grady 1977:39-40). On 16 February 1937 the first classes were held in the new mission school (O'Grady 1977:42,79). A mission census around April 1937 counted 113 people: forty nine children at school, eleven under school age, twenty six women and twenty seven men, living in thirty seven humpies (O'Grady 1977:45). By August 1938 there were 140 people living at the mission in thirty nine humpies: fifty children, forty women and fifty men (O'Grady 1977:59-60); and by February 1940, the mission population had reached 221 (O'Grady 1977:67).

During these pre-war years the two Aboriginal institutions, the Little Flower mission and the Bungalow, existed on the same reserve on the north side of the town. Many fringe camps were established, and came and went around them, along the creek beds, in the surrounding hills, and to the north of the reserve. The area was a general meeting and camping area for Aboriginal visitors and itinerant workers from out of town. While many women worked at the Bungalow, the

men used to look after the wagon horses, and also shoe them. The wagons kept coming. The Afghan camel teams also came carrying loads of food. They dropped off some food there and then kept going north to take loads to other people.

All the working people went back to camp, not in town, but a long way over there, at a place called Ingketyenye, and another called Werlatye-Therre.²² From there my old man used to go to work at the Bungalow, and at knock off time they'd go back again. They used to get ten bob a week; that was big money in those days (Ross, Harold, 1988, IAD interview).

²² These are areas north of the Bungalow reserve, indicating further camps there.

The mission, although removed from the presbytery in the town, was still subject to harassment, and police interference. And the missionaries, on the one hand the advocates of Aboriginal rights, on the other hand enthusiastic suppressors of Aboriginal culture, were in between. They shared many of the white town peoples' prejudices against the fringe campers, and they did their best to obliterate Aboriginal cultural practices by such measures as forbidding the use of Arrernte language at the mission or school (O'Grady 1977:28), and discouraging Aboriginal ceremonial business (O'Grady 1977:58,65). They also saw fringe campers as "non-workers", "indolent", and harbourers of sickness and disease (O'Grady 1977:15). Indeed, many campers did suffer from TB, yaws and glaucoma (O'Grady 1977:19), the mission census in 1939 finding that 33% of its residents showed signs of TB (O'Grady 1977:60). The mission opposed the distribution of rations, other than in return for labour, on the grounds that Aborigines would quickly lose their ability to survive in the bush. The missionary McGarry wrote that

Once the black tastes tea, sugar, flour etc he is more or less a gone coon (O'Grady 1977:72).

However the missionaries were seen to be antagonistic to the white society. They advocated the fringe camper's basic rights for shelter, medical treatment, education, Christianity and legal protection, and rejected the general town attitude that fringe campers had no rights as fellow human beings. They believed that with patience and kindness, education and Christian teaching, Aboriginal people would abandon their 'primitive' traditional ways and accept their place in the new 'civilised' society. They therefore concentrated on running the school and baptising new members into the church, and discouraging cultural practice. By August 1938, 171 mission Aborigines had been baptised, and by January 1939, 192 (O'Grady 1977:59-60).

While the mission remained on the Bungalow reserve it failed to institutionalise camp life, and language, ceremonies and traditional family life continued. However in later years it was to prove far more destructive. ²³

²³ From 1942-53 the mission was at Arltunga, and from 1953 at Santa Teresa. During these phases girls and boys dormitories were established and children were reared separately from their families, a practice which proved to be one of the more successful measures introduced to disrupt Aboriginal culture.

FROM PROTECTION TO ASSIMILATION

Policy

A number of writers including Elkin (1944), Pittock (1975), Wright (1985), Read (1988) and Marcus (1988) have demonstrated that from the mid-1920s pressure from both Aboriginal, and non-Aboriginal humanitarian groups in the more established states, forced governments to re-think their policies on Aboriginal affairs in the 1930s. Aboriginal groups such as the Australian Aborigines Progressive Association established in Sydney in 1925 (Marcus 1988:6), and re-established in 1937 (Elkin 1944:19); a union of Aboriginal people of mixed descent in south west WA in 1926 (Marcus 1988:5); and the Australian Aborigines League in Victoria and the Australian Aborigines Amelioration Association in Perth in 1932 (Elkin 1944:18-19); agitated for a broad range of Aboriginal rights. These rights included issues such as Aboriginal citizenship; an end to the practice of forcibly removing Aboriginal children from their families; land as both an economic base and as compensation for the taking of Aboriginal lands; a national policy and administration on Aboriginal affairs; and employment and training opportunities (Elkin 1944:15; Marcus 1988:6). Generally acting independently, they were supported by a handful of non-Aboriginal individuals and groups, missionaries, journalists, the Sydney based Association for the Protection of Native Races, A.P. Elkin (who became professor of anthropology at Sydney University in 1933), and publicity surrounding a number of atrocities such as the Conniston massacre in Central Australia in 1928 (Elkin 1944:10; Wright 1985:5). In 1931 Elkin argued that Aboriginal people were on the "high road to extinction" because Australia lacked any sort of overall policy on Aboriginal affairs (Elkin 1931:4). He was influential in his campaign for a new and unified national policy and administration (Elkin 1944:10). As Marcus (1988:4) points out, governments were urged "to accept that extinction was not an inevitability, that it was possible for Aborigines to 'advance' towards 'civilization'" if adequate policies and programmes were implemented. Although most of these demands, including a unified policy on Aboriginal affairs were not achieved in the 1930s, and Aboriginal affairs remained the province of the states until 1967, some changes did take place. ²⁴

²⁴ Under the 1901 Federal constitution, power over Aboriginal affairs remained exclusively with the states until the referendum in 1967, which enabled a constitutional amendment so that power could be shared by the Commonwealth and the States (Keon-Cohen & Morse 1984:82).

In 1937 the Minister for the Interior, Mr J. McEwen began drafting a new Aboriginal policy for the NT, as the Commonwealth had jurisdiction over the territories. In early 1939 the 'New Deal', which included the abolition of the old Aboriginals Department and its replacement with the new Native Affairs Branch of the NT Administration, was implemented (Foxcroft 1941:148; Bleakley 1961:244). The first national inter-government conference on Aboriginal Affairs was also held in 1937, at which a new policy of assimilation was generally endorsed, though not officially adopted until the second national conference held in 1951 (Hanks 1984:22; DAA 1974:4). The aim of this policy in 1937

at least for 'the natives of Aboriginal origin but not of the full blood' was their 'ultimate absorption'

into white society (DAA 1974:4). Therefore, while Aboriginal people of mixed descent would need to be absorbed into white society, at this stage it was still believed that the Aboriginal 'native' problem might resolve itself with extinction. Indeed, according to Smith (1980:179) the Aboriginal population in the NT had continued to decline until 1933, had remained roughly stationary until 1947, and only then begun to increase quite rapidly. By 1960 however, when it was recognised that extinction was clearly not to be the case, the policy of assimilation had come to mean that through social change Aboriginal people must detach themselves from their own cultural practices and

become indistinguishable from other members of the Australian community in manner of life, standards of living, occupations, and participation in community affairs (Welfare Branch of the NT Administration 1961:7).

The New Deal for Town Campers

Immediately prior to the wartime army occupation of Alice Springs the official policy regarding the town camps was that an Aboriginal labour pool should be retained in one camp only, and that all other fringe campers would be shifted away to either Jay Creek reserve or Hermannsburg mission. The proposal was that the Little Flower mission section of the Bungalow reserve would be reclassified as the 'Working Blacks Reserve', supervised by the mission, and all other camps were to be dispersed (O'Grady 1977:71; Heppell & Wigley 1981:21; Nathan & Leichleitner 1983a:56-57). This policy followed the prevailing view advanced by TGH Strehlow, the Aboriginals Department Patrol Officer from 1936 (Foxcroft 1941:148), that Aborigines had to be prevented from migrating into Alice Springs from bush communities, and that only those employed should be allowed to remain in town. He argued that to facilitate this, rations should no longer be distributed in Alice Springs, and instead ration depots be set up well out bush, to the south west, west and north west of the town, and that trading in artefacts and dingo scalps be encouraged on these depots. This would prevent Aborigines from drifting into Alice Springs (Strehlow 1937a; 1937b; 1940).

Largely as a result of Strehlow's urging, his base at Jay Creek reserve, about twenty miles west of Alice Springs, was proclaimed an Aboriginal reserve on 22 July 1937 (Von Trepp 1964:17; Rowley 1970:315; Rowse 1989:57). In October 1940 VJ White from the Native Affairs Branch recommended

the immediate removal of all aged and infirm aboriginals in Alice Springs and their associates (not working aboriginals) to the only available site namely Jay Creek and that rations for these people be immediately transferred to Jay Creek from Alice Springs (White, 1940).

On 30 November 1940 the police made

their last official issue of rations in Alice Springs; then the 'aged and infirm' Aborigines camped near the town were taken by motor vehicle to Jay Creek (Rowse 1989:57).

This was the second mass, enforced evacuation of town campers from Alice Springs.

THE WAR YEARS 1939-45

In 1939 World War II was declared and during the war the NT, including the Aboriginal population, came under military control (Bleakley 1961:244). From 1940 (O'Grady 1977:70) until the end of the war, the town of Alice Springs changed dramatically as it became a major military centre, by 1942 housing 2,500 Australian troops (O'Grady 1977:70,74; Beck 1985:97).²⁵

The wartime army administration agreed with the view that all town campers, except workers, should be removed from the town, and they carried out the third major muster and forced evacuation of town campers from Alice Springs. One of their concerns was the health of their personnel, a matter debated by Commonwealth politicians on 7 December 1939, in relation to the Darwin native compound and its impact on 'our young men' in a nearby airforce base. One can assume that similar concerns arose in Alice Springs.

Mr Frost: ... It is well known that many of the half-castes and aborigines in the compound suffer from venereal disease. Some of them are in a bad state. The only mark that distinguishes the diseased persons from others in the compound is the red trimmings on their clothes. It is a disgrace to the Government that the compound should be located as close to the aerodrome as it is, seeing that we are sending our boys there for Air Force training.

Mr McEwen: The honorable member is making a grave reflection upon our young men.

Mr Frost: I am simply stating the facts. ... we should not be sending our boys into a training camp so close to the filthy compound in which these natives and half-castes are living (Australia, House of Representatives Parliamentary Debates 1939).

Rowse (1989:67) indicates that the army's concern for hygiene also led to Aboriginal labour being banned from a dairy in the farm area south of Heavitree Gap in Alice Springs.

The army set about removing all unemployed campers from the town area. The Bungalow was closed as the training institution and its residents were evacuated first to NT Top End missions and later down to Balaklava in South Australia and to NSW (O'Grady 1977:72; Heppell & Wigley 1981:16; Rowse 1989:56). All but employed town campers were ordered out of the town (O'Grady 1977:71). In 1942 the mission was informed that it must move to the old Arltunga gold mine site, 110 kilometres east of Alice Springs (O'Grady 1977:74-75), taking the rest of the Bungalow reserve population with it, most of whom were Eastern Arrernte traditional owners. The army facilitated this move by trucking 176 people to Arltunga.

In 1942 we shifted from Charles Creek to Arltunga. The whitefella boss told us. The priest also said to us: 'There are lots of army trucks coming tomorrow because the Japanese might be fighting here by then. You've all got to roll up your swags at first light and get ready'. The shepherds and the goats had already started that evening. They had taken their goats and donkeys. So we waited, and just at daybreak we saw all the army trucks, and we thought that they were about to fight here, we must go because they'd be fighting here by 5 o'clock. There were also soldiers on the truck and we were anxious that they might mistake us for the army and fight us. They shifted all the poor people like that so that they could get on with the fighting themselves (Ross, Harold, 1988, IAD interview).

²⁵ Before the war in 1939 the white population had reached only 600 according to Rowley (1971b:36).

Despite the impression given by official reports, little distinction was made between the two groups of Bungalow reserve residents, those attached to the children's institution and those at the mission, in the evacuation. As Mirira Bird remembers:

Some people were put in the train and others were taken by the army to Arltunga. Everybody cleaned out from here. We lined up, and even the dogs, the poor things, were thrown up on top of the truck. The kids and the dogs (Bird, Mirira, 1988, IAD interview).

Harold Ross recalls Bungalow children being with the reserve evacuees at Arltunga until the Administration took them away once more.

In 1943, wartime, when we were at Arltunga, they took all the half-caste kids again. The half-caste kids were together with us and we all went to the same school together at Arltunga. They took half-caste kids from there too, the poor things. ... Us kids saw them going (Ross, Harold, 1988, IAD interview).

Documents also highlight the distress caused by the children being sent down south.

They also took my little sister at that time, and that's the last time I saw her, I never saw her again, and I don't know where she is. I was very sad at that time when they took my little sister for good, poor thing (Ross, Harold, 1988, IAD interview).

Rowse (1989:64-65) has reproduced three letters from parents, in all cases father and mother, pleading with the Native Affairs Branch to allow their children to be returned to them rather than sent down south. One reads:

*Dear Sir,
I myself, and my wife, both half castes we understand, do not want any of our children removed, out of this Central Australia their country. It would not be fair to us, the loss of them. also not fair to them the loss of their parents, causing crying and fretting.
We parents, born Arltunga goldfields, children also, except one, he being the eldest N. He born Deep Well, part of the east-west running James Range.
As we were all born here in Central Australia, we don't know any other parts, and don't want to.
Will you please place this Protest, as we do not understand any forcible removal, of any of us, from the Central Australia, our birthright country.
Yours truly, WB.*

Rowse was unable to find any record of an official response to these pleas.

Other campers, especially those south of Heavitree Gap continued to be rounded up and sent to Jay Creek.

Throughout the NT the army employed 1,000 Aboriginal people during the war, doing jobs like collecting night soil, collecting timber, domestic work, general labouring, working in the motor transport workshops (Bleakley 1961:248), unloading trucks (Flemming, Tom, 1988, personal interview, 26 March), and building the N.T. highways (Durnan, Bob, 1987, interview with Memmott). The Bungalow reserve became one of five army 'Native Labour Camps' for Aboriginal workers in the NT. It

functioned as a clearing house for halfcastes evacuated from northern areas as well as a reserve for natives employed by the Army and in the town of Alice Springs, and for natives awaiting repatriation ex-gaol and hospital, witnesses, etc. As the movement of half-castes from North has now ceased, the Institution will continue to function for the use of Aboriginals. ...

Some 186 native employees are camped on the reserve at night; casual visitors, witnesses, patients, repatriates, etc. vary (White 1943).

Unlike the other four native labour camps, the Bungalow had a dual function. It operated both as an army 'Native Labour Camp' and as a Native Affairs Branch repatriation centre, which, Rowse (1989:68) indicates, led to disagreements between the Administrations.

However the major issue, in terms of the future of Alice Springs town camps, was that once more Aboriginal people were attracted to and being brought into the town area, despite an official policy of removing them. By Christmas 1942, thirty nine workers had been recruited from Hermannsburg, twenty nine from Jay Creek, fourteen from Arltunga, sixteen from Tennant Creek, and seven from Barrow creek, Burt Well, Finke River and Rodinga Railway Siding (Rowse 1989:68). In late September 1942, twenty three able bodied men were taken back to Alice Springs from Arltunga mission (O'Grady 1977:80). Tom Flemming recalls that able bodied men from Yuendumu and cattle stations were 'shanghied' into town to become a labour core, and dumped at the Bungalow (Flemming, Tom, 1988, personal interview, 26 March).²⁶

When the war was over, the presence of these workers, plus many families who, despite undertakings from the Native Affairs Branch that they would be rationed on their home communities (Rowse 1989:68), had also moved into the town area, left the Native Affairs Branch with an even greater Aboriginal town camp 'problem'.

THE POST-WAR YEARS 1945-60s

In the post-war years the official policy, and considerable government agency energy, was dedicated to the eradication of the town camps in Alice Springs.

Legislation: The Welfare Ordinance 1953-64, the Wards Employment Ordinance 1953-71 and the Social Welfare Ordinance 1964-72

The most significant thing about the two new Ordinances of 1953 was their exclusion of racial terminology. For example, the words 'Aboriginal' and 'half caste' did not appear. Instead the legislation referred to 'wards'. However, as Rowley points out (1970:241), in practice a ward included almost any person previously classified as Aboriginal under the Aboriginals Ordinances. In Section 14 of the Welfare Ordinance a ward was defined as:

- any person "in need of special care or assistance" because of
 - one's manner or standard of living;
 - one's inability to manage ones own affairs; or
 - one's personal associations.

However a person could not be a ward if:

- one was eligible to vote; or
- one would be eligible to vote if of age, or having resided continuously in Australia for six months.

Because Aboriginal people were not eligible to vote, and were deemed in need of care and assistance, they became wards.

²⁶ Tom Flemming came to Central Australia with his wife in 1950. He was a Baptist minister and worked at Yuendumu. He has a keen interest in Central Australian history and is a member of the NT National Trust.

The legislation abolished the Native Affairs Branch and replaced it with the Welfare Branch of the NT Administration. ²⁷ The Welfare Branch, and its Director, continued to have enormous powers over Aboriginal people, including:

- the Director remained the legal guardian of all wards (S.24);
- the retention of prohibited areas ;
- to send, detain or remove any ward to or from an institution or reserve, that is control over where a ward lived; and
- to control all ward property including any financial transactions over £10.

As with the previous Aboriginals Ordinance, in special circumstances wards could be exempted from the legislation; all marriages had to be approved by the Director; it was an offence for a male non-ward to be in the company of a female ward between the hours of sunset and sunrise (unless married); and a person ceased to be a ward from the date of their marriage to a non-ward. The Wards Employment Ordinance 1953, introduced controls over the employment of wards.

The new legislation of 1953 therefore was not significantly different from previous legislation in place in the NT since 1910. While the official policy was shifting from 'Protection' to 'Assimilation', the methods of implementation remained more or less the same. As Rowley points out

The old means were to be used to attain new ends, through the addition of more services and by intensive education and training (Rowley 1970:239).

The Social Welfare Ordinance 1964-72, abolished the Welfare Ordinance 1953-64, and with it many of the restrictive regulations regarding Aboriginal movement, associations and property. Aboriginal people were no longer defined as wards, "except for wages in the pastoral industry" (Rowley 1970:241); prohibited areas were abolished; drinking alcohol became legal, and Aborigines gained freedom of movement and association. However, although Alice Springs ceased to be a prohibited area, town campers continued to be seen as illegal squatters on crown land.

Ration Depots, Missions, Reserves and Settlements

Throughout Central Australia, missions, reserves and settlements continued to be established, firstly, to halt any further migration of Aboriginal people from bush communities into the town and to act as dumping grounds for those declared illegal and forcibly removed; and secondly, to provide training institutions from which Aboriginal internees would graduate ready to be assimilated and absorbed into the non-Aboriginal community. From 1945 until 1968 a total of six new settlements were established throughout the Central Australian region for this purpose. (See Table 5.)

²⁷ It is interesting, that despite attempts to remove all racist language, the new Branch, officially called the Welfare Branch, was always known as Native Welfare. For example, Heppell & Wigley (1981:62) refer to the "Department of Native Welfare days" and to the "Native Welfare Town Patrol Officer"; and even staff who were employed by the Welfare Branch, will state today that they were employed by Native Welfare.

Table 5: Establishment of Aboriginal Missions, Reserves and Settlements in Central Australia

1877	Hermannsburg Lutheran mission established at Ntaria, 83 miles west of Alice Springs (Bleakley 1961:239). In 1891 missionaries leave the mission, but return in 1894 (Hartwig 1965:514,519; Strehlow 1978:5).
1920	The South West Reserve, 21,875 sq miles in the south western corner of the NT, was proclaimed. Adjoining areas in SA and WA were also proclaimed, creating the Central Reserve of approximately 60,000 sq miles. When the Haasts Bluff reserve was proclaimed in 1940, an equivalent area of land, north of Uluru and south of Lake Amadeus, was excised from the South West Reserve (Von Trepp 1964:15-16). This was to facilitate access to country further west where gold was thought to be. In 1958 the Ayers Rock - Mount Olga area was excised from the South West Reserve as a national park (Uluru Katatjuta Board of Management and Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service 1986:14).
1932 to 1960	Bungalow reserve established at the Old Telegraph Station site in Alice Springs. From 1932-42 it was the site of the home for children of mixed racial descent, known as the Bungalow ²⁸ and from 1937-42 it included the site of the Catholic Little Flower mission (Hocking 1963:26; White, Jessie, 1988, personal interview, 25 March). In 1942 the children's home and the mission were closed, and the reserve was used to accommodate Aboriginal labourers employed by the army until the end of the war in 1945 (White 1943; Heppell & Wigley 1981). From 1945-60 the Bungalow reserve was used to accommodate Aboriginal people who had permits to visit, or were employed in the town area (Von Trepp 1964:22-23). The reserve was closed in 1960 and its residents were shifted to Amoonguna (Hocking 1963:30).
1935	The Little Flower Catholic mission was established in Alice Springs. It was located at four different sites: from 1935-36 at the presbytery in the town; from 1936-42 along the Charles Creek eastern bank, on what is now the Anthelk-Ewlpaye lease, but was then part of the Bungalow reserve; from 1942-53 at Arltunga; and because of water shortage problems at Arltunga, in 1953 it was relocated at Santa Teresa (O'Grady 1977:75-78,136).
1937	Ernabella Mission, SA, established by the Presbyterian church on Pitjantjatjara country south west of Alice Springs (Bleakley 1961:226).
1937	Jay Creek Reserve, about 20 miles west of Alice Springs, proclaimed "as a place to which the population of the Aboriginal camp at Alice Springs could be moved, as a first step to returning them to their native reserves and as a place to hold native offenders and witnesses pending trial" (Von Trepp 1964:17). Aged and infirm Aboriginal town campers were moved there in 1940 (Rowse 1989:57). In 1943 it was "to be a place where Aborigines could be taught to become useful citizens" (Von Trepp 1964:17). Jay Creek is now named Iwupataka.
1940	Haasts Bluff reserve was proclaimed and a ration depot established there by Hermannsburg Lutheran mission (Von Trepp 1964:16; Nathan 1983:55; Beck 1985:97). In 1953 the NT Administration assumed control of the Areyonga and Haasts Bluff depots, and they were established as settlements (Long 1963:4).

²⁸ The Bungalow childrens home existed for 28 years, from 1914-1942. During this period it was located at three different sites. From 1914-28 in the town beside the Police station and the Stuart Arms hotel; from 1928-32 at Jay Creek; and from 1932-42 on the Bungalow Reserve.

1942	Areyonga government ration depot, 145 miles south west of Alice Springs, set up by Hermannsburg mission (Beck 1985:97; Dick Kimber 1988). N.B. Long (1963:4) says Areyonga ration depot was established in 1943. In 1953 the NT Administration assumed control of the Areyonga and Haasts Bluff depots, and they were established as settlements (Long 1963:4).
1946	Yuendumu settlement was established by the government as a ration depot in 1946 and proclaimed as a reserve in 1952, on Warlpiri land 185 miles north west of Alice Springs (O'Grady 1977:110-111; Welfare Branch 1961:32; Bleakley 1961:245; Von Trepp 1964:20). The Baptist church also played a major role in the administration of this settlement and its store.
1948	Hooker Creek reserve, now Lajamanu, north west of Tennant Creek, proclaimed (Von Trepp 1964:19,24).
1955	Warrabri settlement, now Alekerenge just south of Tennant Creek, established, and proclaimed as a reserve in 1960 (Von Trepp 1964:20,24). N.B. Rowley (1970:316) says that the settlement was established in 1954.
1959	Papunya settlement, in the Haasts Bluff reserve, occupied. Papunya, 150 miles by road west north west of Alice Springs, and about 12 miles from Haasts Bluff, was officially opened in 1960 (Welfare Branch 1961:29).
1960	Amoonguna reserve, 7 miles south east of Alice Springs, occupied. Bungalow residents and town campers forcibly transferred there (Hocking 1963:30).
1968	Docker River settlement, west of Uluru near the WA border in the South West reserve, established (Welfare Branch 1964:14).

Town Camps and the Bungalow Reserve 1945-60

Following the war the official policy regarding town campers remained the same. There was to be a single 'Working Blacks Reserve' near the town, and all other campers were to be dispersed to missions and settlements out bush. Before the war the Little Flower mission on the Bungalow reserve had been designated as this reserve. However, as the mission had been shifted to Arltunga during the war, the Bungalow reserve itself became the 'Working Blacks Reserve' until 1960, run by the Native Affairs Branch, and from 1953, the Welfare Branch.²⁹

The Bungalow administration was fraught with problems, in particular problems to do with regulating who was eligible to reside there, and inadequate finances. Aboriginal people with permits and jobs, and their families, were to live at the Bungalow, and only at the Bungalow, and all other town campers were to be dispersed. Administration reports of the time are full of complaints about town campers loafing around the town; men camping at the Bungalow who had no jobs or permits to be there; others refusing to camp at the Bungalow and setting up illegal camps around the town, including in the Lutheran's Finke River Mission Block; inadequate rations and funding for the proper running of the Bungalow; and illegal alcohol consumption there (O'Grady 1977:95; McCoy 1947; Rowse 1989:97-99, 107-108; Hargraves 1956; Webb 1953; Evans 1953; McCaffery 1953; Heppell & Wigley 1981:18-19).

²⁹ Aboriginal children, especially those of mixed origin, were still being removed from their families by Welfare and Police authorities, but no longer institutionalised at the Bungalow. Instead they were placed in institutions and homes down south, or in two new hostels for 'part-Aboriginal' children, opened in Alice Springs after the war - St. Mary's hostel run by the Anglican church and Griffith House run by the Methodist church. In 1949 Griffith House housed fifty two children, and in 1954 St. Mary's housed seventy eight residents, sixty eight school children and ten working women (Donovan 1988:261-262).

The official exception to this rule was the 'night soil' camp, which, during the war had shifted from the west of the town, to a site just south of Heavitree Gap (Rowse 1989:66). The work of carting and burying the 'night soil', and cleaning the pans, was done with Aboriginal labour, about twenty eight workers, who camped with their families by the Sanitary Depot (Rowse 1989:66; Monks 1943). In 1949 the Melbourne Herald reported a story about a slum of sixty Aboriginal people in the camp south of Heavitree Gap, living in tin and bark humpies, and the same year the administration agreed to build proper facilities for the sanitary workers (Heppell & Wigley 1981:18-19,48). These facilities were built at what became known as Old Ilparpa camp, just to the north of the Blatherskite Ranges. While some families occupied the new camp however, others remained separate, and spread out between Old Ilparpa and Heavitree Gap, including Inarlenge camp. The sanitary camp ceased as the workers' camp in 1965, when the town was almost completely connected to sewerage, but remained as a town camp, receiving support from the Welfare Branch and DAA (Ilparpa Association 1979:4) until 1980, when the Ilparpa camp was given its current lease to land further south, away from the sewerage ponds.

RAINBOW TOWN AND THE PROHIBITED AREA

Rainbow Town was so named, according to Charles Perkins, who lived there for a short time during his childhood, after "all the skin colours" of its residents (Perkins 1975:17). It was located near the river at the southern end of the town, in the Gap area, and began with the provision of sub-standard housing for 'part-Aboriginal' people, shortly before the war (Donovan 1988:204). A survey in 1944 revealed that most of the town's 300 'part-Aboriginal' population lived in Rainbow Town, and that there was considerable prejudice against them in the town (Rowley 1971b:36). They lived in twenty two, of what were described as 'sub-normal' shacks (Monks 1944). In 1943 an alternate site for Rainbow Town was found further from the town, but still within Heavitree Gap, beside the abattoirs. However it was not until 1947 that twenty four small cottages, also known as the Gap Cottages were built on this site for the residents; in 1948-49 electricity and fences were provided; and in 1949-51 the town water supply was connected (Rowse 1989:76).

After the war Rainbow Town became the Native Affairs Branch's Alice Springs assimilation laboratory, in particular with regard to transitional housing. If residents could demonstrate their capacity to live in the sub-standard huts provided there, and pass "all the domestic tests, they would then be able to convert to (Housing) Commission houses and flats dispersed throughout the ... town" (Heppell & Wigley 1981:65). However, it was also fraught with difficulties, not the least of which was its substandard dwellings. In 1965 these were described as providing "very poor housing", and to be demolished (Rowley 1971b:40).

Rainbow Town also had legal difficulties because it was within the town area and therefore only those Aboriginal people who were exempted from the Aboriginals Ordinance were technically eligible to be there. While the Native Affairs Branch was prepared to ignore this anomaly, in 1950, police stepped up their activities in enforcing the Prohibited Area provisions of the Aboriginals Ordinance 1918, Section 11. This highlighted the fact that, for example, Aboriginal children could be arrested for attending school. The Acting District Superintendent of the Native Affairs Branch, McCoy, in urging a relaxation of this section, pointed out that "42% of all children attending the Alice Springs Primary School are of part-aboriginal blood" (McCoy 1951). He also pointed out that housing for 'part-Aboriginal' people; Rainbow Town; St Mary's and other hostels for 'part-aboriginal' people; have all been built within the town. A resolution was reached, when on 27 February 1951, a "general permit granting all half-castes to be within the prohibited area of Alice Springs continuously" (Moy 1951), was granted. However, as if to balance this gesture, later in 1951 the Native Affairs Branch carried out a thorough inspection of the whole of Alice Springs, including Rainbow Town, to remove all 'natives' to the Bungalow Reserve (McCoy 1951).

AMOONGUNA 1960

Amoonguna reserve, about fourteen kilometres south east of Alice Springs, was established in 1960 (Hocking 1963:30), as the Alice Springs town Aboriginal reserve. It was envisaged that all illegal Aboriginal town campers, all Aboriginal people who were not exempted from the Aboriginals Ordinance, Aboriginal visitors, and Aboriginal workers living on the Bungalow reserve, would live at Amoonguna, a settlement of three square kilometres (Heppell & Wigley 1981:22). Town campers, including the 350 residents of the Bungalow reserve (Hocking 1963:30), were rounded up and trucked there, in what was to become the final forced muster and evacuation of Aboriginal people from Alice Springs.

Amoonguna was to be the final solution to the Alice Springs town camper problem. It was to be the place where Aboriginal people would be trained and educated for assimilation, and where transients could be held until they returned to their bush communities. Reasons for its failure are not hard to find, and are documented in Heppell & Wigley (1981:22-25). For a start, living conditions there were appalling. In 1961 the Welfare Branch reported that there were water problems which resulted in inadequate sanitation and hygiene (Welfare Branch of the NT Administration 1961:26). The fifty one Kingstrand houses, or aluminium sheds without essential services were erected as housing for the Aboriginal residents, from which they were to graduate to more sophisticated housing once they demonstrated their capacity to manage. These have been described in detail by Heppell & Wigley (1981:22-25), who quote from Tatz's research. Tatz found the sheds nineteen degrees Fahrenheit hotter than the outside temperature and twenty three degrees Fahrenheit hotter than humpies (Heppell & Wigley 1981:23). Three ablution blocks, only one with hot water, provided the Aboriginal population of 386 in 1960, and 538 in 1965, with water and services (Heppell & Wigley 1981:22-23). To the Aboriginal residents, of even more concern however, was the overcrowding experienced at Amoonguna, and the 'mix-up' of so many people from different language groups. Eli Rubuntja sees this mix-up as totally unacceptable and as the reason for Amoonguna's failure.

It is no good, like Amoonguna, nobody living there now (In Dillon 1988a: Appendix A).

In 1961 the Welfare Branch also conceded that the mixture of different tribal groups, counting eleven in all, meant that "some friction was inevitable" (Welfare Branch of the NT Administration 1961:26).

Aboriginal people simply left Amoonguna.

Families like the Stirlings, Phillip and Anthony Palmer's father, and the Lynches didn't want to be part of that move. They sort of hung around. There was a shift backwards and forwards between Middle Park, Amoonguna and Santa Teresa (Shaw, Geoff, 1988, personal interview, 28 March).

Throughout the 1960s consistent camps existed along the Charles Creek and the old Bungalow reserve, along the Todd River right through the town, and south of the Gap.

TOWN CAMPS 1960s

In 1961 an Alice Springs Town Management Board was established (Heppell & Wigley 1981:81), as a precursor to the Alice Springs Town Council in 1971 (Donovan 1988:312). Throughout the 1960s, the Town Management Board, and the Lands, Welfare, Police and Health Branches of the NT Administration concentrated on removing the camps. They discussed establishing a legal camp "to provide a place where itinerant persons might camp, thus facilitating legal prohibition of indiscriminate camping along the Todd River etc" at the Town Management Board's first meeting on 12 May 1961 (Alice Springs Town Management Board 1961-68). Though various sites were suggested at subsequent meetings, none were agreed to. In 1963 the Town Management Board directed its attention to legislation in order to remove campers. At a meeting on 28 June 1963 the Crown Land Ordinance was found to be too cumbersome; on 6 July 1964 Health and Police Department powers were deemed to be limited; and minute no. 14 on 24 August 1964 declared that Welfare powers were a "matter of persuasion not force"; so minute no. 24 on 24 August 1964 recommended new legislation "to prohibit persons camping on Crown Land within a three mile radius of the town" (Alice Springs Town Management Board 1961-68). At subsequent meetings the "continued presence of native campers in the Todd River" was noted. Possible measures discussed in the Town Management Board meetings included taking action against town campers as vagrants, and the banning of fires in the Todd River bed, but still the town camper 'problem' grew. At its meeting on 16 March 1967 it was reported "that approximately 600 natives were camping around the town, especially behind the Lutheran Church" (Alice Springs Town Management Board 1961-68).³⁰

Finally, on 1 April 1970, the Town Management Board appointed a sub-committee to investigate and make recommendations "on the question of camping in the Alice Springs town area, particularly in the Todd and Charles Rivers" (Alice Springs Town Management Board 1970), which reported back in September 1970 (Heppell & Wigley 1981:82).

Town campers saw the problem differently. Geoff Shaw was born a town camper in 1945, the year this post-war offensive on town camps began. He was born in the Todd River, just south of Heavitree Gap, and grew up in fringe camps around the town, mainly in the scrub around Mt Nancy, but he also remembers camping with relations at the Finke River Mission Block, and at other places along the river bed.

Mt Nancy used to be a stock reserve, where they used to keep cattle and truck them from there. So we weren't allowed to camp there. ... Before we set up camp where Mt Nancy is now, we used to live along the creek outside the fence of uncle Dick Palmer's place [Aper-Alwerrkne, north of the Bungalow reserve]. Us mob, Macdonald family, Thomas's - Pam and them before they got sent away, Don Lynch and family, old Nancy Lynch mob, even old Paddy and Dorothy Stirling mob for a little while (Shaw, Geoff, 1988, personal interview, 28 March).

Geoff and other town camp children attended school on the Bungalow reserve, but went home to their camps at night. Geoff's father was a drover, sometimes the family went out with him, but otherwise, when he was away with cattle for long periods of time, the family also collected their rations from the Bungalow.

... Dad, uncle Dick Palmer, Tom Williams, old Mort Conway, they're the ones who usually worked. Tom Williams and Mort used to have droving camps. And old uncle Dick Palmer too. And old Dad used to work for them mob. But while they were away we used to go to the Bungalow for rations. Each week we walked to the Bungalow. They'd give us that tropical butter, sugar, treacle, plum jam, bag of flour, and tins of bully beef, peas and beans, and once a week a slab of fresh meat (Shaw, Geoff, 1988, personal interview, 28 March).

³⁰ See also Heppell & Wigley (1981:81-82) for discussion re the activities of the Town Management Board.

Shaw explains that there were separate camps right along the Charles Creek south from Mt Nancy. Middle park was mainly an Eastern Arrernte camp, while around the Bungalow reserve were distinct Warlpiri, Kaytej, Warumungu, and later even Pitjantjatjara and Luritja camps. While attempts were made to move everyone to Amoonguna in 1960, some people didn't want to go, some "hung around for a little while", maybe "did a stint in Santa Teresa", others just stayed where they were along the Charles Creek, and some shifted backwards and forwards from Amoonguna.

Similarly, Wenten Rubuntja, talks about this time, without a great deal of emphasis on his movements being restricted. He was shifted out to Arltunga with the Little Flower mission, and remembers working from there, building roads during the war.

Then I left the Mission and walked all the way back to Alice Springs with my old man and my brother (Rubuntja 1990).

He describes this journey, the various camps they made, and then "we got here to Alice Springs. Then after that, stayed here. Hanging around town here like all the other young people used to do here" (Rubuntja 1990). Wenten describes living and working around the town right up until the 1970s, including "I was living at Billy Goat Hill", and later, "we was living down the creek then", hanging around "the old telegraph station [Bungalow reserve] and old trucking yard and they gave me a job right there at Morris Soak to take the bullocks ..." (Rubuntja 1990). And later

Then it was Native Affairs days. ... I started to work at the Old Telegraph Station. I was at Jay Creek, that was rationing days here at the Old Bungalow. Then kept going to Amoonguna. I was a supervisor there for everyone, making sausages, sausage rolls, pies, bread making and all. ... After all those years and Land Rights, Aboriginal Land Right for good (Rubuntja 1990). 31

In spite of the many attempts to remove Aboriginal people from Alice Springs, in particular town campers, and in spite of attempts to abolish them as a separate people, they retained their separateness and they remained. The long period of attempted dispossession brought great harm to Aboriginal people, but it did not lead to their destruction, or even their complete dispossession.

However throughout this period they had no political power and no access to political or bureaucratic power. From the 1960s this changed as Aboriginal people assumed a new unity and assertiveness throughout the country, and no where was this to be more evident than in Central Australia.

³¹ The Bungalow Reserve was on the site of the Old Telegraph Station.

Chapter Three

THE TURNING POINT

1960s TO 1977

By the mid 1970s town campers had begun to embark on the long process of negotiating for legal status. They incorporated into individual Housing Associations or Aboriginal Corporations, ³² applied for leases over their land, and made plans for their lease developments. At town camper meetings in late 1977 they decided to form their own umbrella representative and resource organisation, Tangentyere Council, to assist with these negotiations and to tackle other pressing town camper needs such as garbage and water services, roads, education, training, employment, essential services, shelters, housing and maintenance.

While there were earlier political acts such as the 1946 Strelley strike in WA, it wasn't until the 1960s that a continuous and Australia wide campaign got under way.

This chapter looks at the new assertiveness of Aboriginal people and their rising status on the political agenda from around 1966, both nationally and in Central Australia. We see a new phase of Aboriginal resistance, a turning point, as welfare policies and practices are rejected and Aboriginal people demand equality, rights and self-determination. Aboriginal town campers in Alice Springs became part of this movement. They rejected the status allotted them under Welfare, that of illegal campers, ineligible for almost any form of basic servicing or facility, and vulnerable to harassment by police, welfare and other official agencies. They demanded legal title to their own land, services and housing, and established their own organisation to act as their advocate and meet other physical and social needs.

NATIONAL CHANGE IN THE 1960s

It was not until the 1960s that the Aboriginal rights movement gained broad community support in Australia. Prior to that time concern for this issue tended to be isolated to certain fringe groups within the community, some unions, academics and churches. In the 1960s two events initiated by Aboriginal people both highlighted the conditions under which Aboriginal people were forced to live in this country, conditions which came as a surprise to many citizens, and generated a mass of community interest and support.

The first took place in the summer of 1965 when a group of Sydney university students, among them Charles Perkins who was born at the Bungalow in Alice Springs in 1936 or 1937 (Perkins 1975:9), and was the first Aboriginal person to study at the University of Sydney, hired a bus, draped it with a banner reading "Student Action for Aborigines", and made the Freedom Ride through western NSW. In the towns the students made contact with the local Aboriginal community, and issues of discrimination, racism and segregation were raised. At Walgett the students picketed the RSL club because its admission regulations discriminated against Aboriginal people who were effectively banned from the club except on

³² Until 1979 town camps incorporated under the Associations Incorporation Ordinance 1963, which became the NT Associations Incorporation Act 1978. After the introduction of the Commonwealth Aboriginal Councils and Associations Act 1976, which came into operation in 1978 (DAA 1987a:83), camps incorporated under this Act. Those incorporated under the NT legislation generally have the title 'Association Incorporated' or 'Housing Association Incorporated', though Inarlenge has the title 'Community Incorporated'; while those incorporated under the Commonwealth legislation are referred to as 'Aboriginal Corporations'. See Tables 6 and 7.

special occasions such as Anzac Day. As Perkins describes it, "the town came to life like an ant heap" (Perkins 1975:77). The town's residents, black and white alike, were astounded by the demonstration, and many of the latter outraged and hostile. The Freedom Riders were forced to abandon their lodging at the local Church of England hall, and as they left Walgett their bus was twice side-swiped by a truck, and then, while travelling at a speed of fifty miles an hour, forced off the road.

Then the Freedom Ride hit the headlines (Perkins 1975:85).

The bus and the students survived, the ride continued, and now it was accompanied by a travelling press corps.

In the town of Moree the Freedom Ride focused on discrimination at the town swimming pool. Rules allowed Aboriginal children to swim there only on Wednesday afternoons between one and three o'clock, (during school hours); and Aboriginal adults no access. With about twenty or thirty young Aboriginal people from the nearby mission, Perkins sought admission to swim. When he was refused, the protesters blocked all entrance to the pool. An ugly scene of confrontation between blacks and whites began to build up. Anxious that no major incident take place under the gaze of the national media, the town authorities were forced to lift their ban. The Riders were then escorted from the pool and the town, under police protection.

The Ride was inspired by the Freedom Rides into the American south in 1961, and drew similar national and international attention to the issue of black inequality in this country. As Perkins argues, it "sowed the seed of concern in the public's thinking across Australia" (Perkins 1975:74).

A second event of national significance began in August 1966, in the remote north west of the NT, where some 200 Gurindji stockmen on Wave Hill station went on strike. Wave Hill was one of an empire of stations, totalling over 6,000 sq miles, owned by the British Lord Vestey. It was by no means the first Aboriginal stockman strike in the north. Twenty years before, in 1946, in the Pilbara region of WA, the 'Strelley mob' had walked off their station over work conditions, and after being on strike for three years had decided never to return, but to continue supporting themselves with prospecting, and finally purchasing and running their own pastoral properties (Roberts 1981:63). Preceding the Gurindji strike, Aboriginal stockmen at Newcastle Waters, between Tennant Creek and Katherine in the NT, had also walked off their jobs, demanding award wages (Hardy 1968:28,69).

The Gurindji walked off the station in protest at their intolerable working and living conditions, inadequate wages, and delays until 1968 in introducing equal wages under the NT Cattle Industries Award of 1965.³³ They were paid about \$6 per week, but irregularly, maybe every two or three months, and then most of the money was immediately owed at the store; they "lived like dogs ... some of the tin huts were so low that a man had to crawl into them" (Hardy 1968:87); women were sexually exploited by white stockmen; rations consisted solely of salt beef and bread; and the Aboriginal workers were given no vehicle assistance to get fire wood which was not available in the immediate vicinity of the homestead (Hardy 1968). The strikers set up an 'illegal' camp ten miles from the homestead, at Wattie Creek, a site of important traditional significance to the Gurindji, and near the Wave Hill Welfare Settlement. Aided by the author Frank Hardy, who spent time at the strike camp talking with and advising the strikers, the strike received wide publicity in the press and generated public support, especially from the unions. Encouraged by this support, including financial aid, and having established their capacity to survive without the station, the strikers then turned their attention to land rights, and petitioned the Governor General for leasehold title to 500 square miles of land around Wattie Creek on which to run their own cattle station and mining operation. They were refused on the grounds that the Vestey lease did not expire until the year 2004. As with the Strelley strike twenty years before, the strikers never returned to their stockmen jobs, and they fenced and built their housing at Wattie Creek despite the 'illegal' status of their occupation. In 1973, under the Whitlam Labor government, they were granted 1,000 sq miles of their country back, in what was hailed as the first Australian land rights victory.

Possibly the best indication of this new groundswell of public support for Aboriginal rights is reflected in the results of the Aboriginal question in the Referendum held on 27 May 1967 (Hanks 1984:24). The question³⁴ sought to alter two sections of the Australian constitution with regard to the Aboriginal population:

- a) To give the Commonwealth the power to legislate on behalf of Aboriginal people living in the States, a power it had always had "for the people of any race, other than the aboriginal race" (The Commonwealth of Australia Constitution Act 1900, S.51 (xxvi); Hanks 1984:20; Bennett 1985:31); and
- b) To include Aboriginal people in any census of the population of the Commonwealth or States. S.127 of the constitution stated that in any such census "aboriginal natives shall not be counted" (Bennett 1985:31).

These amendments were approved by an overwhelming majority, 90.77% (Bennett 1985:26), of the Australian population, 5,183,133 in favour, and 527,007 against (Australia, Bureau of Census and Statistics 1968:65-66). This is the highest 'YES' vote given any Australian constitutional referendum (Bennett 1985:26).

³³ In 1965 the Arbitration Commission ruled that Aboriginal stockmen be included in the NT Cattle Industries Award, but that this be phased in over a three year period. It meant equal wages for Aboriginal rural workers (Pittock 1975:20).

³⁴ Voters were asked:

Do you approve the proposed law for the alteration of the Constitution entitled- "An Act to alter the Constitution so as to omit certain words relating to the People of the Aboriginal Race in any State and so that Aboriginals are to be counted in reckoning the Population"? (Bennett 1985:31).

Bennett (1985, 1989) argues however, that there is a need to exercise some caution in interpreting national support for Aboriginal rights from this referendum result. In rural areas and areas where there were significant Aboriginal numbers, the 'yes' vote was down, the most spectacular example being in the subdivision of Georgetown in north Queensland, which recorded a 'no' vote of 62.92% (Bennett 1989:54). Bennett also found that the three states with the highest Aboriginal populations were the three states "that recorded the biggest NO votes" (Bennett 1989:53). The Territories, NT and ACT, were not eligible to vote in referendums, and the NT would almost certainly have recorded a lower "yes" vote. There was also no threat posed by the Commonwealth government that it actually had any intention of using its powers without the cooperation of the States. Prime Minister Holt had made it clear that he would not override States on this issue (Hanks 1984:24). On the other hand there may have been more than one 'no' voter, like Frank Hardy, who voted 'no' because he felt that the referendum was just a method of appeasing community concern about the Aboriginal situation, not a real Federal commitment to change. He argued that the Federal Government had had responsibility over Aboriginal affairs in the NT since 1911, but had done little to alleviate their situation (Hardy 1968:219). Regardless of these concerns, the referendum results did reflect a major shift towards a more enlightened view of the Aboriginal situation in this country. The question of the transfer of power over Aboriginal issues to the Commonwealth had been campaigned for by activists and supporters since the 1930s³⁵ and had been rejected or dismissed since that time, including when it was put to the people in a previous national referendum in August 1944 and defeated. However it is difficult to draw any conclusion of the peoples' view from this referendum because the question was put as part of a package of questions requiring a single 'yes - no' answer. There was considerable community opposition in particular to the Labor government's proposed postwar reconstruction measures, also part of that referendum package (Hanks 1984:22).

³⁵ In Victoria in 1929 Aboriginal activists and their supporters advocated the transfer of control over Aborigines from the states to the Commonwealth (Marcus 1988:6, 25-27). Elkin argues that an 'advance of public opinion regarding Aborigines' in the 1930s was responsible for the advocacy of a unified policy of administration of them (Elkin 1944:10). In 1933 the National Missionary Council of Australia conference in Sydney issued a pamphlet calling for a national policy on Aborigines. This call was endorsed by the Aborigines Friends Association of Adelaide and the Association for the Protection of Native Races of Sydney (Elkin 1944:5). The transfer of control over Aboriginal affairs to the Commonwealth was rejected at the Premiers' Conference in 1936 (Hanks 1984:22). Elkin argues that between 1935-39 there was growing agitation for a unified policy of Aboriginal administration in Australia as a whole. In 1939 the Trades and Labor Council in Sydney endorsed this policy (Elkin 1944:19). At the second Commonwealth and State Governments conference on Aboriginal welfare held in 1948, the transfer of responsibility for Aboriginal affairs to the Commonwealth was raised and rejected (Hanks 1984:22).

A Labor government, headed by Prime Minister Gough Whitlam, was elected to power on 5 December 1972, bringing to an end twenty three years of conservative Liberal-Country Party government in this country. Although the previous government, especially under Prime Minister W. McMahon³⁶ had modified its policy on assimilation with an emphasis for the first time on Aboriginal people's right to choose "the degree to which and the pace at which they come to identify themselves with that (Australian) society" (McMahon, quoted in Coombs 1976), this right to choose not to be assimilated was not reflected in any major policy changes. Assimilation or 'integration'³⁷ remained the stated policy (Coombs 1976). McMahon's government did however fund the first Aboriginal Legal Service in Redfern, Sydney, in 1971 (Lyons 1984:139; Australia, House of Representatives Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs 1980:25); and the Aboriginal Housing Panel, to research and advise the government on Aboriginal housing issues, in 1972 (Heppell & Wigley 1981:106).

The new Labor Government had an Aboriginal policy of self-determination, which included the granting of land rights; the funding of Aboriginal groups to service their own legal, medical, housing, and in some cases educational, vocational and social service community needs (Heppell 1979:19; DAA 1975:5-6); and the outlawing of discrimination (Coombs 1976). These policies were to have a major impact on Aborigines throughout the country. On 19 December, fourteen days after being elected, the Labor government established the Department of Aboriginal Affairs, DAA, with its own Minister, creating for the first time at a national level a separate department so that the Federal Government could assume the responsibilities and power over Aboriginal affairs which it was overwhelmingly granted by the people's vote in the referendum of 1967.

CENTRAL AUSTRALIAN CHANGES: ALICE SPRINGS FRINGE CAMPS

These events and the activities of Aboriginal activists and white supporters throughout the country were to have their impact on Central Australian Aboriginal people. By the end of the 1960s the Welfare Branch had been forced to accept that many Aboriginal town campers were permanent Alice Springs residents and that they would benefit from the "provision of suitable accommodation and facilities" (Welfare Branch of the NT Administration 1968:56). They lamented that

Throughout the year, officers of the Branch assiduously counselled and supervised these groups, but this work achieved little in the almost complete absence of any form of normal living facility (Welfare Branch of the NT Administration 1968:56).

Alas, counselling and supervision, no matter how 'assiduous', do not provide land tenure, services or housing.

³⁶ McMahon was the Liberal-Country Party government Prime Minister of Australia from March 1971 to December 1972.

³⁷ "Assimilation policy tacitly abandoned or at least less often referred to after 1967, and a policy indistinguishable from that labelled 'integration' was declared" (DAA 1974:5).

At least one group of town campers had previously made an attempt to gain ownership of land. Before his death in 1959, Albert Namatjira had been the first traditionally oriented Aboriginal person who sought to purchase a block of land in Alice Springs. In 1950 he had been refused an application to lease 460 square miles of land near Hermansburg mission, on which he had planned to graze cattle and build a family home (Batty 1976:54-57). In 1951 he arranged to buy a block of land in Alice Springs, and the land sale was reported in the press in March of that year. However the town was still an area prohibited to Aboriginal people at that time, and following protests from non-Aboriginal residents who argued that tribal relatives of Namatjira would move in and create a nuisance, on 20 April 1951 the NT Administrator refused to transfer the land (Batty 1976:58-60).

In 1963 a group of Aboriginal artists, including six members of the Namatjira family, were the first town campers to attempt to secure land tenure over their camp land in town. They applied to the Commonwealth Government to lease an area of vacant Crown land near Morris Soak, Akngwertnarre, on which to develop housing. Heppell and Wigley (1981:76-80) describe in detail the events which culminated in the refusal of this application. Although the applicants were able to establish that their income from the sale of their art was such that they would be in a position to contribute substantially to the building of houses, and the lease application was supported by the local member of the Legislative Council, D.D. Smith, it was opposed by the Welfare Branch on a number of grounds, including that "we should do everything in our power to prevent the re-establishment of a squalid camp site in the Morris Soak area" (Heppell & Wigley 1981:77).

By the 1970s however the Alice Springs town campers' resistance began to change in form. They had run a continuous but isolated campaign against the policies and practices of governments and authorities bent on their removal since at least 1928, when the town had been declared a prohibited area for Aboriginal people (Australia, Gazette 1928a:2102; Australia, Gazette 1928b:2391). The town campers had hung on. They had been shifted, harassed by welfare and police, declared illegal, their possessions confiscated - but they had not disappeared. In the 1970s the town camper resistance shifted away from the stubborn resistance to bureaucratic opposition, to one of assertively seeking their rights. These rights included not only the right to exist as their own defined units, but to have ownership and control over their land, access to essential services available to the rest of the community, and opportunities for appropriate education, training and employment.

Throughout the 1970s Central Australian Aboriginal men and women were involved in setting up a whole series of Aboriginal organisations based in Alice Springs which would assist them in their pursuit of their rights. The first two were the Central Australian Aboriginal Congress, CAAC, an Aboriginal health service, and the Central Australian Aboriginal Legal Aid Service, CAALAS, both established in 1973 (CAAC 1987:2; Australia, House of Representatives Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs 1980:27). These organisations saw the provision of health and legal services in their broadest context; they were advocate organisations. CAAC argued that access to shelter, water and waste disposal were basic to good health - health was not just a clinical issue. CAALAS argued that legal justice went beyond legal representation for Aboriginal people in the criminal courts, it included land rights, and protection from harassment and discrimination. In 1974 the Central Land Council, CLC, was established to assist NT Central Australian Aboriginal people gain title to and manage traditional lands claimed under the then proposed land rights legislation (Central Land Council 1984:9); in 1976 the Pitjantjatjara Council to assist Pitjantjatjara people gain title to, and manage their lands (Toyne & Vachon 1984:39); and in 1977, Tangentyere Council, to assist town campers obtain, develop and maintain their lands, facilities and community services, particularly the provision of employment and training.

This change to assertion of their rights was not without its opposition from amongst the NT bureaucracy and establishment. However Central Australian Aboriginal people were firm in their resolve to press ahead. Eames (1983:268), in his comments on the newly established CLC and the struggle to preserve Woodward's recommendations in the 1976 Land Rights legislation, argues that CLC members demonstrated an astute awareness of the politics of land rights and were able to combat very sophisticated opponents, including TGH Strehlow and Pastor Paul Albrecht, who were both known to many local Aboriginal people through the Finke River Mission at Hermansburg, and who campaigned vehemently against the Aboriginal land rights legislation supported by the CLC (Eames 1983:273). The members were able to resist the efforts of various pressure groups to crush the independence of the CLC and/or to block the land rights movement (Eames 1983:268).

Through these organisations Aboriginal people began to take the lead to determine not only their needs, but also how they wished to meet them. They produced their own leaders and activists, people who applied their traditional knowledge and law to their colonised situation, and brought a wisdom to the 'Aboriginal problem' that had been previously absent. And no where was that more evident than on the Alice Springs town camps.

OFFICIALDOM PUSHED TOWARDS CHANGE: TOWN MANAGEMENT REPORT 1970-1973 AND THE CROSS CULTURAL GROUP

Prior to the establishment of Aboriginal organisations in Central Australia, another group, this one of concerned town citizens, was to have a significant effect on Aboriginal town campers and on official attitudes to them. The Cross Cultural Group was a group of concerned white town people who wished to improve relationships and cultural understanding between black and white residents through meetings and inter-racial contact. In a letter dated 20 February 1989, the Reverend Jim Downing explained that it was established in October 1969 following a United Church seminar organised by himself "on the problems and needs of Alice Springs and Central Australia and our responsibility as a Christian Group in terms of political, social and economic needs".

On 1 April 1970, after the failure of all previous attempts to remove Aboriginal town campers, the Town Management Board decided to set up its own sub-committee to investigate "the needs of the camper community and to propose a solution to their problems" (Welfare Branch of the NT Administration 1971a: 40). Having previously observed the frantic and futile endeavours of the Town Management Board and the various Branches of the NT Administration to rid the town of its fringe camps, the Cross Cultural Group saw a role in advocating town campers' rights and needs to this committee. As Downing also explained

Our involvement with TMB³⁸ arose out of our comments to them in response to some of the foolish things that were being suggested by some members to 'solve the Aboriginal problem', and in support of those members who wanted sensible community dialogue and searching towards appropriate measures.

The report was presented by the sub-committee to the Town Management Board in 1970. It noted the noticeable and increasing number of Aboriginal people camping in and around the Alice Springs town area, especially in the Todd and Charles River bed areas (Australia, Interim Aboriginal Land Commission (NT) 1975: 95; Heppell & Wigley 1981: 82-83), and this despite the considerable efforts to reduce them. However due to the lobbying and work of the Cross Cultural Group, the report reflected some change in official attitudes to town campers. It argued for example, that

We are of the view that the Aboriginal should be regarded as a member of the community with particular problems which deserve proper attention, not just for the sake of the white man or his feelings but even more for the sake of the Aboriginal. It is not just a matter of noise and disorderly behaviour being offensive to and disturbing for the European; they are also offensive to and disturbing for many Aboriginals, ... not just a fear of harm to a member of the European community arising out of drunkenness but of a fear of harm to an Aboriginal arising out of the same circumstances, ... It is a matter of human dignity (Alice Springs Town Management Board 1970: 4).

³⁸ Town Management Board.

Although it did set out community objections to town camps, and the problems associated with them, such as noise, bad behavior and bad language, health hazards, child welfare and education problems, drunkenness, untidiness and "impairment of the tourist image of the town" (Alice Springs Town Management Board 1970: 1), it also attempted to provide some realistic solution to the problems for the campers themselves. It recommended the establishment of five camping sites with facilities for town campers. The five sites suggested included one each for the five major language groups identified in the report: Arrernte, Pitjantjatjara, Warlpiri, Anmatjera and Pintupi, indicating some understanding of how Aboriginal people saw their situation. The suggested sites roughly included the current camp sites of Inarlinge, Ewyenper-Atwatye, Nyewente, Anthelk-Ewlpaye and Mt Nancy/Basso's Farm. To be on the safe side, the Board proposed that the facilities be temporary ones for a trial period, and it remained rigid in its aim to control town camping by arguing that once the five sites had been established, all other camping in the town area would be banned (Alice Springs Town Management Board 1970; Heppell & Wigley 1981: 83).

Apart from a recognition that town campers had a right to exist and to services, albeit limited ones, the Cross Cultural Group's influence was further evidenced in the report's recommendation that town campers would need to be consulted to confirm appropriate camp sites, camp membership, boundaries, the development, and ongoing management of each camp (Alice Springs Town Management Board 1970: 5; Australia, Interim Aboriginal Land Commission (NT) 1975: 97). Rather than the standard practice of setting up services and then withdrawing, the report also noted the suggestion "that a hostel and club should be established within the town under Aboriginal control and for Aboriginal use" (Alice Springs Town Management Board 1970: 6), and appropriate back up services such as social work assistance be available (Alice Springs Town Management Board 1970: 7; Australia, Interim Aboriginal Land Commission (NT) 1975: 98). Some of these recommendations are quite progressive even today. For example, town campers have only in 1990 secured land for a social club site to be run by and for Aboriginal people.

The report was adopted in 1970 by the Town Management Board (Australia, Interim Aboriginal Land Commission (NT) 1975: 95), which was replaced the following year by the Alice Springs Town Council (Australia, Interim Aboriginal Land Commission (NT) 1975: 98). The Council delayed until 1973 before it adopted "in principle the terms of" the report (Australia, Interim Aboriginal Land Commission (NT) 1975: 95).

FIRST FRINGE CAMP DEVELOPMENT 1973

In 1973 the Welfare Branch or Division of the NT Administration was abolished, and the NT Division of the DAA assumed its jurisdiction over Aborigines. However, although the Federal Government in Canberra had established a new Department and new policies on the national level, on the local level the old staff of the NT Administration simply transferred over to the new department. As DAA wrote in its NT Division 1972-73 annual report: "The Welfare Division of the NT Administration was transferred to the new DAA and became its NT Division" (DAA 1975: 1). Town campers in Alice Springs therefore did not experience the benefits of the new department, or its commitment to self-determination. In an interview I conducted with him on 23 March 1988, Geoff Shaw, General Manager of Tangentyere since its inception, who left the army in 1970 after six years service, recalled going for a job interview with DAA around 1974. At that time he and his family lived in humpies at Mt Nancy, and the camp's only amenity was just one tap. During the interview the DAA officer asked Geoff whether he had the phone on. Geoff replied that he did not, he only had a tap. "He said he'd contact me, and that was the end of it".

The same old assimilation and welfare attitudes largely remained until 1975 when the Alice Springs DAA office was upgraded to become a Regional Office with a new

Regional Director, Bob Huey. ³⁹ According to Geoff Shaw, DAA Alice Springs then began to be seen by Aboriginal groups as an allied force. Bob Huey visited town campers, talked to them about land rights, and supported them in their negotiations (Shaw, Geoff, 1988, personal interview, 23 March).

³⁹ Bob Huey was Regional Director of DAA in Alice Springs from 1975-1979 (Heppell & Wigley 1981:98-99).

The first town camp development began in 1973 when the Alice Springs Town Council finally accepted in principle the recommendations of the Town Management Board's 1970 report, and DAA made funding available for the very limited development of two camps. Heppell and Wigley (1981:84-88) describe the process of the development of these two camps in detail. Briefly, Inarlenge camp, known as Little Sisters, was granted a lease in the name of the Cross Cultural Group, and two ablution blocks, one for males and one for females, were erected there. The Cross Cultural Group undertook extensive consultation with the Little Sisters campers regarding the proper development of this camp, but no further funding was made available. The Anthelk-Ewlpaye village camp, known as Charles Creek village, was not provided with a lease, but the Department of the Northern Territory, DONT, apparently without consulting residents at all, built five small, inadequate cabins, two ablution blocks, and installed taps, and frames on which to throw tarpaulins for 'instant' humpies, all with the idea still firmly fixed in their minds that the town campers for whom this development was taking place, were 'transients'. The families, including Campbells, Golders and Turners, were permanent residents. 40

In 1973 DAA also provided materials and wages for the maintenance of the huts, toilets and laundry at the Ilparpa camp, 41 and the following year upgraded the toilets to a septic system (Ilparpa Association 1979:4-5). At about the same time St Vincent de Paul society installed one tap at Mt Nancy camp, serving approximately sixty people.

They went out there one day and put this pipe in, and it was summer time too, and everybody at Mt Nancy freaked out. We got panels of three or four ply and built a temporary shower block. I don't know how much water was wasted in that first summer, because people were having showers, walking away with towels over their shoulders. You had to wait in line. Because of that tap we didn't have to cart water from Aper-Alwerrkngge. Because they only had one tap there, and we'd have to roll 44 gallon drums over to Mt Nancy (Shaw, Geoff, 1988, personal interview, 23 March).

On 5 February 1974, following a spate of bad publicity about town campers, Alan Weber from DAA called a meeting in Alice Springs and announced that DAA had funding available to assist in the resolution of the problem. Throughout that year a series of meetings took place involving politicians, DAA, the Cross Cultural Group, CAAC, CAALAS and some town campers, and this group formed an association called 'Tangatjira'. For town campers, the Reverend Jim Downing became the key person in these meetings, ensuring that they were able to attend, providing transport and moral support. Downing recalled:

We received many complaints in those days of police entering camps, pulling beds to pieces, sometimes kicking over their billy-cans and occasionally burning a shelter ... The fact that the people had no leases or any sort of secure tenure for their camp areas left them very vulnerable to harassment and feeling very insecure (Downing 1988b).

Geoff Shaw recalls

We wanted to get secure land, we wanted water, we needed firewood, we needed vehicles to organise garbage collections. At that time none of us had heard about 'Crown land' or 'Special Purpose Leases' (Shaw, Geoff, 1988, interview with Pam Ditton, 17 June).

40 These 5 houses were demolished and replaced in 1989-90.

41 This camp site was the official camp for the town's night soil carters who were Aboriginal workers, but abandoned as an official work camp in 1965 when most of the town had been connected to sewerage. However many of the workers and their families remained living at their camp.

By about May these meetings had collapsed. In an interview with lawyer Pam Ditton on 17 June 1988, Geoff Shaw explained that town campers withdrew their support because they felt that they were not really being listened to, and that the meetings did not result in changes to their living conditions. This collapse however, did not mean the withdrawal of support for the campers. Throughout 1974 and into 1975, CAALAS, CLC and Reverend Jim Downing assisted town campers to form themselves into incorporated Housing Associations, and to begin the long process of applying for leases. In 1974 four camps - Anthelk-Ewlpaye, Mt Nancy, Anthepe and Akngwertnarre - were incorporated (see Table 7), and in February, Mt Nancy had lodged a lease application with DONT (Australia, Interim Aboriginal Land Commission (NT) 1975:4). Anthepe, with DAA assistance, had lodged a lease application to the secretary of the DONT in November 1973 (Heppell & Wigley 1981:101). Anthepe members had been part of the Ilparpa camp, which had usually had a relatively good relationship with the old Welfare Branch of the NT Administration and now DAA. In the face of delays for this Anthepe group, in 1974 DAA upgraded the Ilparpa toilets (Ilparpa Association 1979:4-5). In 1975 Nyewente camp was incorporated.

CONDITIONS ON ALICE SPRINGS FRINGE CAMPS IN 1975

In 1975 the CAAC carried out a three week survey of thirteen of the more established camps. They estimated a town camper population of about 600. Such estimates have always been a difficult task as there are many visitors to camps who do not consider themselves and are not considered permanent members, and there are (probably more so in 1975) other smaller temporary camps, especially in the creek beds, which are extremely mobile. The population figure used at the 1975 interim land hearings was approximately 700 campers, with a prediction that the number would rise (Australia, Interim Aboriginal Land Commission (NT) 1975:58). CAAC found that town campers had little access to normal town services. All housing was substandard. The five cottages built at Anthelk-Ewlpaye in 1973 were small, unpleasant and lacked privacy; and the rest of the town camp population lived in humpies made from bags, branches and sheets of iron, and tents and iron sheds, with no facilities. Access to water was limited. Anthelk-Ewlpaye had water to the five cabins, one camp had a soak only, and the rest of the campers had to walk between fifty and 400 yards from their sites for household water; Anthelk-Ewlpaye and Inarlange had hot showers, and Mt Nancy and Ilparpa cold showers, Mt Nancy's one cold shower serving one hundred people. Four camps had toilets, Anthelk-Ewlpaye, Inarlange and Ilparpa were septic systems and Aper-Alwerrknge a pan. All camps had difficulties with wood supplies for heating and cooking, and food storage, only Anthelk-Ewlpaye having a power supply for refrigeration. The survey also found problems of malnutrition, unemployment, lack of access to education and alcoholism. It recommended that town campers be granted title to their land so that housing, power, water and ablution facilities could be available; that they have access to transport, garbage disposal, social security, alcohol rehabilitation, and nutrition and medical services; and access to education, and employment opportunities within their own community. CAAC saw the development of Aboriginal services as a priority to meet these needs because existing services in the broader community were unable to do so (Cutter 1975).

TOWN CAMP LAND CLAIM HEARINGS 1975

A major initiative of the 1972-75 Labor government was the establishment of the NT Woodward enquiry. In 1973 Mr Justice Woodward was appointed Aboriginal Land Rights Commissioner with the task of establishing how land rights could be achieved in the NT. He produced two reports, one in 1973 and the other in 1974, which culminated in the establishment of the two major NT land councils in 1974, the Northern Land Council (NLC) based in Darwin and the Central Land Council (CLC) based in Alice Springs; and draft land rights legislation in 1975 which included provision for town camper's land needs (Central Land Council 1984:9; Rowley 1986:50-51; Heppell & Wigley 1981:91-93).

On the basis of the draft Land Rights bill, in November 1975 Mr Justice Ward was appointed Interim Land Commissioner and began hearing town camper's land claims in Alice Springs. The town campers were assisted by the CLC in presenting these claims. Although officially established in 1974, until around October 1975 the CLC existed only as an office in DAA, with no independence, and the CAALAS, controlled by an active Aboriginal Council, filled the gap. In October 1975 a CAALAS Council meeting decided to re-establish the CLC. They employed a full-time Aboriginal employee, Wenten Rubuntja, who was to direct the preparation of the land claims for the town campers, and transferred a lawyer from CAALAS to CLC (Eames 1983:268).

The process by which the town camp land claims were organised was described by CLC lawyer Geoff Eames in the 1975 town camp land hearings, and that description is included below because it so vividly illustrates the new approach. Gone were the days when Welfare Branch officers "assiduously counselled and supervised" (Welfare Branch of the NT Administration 1968:56). In 1975 Aboriginal fringe campers and traditional owners sat down and negotiated solutions to a problem that had confounded the authorities of the NT for many years - that of living areas for town campers.

The process by which these claims come before Your Honour is worth stating, as it indicates why ... (you) ... should be satisfied that these claims represent a very significant step towards a genuinely successful resolution of this so called fringe dweller problem. ... The first step which was taken, was that the Central Lands Council contacted the people who were identified by Aboriginal leaders, as those whom the Aborigines themselves, that is the Aranda people in particular, regarded as the spokesmen for the town area of Alice Springs. And meetings were held with all of these people, I think about a dozen or so were identified who were regarded as necessary for these discussions, and those discussions held in their own language centered around the whole question generally of Alice Springs town campers, the variety of different tribes that are now living in Alice Springs, (and) that come to Alice Springs from time to time. And after the Aranda people concerned discussed the various claims, they came to agreement on the fact that some of the claims were in what they saw as proper places. Some other claims were in what they saw as the wrong places for those particular campers.

These difficulties which they posed seemed to the European to be fairly insurmountable, but to themselves in fact posed no difficulty. What then occurred was that the Aranda people I have referred to, themselves, went out to each of the camps around Alice Springs, and discussed with the campers what they saw as the rights, or lack of rights, in the Aboriginal ... view, of their camping areas. Where problems arose, they went, together with representatives of those camps, around Alice Springs looking at other areas of land, and in particular, keeping in mind areas of land that would not seem to be affecting people in Alice Springs

who had already had development going on blocks. They were basically then looking for vacant areas of land where the people themselves had some prospect of getting permanency in land, and where the people concerned would be happy to live, so that there was no pressure on them to go to land simply because they were being told that they were not allowed to stay where they were, that is by Aranda people.

And in the course of those discussions, nearly all of which were held in language, a number of themes came through. One was the obvious theme ... need for land. The other one was the determination that as Woodward himself referred in his report, that these areas of land be not areas of land right out of the main stream of Alice Springs, but they be areas within Alice Springs, but as far as possible, not affecting other Alice Springs dwellers.

After those specific discussions with each of the camps, mass meetings if you like, of all of the camps were called on two occasions, and again these meetings were controlled by the Aranda people concerned, and the discussions went through any of the final problems that appeared to be left. As a result of all of those processes of discussions, all of these claims which are now before Your Honour came forward.

... to the extent that the claims which we make affect people from communities outside Alice Springs. Discussions have taken place not organised by ourselves, but organised through the Aborigines themselves with those people, so that we have found that likely campers in areas such as Yuendumu, Papunya and stations Alcoota and so forth, were in fact aware what was being done in Alice Springs by the most effective form of communication, which is the bush net work if you like, of information being disseminated (Australia, Interim Aboriginal Land Commission (NT) 1975:58-59). 42

Table 6: Alice Springs Town Camp Names

No.	Official Name	Other Names
01	Iperle-Tyathe Association Incorporated	Llibili Tjatja, Warlpiri camp, Dalgety's Paddock, Motor Re camp
02	Aper-Alwerrkng Association Incorporated	Purarultna, Palmer's camp, Dick Palmer's (deceased) camp
03	Basso's Farm	Itwiyethwenge
04	Mt Nancy Housing Association Incorporated	
05	Anthelk-Ewlpaye Association Incorporated	Ntarka Ulpaya; Charles Creek, including: Charles Creek Village, Charles Creek Extension, Hoppys camp; Charles
06	Nyewente Association Incorporated	Ootnarungatcha, Trucking Yards, Smith St camp, Humes camp, Abattoirs camp
07	Akngwertnarre Association Incorporated	Knugutnarra, Knudnara, Morris Soak, Alec Simpson's (deceased) camp, Lovegrove Drive
08	Ewyenper-Atwatye Association Incorporated	Ilpea-Ilpea, Eastside, Sadadeen, Hidden Valley, Powerhd camp
09	Yarrenyty-Arltere Association Incorporated	Yarintja, Larapinta Valley, Heavitree Gap camp
10	Anthepe Housing Association Incorporated	Ntapa, Drive In camp
11	Inarleng Community Incorporated	Inilunga, Little Sisters, Cross Cultural camp, Dump camp
12	Ilyperenye Association Incorporated	Parentja, Old Timers camp
13	Old Ilparpa Aboriginal Corporation	Ilparpa, New Ilparpa, Irrparlype, Sewerage camp, 8HA c
14	Mpwetyere Aboriginal Corporation	Mbutjara, Abbot's camp, South Tce camp, BP camp, Miss Block camp
15	Ilpiye-Ilpiye Aboriginal Corporation	Iikalantja Tuwatja, Irrkerlenyty-Atwatye, Ilpeye-Ilpeye, Golders camp
16	Karnte Aboriginal Corporation	Yirara camp, Lot 1442, Joseph's camp, Mantjakura's can
	Ilwemp-Akerte Aboriginal Corporation	Clem Abbott's (deceased) camp, Kere-Kwatye, New Carmichael's camp
18	Lhenpe Artwe Aboriginal Corporation	Anmatjera camp, Toby Brown's (deceased), Museum site North Hoppy's camp
19	Anhelke Aboriginal Corporation	Namatjira's camp, Driffen's camp, Pata-Iltura community Artists camp, Carmichael's camp

⁴² Arrernte orthography currently accepted by the Institute for Aboriginal Development in Alice Springs has changed the old spelling of Aranda to Arrernte.

The town campers' land claim lodged before Justice Ward was for a package of twelve separate camps (Eames 1983:270): Mt Nancy and Anthepe had both already lodged lease applications with the DONT, Ilperle-Tyathe, Aper-Alwerrkngge, Basso's Farm, Anthelk-Ewlpaye, Nyewente, Akngwertnarre, Ewyenper-Atwatye, Yarrenyty-Arltere, Karnte and Artist's camp ⁴³ (Australia, Interim Aboriginal Land Commission (NT) 1975; see Tables 6 & 7). Inarlinge had already been granted a lease, in the name of the Cross Cultural Group, in 1973.

As with Justice Woodward, Justice Ward was clearly impressed by the town campers' presentation, and appalled at the delays and obstacles they had endured in their so far fruitless attempts to gain land title, and thus services, to their camps. He recalled Woodward's warning that town camp claims should not go on being delayed until supposed white Australian needs were met, and announced that he would recommend that all of the town camp land requested be granted, and that he rejected the objections from the town authorities (Eames 1983:269-270).

But fate was again to strike a major blow to the town campers. In the middle of the hearings, on 11 November 1975, in an unprecedented move, the Governor General dismissed Gough Whitlam's Labor government. He installed Malcolm Fraser, leader of the opposition as acting Prime Minister until elections on 13 December 1975, when Fraser's Liberal-Country Party won government. The Ward hearings in Alice Springs were immediately terminated by Fraser, and the draft NT Land Rights legislation amended. It was eventually passed in 1976, but it now excluded any provisions for Aboriginal town campers, despite the fact that in opposition the Liberal-Country Party had supported the Draft Land Rights Bill, and in the lead up to the December elections had promised not to make major alterations to it (Eames 1983:270; Heppell & Wigley 1981:93,176).

However in Alice Springs, although the hearings were terminated, and although town camper needs were to be excluded from the final land rights legislation, town camps had already won a victory. As Eames put it:

The bureaucrats for the first time had been forced to publicly state their objections to Aboriginal land rights and to explain their delays in granting titles. They had failed to impress, and their humiliation was both public and final (Eames 1983:270).

TOWN CAMP PLANNING

As discussed above, the process of determining suitable sites as town camp living areas for different Aboriginal groups in Alice Springs is a complex one, and one that has required considerable thought and negotiation. Aboriginal campers do not and have not had the right under Aboriginal law to just camp anywhere. However because the location and internal planning of each camp is according to different criteria to those used by non-Aboriginal planners, it has often been seen as haphazard and uncontrolled.

⁴³ The Artists Camp was the Kere-Kwatye site behind the Diarama Village. Artist camp members and their descendents later became associated with both Ilwemp-Akerte and Anhelke camps.

In papers prepared by Tangentyere in 1986 and 1988 (Dillon 1988:17, Appendix A), Tangentyere listed six factors that together influence the location of camping sites for different Aboriginal groups. These include:

- 1) The group's relationship with local dreaming tracks and stories under Aboriginal law, and the location of sacred and significant sites;
- 2) Traditional and social factors such as marriage relationships, and birthplaces and conception sites of group members;
- 3) The consent and advice of the Alice Springs traditional owners;
- 4) The direction of the town camp group's home country;
- 5) Historic factors such as where the group has been allowed or forced to camp in the past as determined by non-traditional forces;
- 6) The specific needs of the group, including proximity to resources and services.

As a general rule therefore, different groups camp according to the direction of their home countries, and so Warlpiri, Kaytej and Anmatjera people, whose country is to the north of Alice Springs, camp on the northern side of the town.

Pitjantjatjara, Pintupi and Luritja people, who enter Alice Springs from the south, camp on the southern side of the town. Eastern Arrernte to the east, and Western Arrernte to the west. Under traditional Aboriginal law one has certain rights or responsibilities for land on which one was conceived or born. These sites, plus marriage relationships of group members are also taken into account. Dreaming tracks, the paths made by ancestral beings when they created the country, have significance for traditional Aboriginal people today. Some cover long distances, and thus people belonging to a dreaming track miles out bush, may camp in an appropriate location to the same track as it passes by Alice Springs. Different groups place a different emphasis on these factors depending on their own stability and cultural orientation. The judgements of local traditional owners and the availability of suitable land are also taken into account.

The internal planning or composition of different camps is also complex and differs markedly from non-Aboriginal style planning. Apart from more general planning features such as easements, statutory set backs and lease covenants which include landscaped buffer zones, town camp planning constraints also include the need to provide discrete areas for different family groups, temporary accommodation for people who have to leave houses following a death, the need for visitor camping, ablution blocks, clinics, community facilities, parks and gardens, ceremonial areas and sacred site protection.

Each Alice Springs camp tends to comprise small groups of closely related people. While some camps may comprise just one such group, in larger camps the members tend to break up into several smaller groups. General lease layout, including roads, location of houses, community facilities and visitor camping areas is thus affected. Small "clusters of houses and shelters with landscaped yards and communal areas with parks and ablution facilities" (Dillon 1988: 18) are broken by fences, open land spaces and trees or small ranges. This has been the cause of great dispute between the NT government and town campers, the government claiming it is wasteful for the provision of essential services and that the land is not being fully utilised.

EARLY TOWN CAMP LEASES AND DEVELOPMENT 1975-1977

(See Table 7.)

Following the exclusion of town campers from the Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act 1976, town camp land needs were once again to be met through applications to the Commonwealth DONT, which had replaced the Department of the Interior in the Whitlam restructuring in 1972. Anthepe and Mt Nancy had already begun this process, having lodged their lease applications in 1973 and 1974 respectively, prior to the land hearings before Justice Ward. The land rights legislation and its exclusion of town campers had a second consequence however, and that was that town campers became officially ineligible for representation by the CLC because it was a statutory body which was to operate within the provisions of the Act (Heppell & Wigley 1981:93). Although town campers were not abandoned, and they received support and assistance from CLC, CAAC, CAALAS and Reverend Jim Downing, there was no one body focussing specifically on their needs until, at the end of 1975, the Aboriginal Housing Panel (AHP), opened an office in Alice Springs. ⁴⁴ Throughout 1976 and 1977 its architect, Julian Wigley, and field officer, Syd France, committed most of their time to town campers.

Town campers had already demonstrated, in the preparations for the Ward land hearings with CLC in 1975, that they were able to unite and negotiate suitable camp sites for different groups around the town, taking into account a variety of complex factors including the instructions of traditional owners, needs of the group, and non-Aboriginal interests. Most importantly however, they had clearly demonstrated that town camp development was not to be limited to one or two camps and that they were prepared to unite and support applications for land for all town campers. They had a holistic view of the situation and were not prepared to negotiate or proceed in isolation from each other.

This ability and commitment to view the town camp movement as one overall movement rather than as individual and separate camps is, by any standards, an impressive political act. However for town campers in Alice Springs in the 1970s it is extraordinary for a number of reasons. Firstly, conditions on town camps, as already described, were appalling. The urge to proceed with one's own case would have been strong. Secondly, town campers would not have previously identified with each other as a unified group. Even among field officers at Tangentyere in 1981 (one a traditional owner for Alice Springs), two had never been to some camps because it had not been appropriate for them to do so according to traditional Aboriginal custom (Personal experience). Thirdly, as Heppell & Wigley (1981:176) point out, two of the camp leaders in 1976, Geoff Shaw from Mt Nancy and Eli Rubuntja from Anthepe "were political opposites". Geoff Shaw was the radical land rights activist and Labor Party supporter, and Eli Rubuntja the Lutheran Pastor and conservative Country Liberal Party supporter. However, clear in each of their minds, and in the minds of other leaders including Wenten Rubuntja, was the need to proceed with town camp claims in a unified fashion, and this ideal apparently bound them together.

⁴⁴ The Aboriginal Housing Panel was established in Sydney in 1972 and funded by the Commonwealth government, under Liberal-Country Party Prime Minister, W. McMahon. It grew out of a joint seminar conducted by the Council for Aboriginal Affairs and the Royal Australian Institute of Architects to "plan and co-ordinate the work of a number of study groups which would investigate and recommend on various aspects of the Aboriginal housing programme" (Heppell 1979:230).

The AHP, with its strong commitment to Aboriginal self-determination, therefore helped reactivate town campers' meetings. At first these were small and informal. "There were usually between six and twelve people at the meetings, representing a cross section of camps" (Shaw, Geoff, 1988, interview with Pam Ditton, 17 June). CLC assisted with pickups. The meetings discussed and planned town camp incorporations, new lease applications, and delays and problems in securing the first two leases for Mt Nancy and Anthepe. The AHP worked according to strategies and plans decided on during these meetings, assisting camps incorporate, drawing up development plans for new lease applications, and pursuing the Mt Nancy and Anthepe applications. At a meeting on 13 July 1976, representatives from thirteen town camps, CAALAS, CAAC and CLC agreed that something like the Tangatjira organisation attempted in 1974 was needed:

- a) to establish and push town camp land claims;*
- b) to have a body that can talk with and push politicians;*
- c) to ask for courses on processes to help them to meet their needs and to deal with the department (Heppell & Wigley 1981:177).*

The meetings continued, and by April 1977 after numerous such meetings and individual camp consultations, the AHP produced a development proposal for thirteen town camps, at an estimated cost of \$8.65 million. The government then made a commitment, based on this document "to a 7-year program to provide serviced housing to the Alice Springs town camp population" (Heppell & Wigley 1981:177).

Heppell and Wigley (1981:101-102,111-113) describe in detail the protracted negotiations which took place before Mt Nancy and Anthepe camps were officially granted leases. Mt Nancy negotiations took from February 1974 until July 1976, and Anthepe from November 1973 until November 1976. According to Heppell and Wigley (1981:102) this lease was granted after three years, 149 items of correspondence and numerous meetings, telephone calls and telexes, and with the services of a private firm of solicitors, CLC and AHP. Wigley and France, from the AHP, spent many hours in consultation with Mt Nancy community members planning the layout of the lease, house designs, and determining community priorities (Heppell & Wigley 1981:113-124). After land tenure this camp saw security as its first priority, security from the intrusion of curious tourists, louts on motor bikes, white men after a "cheap Aboriginal lay" (Heppell & Wigley 1981:114), and police activities. They saw fencing and public lighting as the best way to provide themselves with this security. Their next priority was for an ablution block so that the community as a whole would have access to toilets, shower and laundry facilities. The ablution block became a focal meeting point for the community, and a television set was bought and installed on its small verandah. These few amenities created a new need, a need for maintenance and management. Shower and toilets had to be cleaned, light bulbs, cleaning materials and toilet paper purchased, people instructed on use of the washing machines and the toilets,⁴⁵ and blocked pipes unblocked. Only then did housing become the priority. After completion of three houses, one pensioner changed his mind and decided to leave his house to another camp member and return to live in a caravan. Designing the lease was also complex and its overall layout was determined by the social structure of the camp. The two major family groups which made up the camp membership decided to develop separate housing areas, with separate entrances, side by side.

⁴⁵ That, for example, rags and other objects cannot be put in a flush toilet.

By the end of 1977 eight camps, Mt Nancy, Antheik-Ewlpaye, Akngwertnarre, Anthepe, Nyewente, Aper-Alwerrkngge, Ewyenper-Atwatye and Ilyperenye had all incorporated. (See Table 7.) A total of twelve applications for Aboriginal town camp Special Purpose Leases had been lodged: Ilperle-Tyathe, Aper-Alwerrkngge, Basso's Farm, Mt Nancy, Antheik-Ewlpaye, Nyewente, Akngwertnarre, Ewyenper-Atwatye, Yarrenyty-Arltere, Anthepe, Ilyperenye and Karnte (Heppell & Wigley 1981:48-51). Of these, four had been granted, Mt Nancy and Anthepe in 1976 and Antheik-Ewlpaye and Akngwertnarre in 1977; plus the lease to the Cross Cultural Group for Inarlenge in 1973. Although the AHP employed a second architect, Wally Dobkins, towards the later part of 1977, it became clear to the AHP and campers alike that the work involved in negotiating the leases, drawing up development plans and assisting town campers come to terms with their own management and maintenance needs, was beyond the means of the AHP, which also had responsibilities with other communities in Central Australia. The need for the town campers to have their own organisation, not only to support them solve practical problems like getting land, essential services and management skills, but also to tackle social and political issues such as employment, education and lobbying for rights, became more urgent. In October and November 1977 two major town camp meetings were held in the backyard of the old CLC office in Hartley St, and from these meetings Tangentyere Council was born.

In May 1977 the Commonwealth Education Department had also provided funds for two part-time adult educators to be employed on the town camps and Amoonguna. Bob Durnan and Helen McCann took these positions (Durnan, Bob, 1988, personal interview, 26 March; Durnan, Bob, 1987, interview with Paul Memmott). Campers remember the arrival of this new phenomena with some mirth.

He [Bob] used to ride a bike when he was doing his adult education thing. He'd ride from Mt Nancy right down to Ilparpa, ... [I] met Bob and asked him 'who was he going to educate?' Sitting down at Mt Nancy with old Rita Scobie, Walter and all them. I think at that time we only had one tap (Shaw, Geoff, 1988, personal interview, 23 March).

However the two educators quickly saw the irrelevance of education that was not related to the immediate needs of campers.

I didn't think that any adult education could occur without people combining it with improving their conditions and getting some stability and security in life, and for their future and their kids' future. There was no meaning or need for educational work unless there was a future. Even people who wanted to study, or whose parents wanted them to learn reading, writing and arithmetic, couldn't do it in the conditions they were in, because there were always crises, bigger problems, people were too exhausted, despairing and turning to grog and stuff. ... You could have some sessions actually doing that in a fairly formal way, but it was really sitting in the dust, covered in flies, with people who were worried also about getting their kids to Congress clinic and didn't have transport to do it, or having to get into town and out that day to buy some tucker, just heaps of classic problems you see in really bad camp conditions (Durnan, Bob, 1988, personal interview, 26 March).

Durnan and McCann began working closely with the AHP and CLC, assisting with visiting camps, organising meetings, camp incorporations, preparing lease applications and circulating and reading literature from CLC and CAAC. They took some classes at Anthepe, at the request of Eli Rubuntja, and assisted Yarrenyty-Arltere camp, which had been moved from its Todd River site near the Olive Pink Reserve where members had been camped since the 1960s, following protests at their presence from non-Aboriginal town residents. The camp moved to a site between Bloomfield St and the Railway, on land opposite Adult Health, and then to Yarrenyty-Arltere, in 1977. The adult educators obtained tools, materials from a demolished Aboriginal Hostel building, and assisted campers build three temporary shelters at the new camp site.

The 1960s began with policies towards Aboriginal people, including town campers, set in terms over which they had no control or influence. All they could do was resist. In the 1960s the tide turned. Aboriginal assertion began and affected the people of Alice Springs as it did those in the rest of Australia.

Given the history of Central Australia, and its particular stage of colonisation, the new mood of Aboriginal assertion took the form of legal title to the land upon which they had traditional and historical rights, including rights to their camps. The movement, supported by sympathetic non-Aboriginal people, before long became a movement to develop Aboriginal organisations. The development of these organisations, and their relationship with governments, has become a major theme in the history of Central Australian Aboriginal people since that time.

Chapter Four

TANGENTYERE - THE FORMATIVE YEARS

1977-1982

Tangentyere Council began in October 1977 at a meeting of town campers held in the back yard of the CLC office in Hartley St. This was the point at which campers and their supporters alike, realised that the ongoing development of the town camps demanded more resources and support than existing Aboriginal and support organisations could provide. Town campers were only one section of the clientele of CLC, AHP, CAALAS and CAAC. They therefore decided to establish their own organisation to coordinate applications for land tenure, coordinate lease developments, and support ongoing self-management. The Council was made up of the adult Aboriginal members of all of the town camps, and it met fortnightly. At the initial meetings Wenten Rubuntja, Eli Rubuntja, Greg Johnson and Geoff Shaw were appointed spokespersons to lobby DAA for support and funding, and Bob Durnan, part-time town camp adult educator, was enlisted to help organise meetings, prepare budgets and find an office site. CLC lawyers assisted with the drafting of a constitution and its incorporation was registered with the NT companies office on 6 February 1979.

RESISTANCE TO TANGENTYERE

Town camper efforts to securely establish Tangentyere were strongly resisted by the Federal government departments, DAA and DHC, and from 1978 by the NT government. It has to be remembered that DAA in the NT consisted largely of staff members who had transferred from the old Welfare Branch of the NT Administration in 1973. They belonged to the old Welfare era, many had been active campaigners for the abolition of the Aboriginal camps in Alice Springs, and they were appalled at this new policy of self-determination. Forced to accept the inevitability of a 'legal' town camp presence in 1975-76, they saw the emergence of Tangentyere in 1977 as a another threat to be resisted. Following NT self-government in 1978, many of the same staff transferred from the then abolished Federal departments to the newly created NT departments, thus perpetuating this hostile attitude.

The significant exception to this NT DAA spirit of resistance was Bob Huey, who came to Alice Springs as the Regional Director when the office was upgraded in 1975, and a young Project Officer, Frieda Thornton.⁴⁶ Geoff Shaw, living at Mt Nancy camp, recalls:

The first who came to us and started talking about land in town was Bob Huey and Janet Layton. Think it came out of that Woodward report, some consideration should be given on a needs basis. So we [Mt Nancy mob] all decided to come close together so we can fight for one land (Shaw, Geoff, 1988, personal interview, 23 March).

⁴⁶ Huey was the DAA Regional Director in Alice Springs from 1975-79, and was very supportive of land rights and services for town campers. Heppell & Wigley (1981:98-99) give a good account of this support.

There was also some initial reservation about the establishment of Tangentyere from a section of the CAAC, the independent Aboriginal controlled health service based in Alice Springs, which served Aboriginal people throughout Central Australia. The director of CAAC, and some others, argued that town camp services should all come under 'one umbrella', the CAAC umbrella, and they lobbied DAA, the AHP and Tangentyere members to this effect. However, while town campers appreciated and relied on CAAC for many services, they did not see it as sufficiently representative of their needs, and were determined that Tangentyere be controlled specifically by the people it served and was to affect, the town campers themselves. Just as in 1975, when the CLC had fought for its independence from DAA and the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies (Eames 1983:268), town campers fought for their own organisational independence and the right to set their own agenda. The tension between CAAC and Tangentyere was short lived, largely being resolved in 1978 when Geoff Shaw, Coordinator of Tangentyere, became the elected President of CAAC.

However tensions between town campers and Federal government departments and the NT government were not resolved. In the period 1977-82 these might best be seen to revolve around three major conflicts - conflict over the definition of town camps, conflict over the role of Tangentyere Council, and conflict over the definition of Aboriginal housing.

CONFLICT OVER THE DEFINITION OF TOWN CAMPS

A fundamental difference existed between how town campers and bureaucrats viewed the town camps. Town campers saw their camps as permanent urban communities. Children would be born, grow up, have their own families, and die in them. The camps were their solution to the need to participate in the larger society, the town of Alice Springs and its economy, yet retain their own form of community. Bureaucracies on the other hand, continued to see town camps as temporary. They saw them as either a place for transients, visitors to the town from surrounding bush communities; or, in the assimilationist mode, as training centres in which traditional Aboriginal people would learn the skills of living in houses and urban communities, and from which they or their children would graduate to regular town housing. This fundamental difference between the two groups had major repercussions in policy and practice.

The historical bureaucratic attitude to the presence of Aboriginal people in the Alice Springs town area has been described in earlier chapters. It can perhaps best be summed up by the fact that Alice Springs was a prohibited area for Aboriginal people from 1928-64, as outlined in Chapter Two. In 1964, although the Social Welfare Ordinance abolished prohibited areas, the status of town campers remained that of illegal squatters on crown land. Although some attempts had been made by the town council and concerned citizens to designate two official camping areas for Aboriginal people, it was not until the 1975 town camp land hearings that town campers were able to challenge this historical attitude to their presence. As discussed in Chapter Three, one of the major issues raised in these hearings before Justice Ward, was the history of delays and inaction in granting Alice Springs town campers land tenure (Australia, Interim Aboriginal Land Commission (NT) 1975:57,61), and the history of town camps on the fringes of towns generally being pushed further and further out as towns developed (Australia, Interim Aboriginal Land Commission (NT) 1975:105), prompting Justice Ward to state:

And one of the things that I have been directed in affect to take into account, is that above all existing Aboriginal living areas should not be seen as convenient sites for further housing development or even public parks. It is quite unacceptable that Aborigines should be pushed further and further away from the centre of towns by the apparently inevitable urban sprawl. And I am also asked to fix this up by the end of 1976 - I have not got much time have I (Australia, Interim Aboriginal Land Commission (NT) 1975:188)

Although these hearings did force the authorities to accept the rights of town campers to land tenure, delays in lease applications continued. Anthepe camp lodged its lease application in November 1973 and the lease was granted three years later in November 1976, after exhaustive debate and delay. Similarly, Mt Nancy lodged its lease application in February 1974 and it was granted almost two and a half years later in July 1976. These delays in lease applications have continued, the longest delay probably being that made by the Golder families, traditional owners of Alice Springs. They made their first application for land in 1979, and finally received a lease in 1986. However by then it was the NT government which played a major role in this process.

Once a lease had been granted, delays continued to occur regarding its development. In 1976-77 a dispute between the two Federal government departments, DAA and DONT, ⁴⁷ as to who was responsible for funding essential services - power, water and sewerage, left Mt Nancy camp with three houses built but no services connected, and seven ablution blocks built on different camps, in a similar state. As the departments passed the buck from one to the other, town campers waited with shower and toilet blocks, but no power, water or sewerage connections (Shaw 1977: 12). As Geoff Shaw wrote:

Right where the community is now, 150 yards to the west, is a new housing subdivision. Streets have been put there, sewerage has been put in and the houses haven't been built yet!

Here we are, east 150 yards and have no sewerage but we are now building three houses after fighting hard for many years. But we have to use septic tanks.

This is because there's an agreement between the Department of the Northern Territory and the Department of Aboriginal Affairs to look after the interests of Aboriginals living in fringe camps but these two are locking horns, arguing over which one is going to pay for it!!

Why can't we have the sewerage facilities as supplied to the rest of the town without argument (Shaw 1977: 12)?

The delays reflect a bureaucratic attitude to town camps, that they were not legitimate - they did not warrant the type of services expected by and available to the wider community. And this was further aggravated by the fact that camps continued to be seen by bureaucrats as transient rather than permanent. In 1979 the Federal DHC submitted its 1979-80 town camp housing programme to DAA for funding, without any prior consultation with town campers or with Tangentyere, despite a government policy of self-determination and despite the fact that by then Tangentyere employed the architect who would be responsible for the design of the housing programme. Much of this report is quoted in Heppell & Wigley (1981: 190-191). In it the department argued:

The final important point was the intention to use Town Camps as 'transition' establishments or 'training camps' i.e. to provide residents with the facilities to assist in the implementation of self management or assimilation programmes. ... For an individual to progress beyond the stage of rental control and welfare support, he or she must leave the camp and seek accommodation via other avenues, e.g. Housing Commission, or DAA sponsored private home purchase arrangements (quoted in Heppell & Wigley 1981: 190-191).

Even as late as 1986 the NT Minister for Community Development, Barry Coulter, during a discussion regarding the outstanding Karnte lease application, kept referring to the problems of 'transient' camps. The meeting repeatedly pointed out that town camps in Alice Springs were not transient, (although transient leases had been applied for none have yet been granted). The Minister was forced to agree:

Neither are the ones in Darwin. We might call them Transient Camps, but they're Permanent (Tangentyere Council, Minutes, 7 February 1986).

⁴⁷ The Department of the NT (DONT) included Department of Housing and Construction (DHC).

However it was more than just a semantic problem. His perception continued to be that town camps were not permanent. In discussing his government's opposition to Karnte lease he argued:

Simply that we've supplied essential services, power and water, and given land in some cases, lot of land, 5 acres, 10 acres ... and there's 2 or 3 houses on it, and that mob have a fight with some other people that come in there, or their friends of the family or something, and they move over the road and set up another camp, over the road. So when we designate an area as a Town Camp, and we supply services and everything, people can't get on together, and ... they move over the road and set up another camp over the road. And that happens a lot. And if we designate an area, and supply services with it, that's where we want those people to be. (Tangentyere Council, Minutes, 7 February 1986). (No camps in Alice Springs have been thus abandoned.)

The issue of the definition of the camps extends beyond the actual provision of a lease and essential services, into the design and layout of the lease, including distance between houses, house yards, communal areas, landscaping and roads, and the design of houses. Heppell & Wigley (1981:191) note that the 'secret' DHC 1979 report recommended that leases be designed as regular suburban blocks. DHC, and later NT government departments, argued that houses should be set out close together, in straight rows, in order to maximise land use and to minimise the cost of essential service provision. Town campers on the other hand, had a completely different idea of town planning. While they appreciated the cost factor, they required the lease layout to be culturally and socially sensitive, and therefore that houses be grouped and separated differently. Larger town camps are therefore characterised by a small group of houses containing a family group, separated, often by a natural barrier such as trees or a range, from the next family group. In 1979 DHC saw the solution not in the adaptation of housing to traditional Aboriginal values, but the abandonment of those Aboriginal values for non-Aboriginal ones. DHC wrote:

So long as traditional aboriginal groups place inter and intra family relationships, communications, responsibilities etc. above European style pride in possessions, there will be little motivation towards construction and maintenance of houses (quoted in Heppell & Wigley 1981: 190).

On 1 July 1978 the NT became largely self-governing, following the Northern Territory (Self-Government) Act 1978, and gradually assumed control of many state functions, including control of land. The NT Lands Department became responsible for the issuing of leases, and in 1981 began a major offensive to stop the granting of any further Aboriginal Special Purpose Leases in Alice Springs. The offensive began when the Lands Department pulled down and impounded temporary shelters and other equipment including pit toilets and a water tank which had been erected by Tangentyere on the Ilwemp-Akerte camp site. DAA had allowed funds to be used to erect such temporary facilities, despite the fact that there was no land tenure, on the grounds that a formal lease application had been lodged and in order to reduce health and hygiene problems on the camp. Tangentyere was eventually able to reclaim the goods, but not re-erect them on that site.

Following this confiscation, the headline on the front page of the local paper, the Centralian Advocate read:

Alice being 'ringbarked'. Lands Minister Jim Robertson and his department are gearing up for a major attack on illegal campers in and around Alice Springs (Centralian Advocate, 24 June 1981: 1).

Robertson attacked the use of public funds to break the law and build what he called 'substantial houses' on public land, the 'disgraceful' littering of the camps, and the practice of Aborigines occupying vacant crown land and then using that occupancy as grounds for a lease application, a practice he described as 'blackmail'. "The Government will not buckle," he declared. The 'substantial houses' referred to were in fact tin shed shelters.

This public attack by the Minister was followed by a letter to the President of Tangentyere Council three weeks later, 17 July 1981, signed by J.M. Pinney, Director, NT Department of Lands, Alice Springs. It read:

APPLICATIONS FOR TOWN CAMPS

The Government has considered the issue of further Special Purpose Leases in and around Alice Springs for Aboriginal town camps. Concern was expressed that these Leases may not be effectively used.

Accordingly, the Government has resolved to reject all current applications for camping and living areas until adequate and rational use is made by Aborigines of existing land grants (Department of Lands, 1981).

Thus began a freeze on the granting of any new leases to Aboriginal town campers in Alice Springs, which was not to be lifted until 1986. All outstanding applications were ignored by the NT government.

Outstanding applications in 1981, listed below, included land tenure for permanent camps still classified as illegal, extensions to existing camps, transient and sorry camps, ⁴⁸ and land for recreation and to safeguard ceremonial areas.

Transient Camps

- 1) Butcher's Camp, for Western Luritja and Pintupi transients, on site of Yipirinya school.
- 2) Kere-Kwatye, for Western Arrernte transients, behind the supermarket in the New Larapinta subdivision.
- 3) Area behind Basso's Farm, for Alyawarre transients.

Ceremonial Camps

- 1) Akngwertnarre ceremony camp behind Akngwertnarre and Yipirinya.
- 2) Nyewente extension, towards and behind the abattoirs complex.
- 3) Ewyenper-Atwatye extension, to include the hill to the north of the camp and valley to the east of it.

New Permanent Camps and Extensions

- 1) Akngwertnarre extension.
- 2) Lhenpe-Artnwe (Anmatjera camp).
- 3) Iipiye-Iipiye, for Golder families, following the failure of the Iikalantja-Tuwatya application in 1980 - (granted 1986).
- 4) Ilwempe-Akerte, for Abbott families and Artists.
- 5) Karnte - (granted 1988).

⁴⁸ Central Australian Aboriginal people are required by traditional law to move away from the living area of a deceased person for a period of time to allow that person's spirit to leave in peace. Temporary camps, known as 'sorry camps' are therefore set up for the mourning family.

CONFLICT OVER THE ROLE OF TANGENTYERE COUNCIL

From the very beginning the establishment of Tangentyere led to further conflict between town campers and DAA and DHC and from mid-1978, the NT government, over Tangentyere's role. While town campers saw Tangentyere as their representative body through which they would make decisions and determine their priorities, the bureaucracies saw it as a body they could consult, but which had no power of decision making or negotiation. Town campers also saw that their organisation should deal with a broad range of town camper issues and needs, ranging from housing to employment, sacred site protection and education. Government agencies on the other hand argued that Tangentyere, the town camp organisation, had responsibility for housing only. Finally, town campers saw Tangentyere not only as their voice and negotiator, but as the body which should control and deliver services to their community - services ranging from garbage collection to architectural advice. Once again, this was completely contrary to the view of government agencies.

The Council met fortnightly to allow members to discuss issues and together plan priorities. Organising these meetings in itself was a major task. For one thing, nobody had transport, and vehicles and drivers had to be borrowed from CAAC, CLC, CAALAS and AHP to do the pick up. Durnan recalls:

I got a lot into organising meetings and getting people to say what they wanted done. In those early minutes there's a lot about garbage services, roads being too wet to get in, need for employment, issues like that came out. Probably not what DAA in particular had had in mind as the main focus. I think they were thinking that getting the leases, getting houses going, collecting rents, would be the focus. But it got to be a lot more nitty gritty than that because people had a lot of immediate needs and demands, and employment was one of those (Durnan, Bob, 1988, personal interview, 26 March).

Issues discussed at those early meetings included water, garbage, security, boundary fences, electricity for night lighting and fridges, wood for heating and cooking, getting the existing ablution blocks operating again, getting essential services connected to the seven new AHP ablutions just being completed, emergency shelter such as tents, new leases, education, training, employment, getting adequate facilities in the camps and budgets (Shaw, Geoff, 1988, personal interview, 28 March; Durnan, Bob, 1988, personal interview, 26 March).

Although Bob Huey supported Tangentyere, and made a DAA staff member, Keith Smith, available to assist it to draw up a budget and find office space, Tangentyere's relationship with DAA as a whole remained difficult. For reasons never disclosed at the time, and which were attributed to bureaucratic resistance, Tangentyere experienced extraordinary funding delays. In February 1978 DAA promised six months funding from Christmas 1977 to the end of June 1978. But it wasn't until May 1978 that the first funding was received, and Geoff Shaw was employed as the coordinator, Eileen Hussen as secretary, and Bob Durnan as the office manager. Shortly afterwards a book keeper joined the staff. Tangentyere members remember one event as very significant during this funding campaign in the early part of 1978. In April still no funds had been released by DAA after numerous exchanges, meetings and broken promises. Yet another meeting was called in DAA's conference room and camp spokespersons had once more gone through the tedious list of funding requirements, when Henry Ross (deceased), from the Ewyenper-Atwatye camps on the Eastside, rose to his feet and made a passionate speech about the rights of town campers. He blasted the DAA officers for their denial of these basic rights, and wound up before a stunned audience with a threat to return with his spears if funds were not immediately forthcoming. Funding in May was seen to be largely due to Henry's effort.

Tangentyere's first major project was to convince DAA that Tangentyere should control the camp garbage collection and water carting service. Durnan recalls that for the first two to three months, December 1977 and into 1978, one of the biggest issues at Tangentyere Council's fortnightly meetings was problems with the service. In March 1978, Bob Huey had agreed, in discussions with the AHP and Tangentyere, that the latter should be actively involved in managing town camp services not simply act in an advisory or coordinating role. The plan was that Tangentyere was to be given control of the garbage service, and gradually extend its activities as skills developed (Heppell & Wigley 1981:182). On 12 April 1978 DAA approved a budget for Tangentyere's garbage service, but it wasn't until about November 1978 that this funding was received. DAA at this point attempted to renege on its undertaking, and tried to persuade the Alice Springs Town Council to extend its service in the town to the camps.⁴⁹ Tangentyere again fought this move, but it was not until 1979, after obtaining DAA Town Maintenance and Public Utility (TMPU) funding for a garbage compactor, that Tangentyere funding for the town camp garbage service came through.

For Tangentyere it was a struggle from the beginning. The first achievements were despite the DAA bureaucracy, rather than with its support.

In August 1978 the Federal government abruptly stopped all funding to the AHP (Heppell 1979:237), and it was forced to close in September. This was a major blow to Aboriginal housing throughout the country, and Alice Springs town campers in particular. The AHP was a valuable national resource agency that had some independence from government agencies, and was controlled by an Aboriginal board, including Geoff Shaw from Mt Nancy camp and coordinator of Tangentyere, and Milton Liddle (deceased) from Alice Springs. The AHP had been critical of the Fraser government's annual budget for Aboriginal housing, had campaigned against corruption by builders and architects prevalent in the Aboriginal housing industry, and had campaigned strongly for self-determination against bureaucratic control and for grass roots power for housing associations and Aboriginal controlled resource agencies, which are things which are still being fought for today (Durnan, Bob, 1988, personal interview, 26 March). Of course this type of activity won it many enemies in government circles, including DAA, who justified its termination on the grounds that the \$173,000 operational grant would be better spent on building Aboriginal houses. It argued that the DHC could provide any expert advice needed, a proposal rejected by Tangentyere and other Aboriginal bodies (Heppell 1979:229-243; Heppell & Wigley 1981:187).

For Tangentyere this meant the loss of its architectural services which until then had been provided by two architects in the AHP, Julian Wigley and Wally Dobkins. DAA supported DHC's argument that it should employ an architect who would be available to advise on town camp lease development, but be answerable to the department. That is, the same DHC which saw town camps as transitional; which a year later would submit forward estimates on town camp development without once consulting town campers; and which refused to accept Aboriginal town planning concepts; won DAA support to control town camp development. Tangentyere disagreed with the proposal and lobbied heavily that town campers should employ their own architect who would work for them. Tangentyere finally won out and around October-November 1978 Wally Dobkins commenced work as Tangentyere Council's first employee architect. However it remained an isolated, local victory, with the closure of the AHP remaining a loss to Aboriginal people nationally.

⁴⁹ The move to have municipal town councils take over town camp services provided by organisations like Tangentyere in Alice Springs and Jularlikari Council in Tennant Creek, has continued in the NT with the promotion of the Community Government scheme in the 1980s.

Dealings with DAA and DHC continued to be bogged down in petty battles to get budgets approved and each month's money released. The design department in particular came under close scrutiny. Although Tangentyere now employed its own architect, DAA insisted that all building supervision be carried out by DHC, and gave DHC the power to veto cost estimates. Given the attitude of DHC staff members towards Tangentyere, this resulted in extended obstructions and delays. This arrangement continued until 1980.

In about September 1980, Bob Beadman, the new Alice Springs Regional Director of DAA, conceded to Tangentyere's wishes, and authorised it to supervise its own contracts thereby excluding DHC from the process. In 1981 Beadman permitted Tangentyere to set its own cost limits as well. From that time, the uncertainty of Tangentyere's ongoing existence began to diminish. Not only were lengthy delays in building programmes avoided, but the whole procedure for building houses on town camps became more flexible. More importantly, this move was an official recognition of Tangentyere as a valid and professional organisation.

CONFLICT OVER THE DEFINITION OF ABORIGINAL HOUSING

The disagreement between town campers and governments and their agencies over what constitutes housing in a traditional Aboriginal setting is perhaps the most fundamental conflict regarding Aboriginal development in this country. Town campers continue to argue that the provision of adequate shelter includes housing support services such as repairs and maintenance, homemakers and rent collection systems; and is closely related to social supports for special groups including youth, the aged and women; alcohol programmes; research; and employment, training and education. Governments and their agencies have continuously argued that housing is a bricks and mortar issue only.

As described above, from the earliest Tangentyere Council meetings in 1977-78, people raised issues of employment and education. Prior to the establishment of Tangentyere, the AHP and town campers had identified the need for housing management and maintenance support services. Town campers recognised immediately that land and services were only part of the solution, and that without education, training and employment, they would never be able to make the town camps viable communities. As Geoff Shaw was to say at an ADC organised national Aboriginal housing conference in Alice Springs in 1989:

It's just an obvious truth to me that a community that is both housed and massively unemployed is not being properly sheltered and won't stay housed for long. Too many tensions and problems will get in the way. The houses will end up, at best, under-utilised, and expensive to maintain, or at worst, wrecked and abandoned. ... You must accept this: if your job is to shelter people properly, then half your job is to help the community to create jobs and some kind of economic future for itself, or else next time you look around it won't be sheltered (Shaw 1989).

After winning control of the town camp garbage service, Tangentyere's second major project was to get the basic ablution facilities which already existed on some of the camps, operating. This involved several steps. DAA were already providing some individual camps, those with leases or involved in lease negotiations, with some funding. With the assistance of the AHP and Alice Springs accountants Wilson, Bishop, Boes and Craig, a scheme was developed with DAA which enabled town camps to pool individual camp funding for communal camp projects. In early 1978 the ablution blocks at Anthelk-Ewlpaye, Inarlenge, Iparpa and Mt Nancy were restored to working order. Durnan recalls digging around abluitions with town camp residents, finding pipes, unblocking, cleaning, "some very practical adult education work" (Durnan, Bob, 1988, personal interview, 26 March). During subsequent negotiations about Tangentyere's first budget in March and April 1978, Tangentyere convinced DAA that paying wages to cleaners on each of the camps to clean up rubbish, and ensure that the ablution blocks were cleaned and maintained so that they did not become health hazards, was a legitimate use of town camp funds. This both guaranteed that these blocks never again degenerated to the state that they were found in 1978, and provided part-time employment for town campers.

Education and community development were also taken up at this time, again despite continued bureaucratic resistance. In June 1978 Eli Rubuntja began the town campers' campaign to establish a school for town camp children. Using consultancy money Tangentyere had saved at the end of that financial year, two people were employed to consult with the parents on two camps, Nyewente and Anthepe, regarding the problems they were having with their children's schooling. DAA were immediately hostile to this Tangentyere initiative, arguing that education was not a Tangentyere responsibility, and demanding that the project be dropped. However it continued, and in 1978 a separate Yipirinya school council was formed. Classes were held in tin sheds and community facilities on some camps. After years of lobbying, and campaigning, existing on funding from national and international charity organisations, work on developing a suitable curriculum, and a protracted legal battle against the NT government, in 1983 the school was registered by it as a non-government school, thereby making it eligible for Commonwealth government funding.

Similarly, in September 1978 Tangentyere also presented its first submission to DAA for a community development officer (CDO), and again this submission was met with a DAA reaction of mistrust and resistance. After months and months of negotiation the position was authorised in late 1979. Towards the end of the 1979-80 financial year a CDO, John Macumba, was employed using savings from Tangentyere's budget, and in the 1980-81 financial year enough money was built into all of the Housing Association recurrent budget's technical consultants' section, to employ first one, and gradually up to three full-time CDOs. Their role was to assist camps with meetings and problem solving, collect rent, and generally liaise between the camps and Tangentyere, for example, assisting architects meet with town camp members for design consultations.

Tangentyere's first building programme was the building of seven community facilities in 1978, one each at Ilperle-Tyathe, Nyewente, Akngwertnarre and Anthepe, and three at Anthelk-Ewlpaye (Durnan, Bob, 1988, personal interview, December). Different camp funding was again pooled for this project, and because Tangentyere members maintained that employment and training were priority needs on their camps, Tangentyere hired one outside builder, Vince Augusta, as a foreman, who in turn supervised and trained an all town camp labour team. As Geoff Shaw explains, from "the start, Tangentyere has tried to provide work for campers" (Shaw, Geoff, 1988, interview with Pam Ditton, 17 June). These community facilities, and others built later, have been used for a variety of purposes, including Yipirinya school rooms, meeting places, and shelter for visitors or those waiting housing. Along with ablution blocks, they continue to provide a vital function in relieving pressure on the houses. With high household occupancy rates, a large population still living in tin sheds which have no private ablution facilities, and high visitor numbers, an alternate site for congregating, and showering and washing, is essential for the survival of the households.⁵⁰

⁵⁰ In a survey carried out between April and June 1987 a total of 1192 people were found to be living on town camps, and an estimate made that approximately 10% of these were visitors (Khalidi 1989:159). See Table 9. Despite several attempts, Tangentyere has never been able to obtain an accurate census of town camp visitors. The permanent town camp population of 1057 people plus their visitors were found to occupy a total of 112 brick style houses or units, forty five tin sheds and six tents or humpies (Khalidi 1989:202). It was found that the average number of people occupying a room in the 112 town camp houses was 2.8, compared with 1.2 in a sample group of Aboriginal households living in Housing Commission houses (Khalidi 1989:202). The average household size on town camps was 7.1 compared with 4.7 with the town sample group.

Because of the bureaucratic view that separated employment and housing issues, and difficulties experienced within Tangentyere in employing suitable tradespeople, it was not until 1982 that Tangentyere was again able to employ local town camp labour in the building of new houses. Local builders, supported by CLP Senator Bernie Kilgariff, were also able to put political pressure on DAA and DHC to ensure that building projects went to public tender, rather than have a preferential tender system to favour Tangentyere. Tangentyere was thus unable to compete, having to struggle as it was merely to get funds to carry out its repairs and maintenance service.

Throughout 1979 Tangentyere was also under pressure to build houses quickly and cheaply. DHC argued that Tangentyere should be able to build town camp houses at the same rate as Housing Commission houses. At that time, while Tangentyere's town camp houses were costing about \$31-32,000 to build, town Housing Commission houses were costing only \$25-26,000. This was due to a number of factors, including Tangentyere houses were individually designed in consultation with household members; stronger materials were used; they were generally bigger; and they were built in smaller numbers. While the Housing Commission might go out to tender for forty houses, Tangentyere might do so for six at the most. Tangentyere's one architect was also having trouble keeping up with his workload. This led, in 1979, to a Tangentyere decision to allow the DHC to design the five houses at Akngwertnarre. This exercise proved a useful lesson, as Bob Durnan explains, it was one of the worst decisions ever made by Tangentyere, as the houses

turned out to be disasters, even though they came in at the \$26,000 each that ... (DHC) was advocating. The ceilings were very low, the bedrooms were so small and poky that people still complain about them, the doors were such that if you put more than one piece of furniture in the bedroom you couldn't open one of the doors wide enough to get through. There were constant complaints about the ceilings, the bathroom areas, the laundries, the kitchens, not enough living room space, the potbelly stoves were tinny little things that fell over and we eventually had to replace them. In the last ten years since those Morris Soak houses were built, Tangentyere has basically had to totally renovate and extend them. Redesign them basically and rebuild, at quite a large cost. Some features like the low ceilings we haven't been able to do anything about. But looking back it probably would have been better to have bulldozed them sometime and rebuilt those houses. The camp probably would have worked better as a result. People there have always been irritated about things to do with the houses and the shoddy work. They didn't use as strong materials and things as we use. There were always complaints about the windows there because they used some, maybe tin louvers or something, which made the houses that were already very small and poky and dark, even darker during the time say in winter when people needed to have their windows closed. So it probably proved Tangentyere's point in the long run, although we've never really properly got that through to the funding agencies, because we never had any professional survey done of those houses and the conditions. It was always Tangentyere staff just trying to cadge a bit of money here and a bit there to improve this house or that house, and gradually over the years various houses got changed in various ways (Durnan, Bob, 1990, personal interview, 28 April).

THE CITIZENS FOR CIVILISED LIVING

Resistance to Tangentyere and the town camp developments was all the more difficult for government departments to sustain, in the light of their own failures to meet Aboriginal housing needs. In 1979 the NT Housing Commission announced a programme whereby twenty 'special' Housing Commission houses were to be built for Aboriginal tenants throughout the town. This programme had been established to overcome a major anomaly in the government's housing programme, which ruled that in order to be eligible for Housing Commission housing, Aboriginal families must first establish that they were capable of living in a house. To do this they had to demonstrate their skills in a house. If they had no house in which to do this, they were deemed ineligible for Housing Commission housing.

But in response to the announcement of the programme a group of town citizens who called themselves the Citizens for Civilised Living, and headed by retired magistrate Bob (Scrubby) Hall, and town solicitor Ted Skuse, was established to oppose it. On 31 May 1979 it wrote to town residents, telling them that the NT Housing Commission was proposing

to build and convert houses in your area to house sub-standard tenants who do not meet the present minimum standards of acceptability. ...

Security, health, noise and over-crowding problems are anticipated in and surrounding these special homes.

A public meeting will be held at Ross Park Primary School at 2.30 p.m. this Saturday, 2nd June, to oppose this plan (Alice Springs Citizens For Civilised Living, 1979).

The campaign won the support of the NT government Education Minister, Jim Robertson, who promised to "move to stop the construction of special homes for Aborigines next-door to or directly opposite privately owned homes" (Centralian Advocate, 14 June 1979), and reassured a public meeting that:

"We will not move in creekbed people" he said. "That is not the intention at all." ...

He said work to provide housing in the town leases - fringe camps - was continuing in addition to the special housing program ... (Centralian Advocate, 14 June 1979).

Two other Alice Springs CLP politicians also expressed their 'grave concerns' about the programme, which was finally halved, with only ten of the houses ever being built.

The success of the Citizens for Civilised Living in preventing the establishment of special town housing for Aboriginal people was a victory for racism. But in an unforeseen way it also de-railed the NT government's plans to mainstream Aboriginal housing under their Housing Commission and powerfully reinforced the need for town camps and the role of Tangentyere Council.

Chapter Five

TANGENTYERE - THE EXPANSION YEARS

1982-1985

The period 1977-81 can best be described as the time of rapid town camp development, illustrated by the number of new houses built; and the time of Tangentyere being established as both a town camp representative body and a resource organisation. The period 1982-85 is marked by the expansion of town camp housing and social support services, and administration; and the development of research projects at Tangentyere. This change in direction arose from Tangentyere's concerns that if the town camp programme was to be successful in the long term, the simple provision of new houses was not sufficient. Town campers needed additional assistance not only to manage and maintain their housing stock, but to tackle a variety of other social problems that they as a group recognised and experienced. Initially the new Commonwealth Aboriginal housing bureaucracy, the Aboriginal Development Commission (ADC), was prepared to support this shift in emphasis, but by 1985 its head office in Canberra was to recoil back to rigid adherence to a policy which dictated capital rather than recurrent funding, regardless of individual community need. The NT government continued its offensive on town camps, maintaining its freeze on the granting of outstanding town camp leases from 1981-86; renegeing on some aspects of its responsibility to provide essential services; and escalating its offensive on Aboriginal sacred sites throughout the NT, including the Alice Springs district.

Tangentyere's change in emphasis from new houses to support services, from capital to recurrent spending, is significant, because it was the period when Alice Springs Aboriginal town campers came closest to self-determination. It is the period when they were most able to determine their own priorities, with the least resistance.

TOWN CAMPS IN THE 1980s

In examining the changes that took place at this time, it must firstly be remembered that town campers established their own organisation in 1977 to meet the needs of town campers. They always intended that Tangentyere would not only be responsible for land tenure, shelter and essential services, but equally be responsible for meeting a broad range of needs including maintenance and management of camps and assets, education, training, employment and income security. It was the funding bodies, initially DAA, who always tried to restrict Tangentyere's area of operation to housing alone. For example, when Tangentyere employed two consultants to research the problems that Nyewente and Anthepe children were experiencing with schooling, the origin of Yipirinya school, at the end of 1978, DAA opposed and tried to prevent that. Likewise, it took over twelve months of submission and negotiation before DAA agreed to a town camp CDO being employed out of saved funds, in late 1979. Town campers always saw housing as only one of a number of problems which had to be addressed if the overall conditions on town camps were to be alleviated.

One also needs to consider the general pattern of lease development. As each camp was granted a lease, it underwent a rather rapid development programme which included fencing, roads, essential services, basic ablution facilities and some housing. This was followed often by a period of consolidation and then the gradual addition of new houses as resources became available. For example, in 1976 Mt Nancy lease was granted and in 1977-78 eight houses were built on the lease.

Three years later, in 1981 a further five were built.⁵¹ Similarly, in 1980 Ewyenper-Atwatye lease was granted. In 1981 twelve houses were built there, in 1983 a further two, in 1984 one, and in 1988 two, bringing the total to seventeen. (See Tables 8 & 9.)

Table 8: Alice Springs Town Camp Annual Housing Programme

Year	New Houses	Camp	Description	Total 52
1973	5	05. Anthelk-Ewlpaye	House: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 ⁵³	5
1977	3	04. Mt Nancy	House: 1, 3, 5 ⁵⁴	8
1978	24	01. Ilperle-Tyathe	House: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6	32
		04. Mt Nancy	House: 2, 4, 6, 7, 8	
		06. Nyewente	House: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7	
		10. Anthepe	House: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6	
1979	20	02. Aper-Alwerrkngge	House: 1	52
		05. Anthelk-Ewlpaye	House: 6, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15	
		07. Akngwertnarre	House: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 ⁵⁵	
		11. Inarlengge	House: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5	
1980	16	09. Yarrenyty-Arltere	House: 1, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 14	68
		08. Ewyenper-Atwatye	House: 10, 12, 13, 14, 21, 22, 24, 30, 32	
1981	24	04. Mt Nancy	House: 13 Duplex 9 /10, and 11 / 12	92
		06. Nyewente	House: 13, 18	
		08. Ewyenper-Atwatye	House: 1, 2, 33	
		12. Ilyperenye	House: 1, 2, 5, 6, 7	
		13. Ilparpa	House: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5	
		14. Mpwetyere	House: 2, 4, 5, 7	
1982	9	02. Aper-Alwerrkngge	House: 2	101

⁵¹ The total Mt Nancy house number was reduced from thirteen to twelve in 1984 when duplex 9 & 10 was converted into a single house, house 10.

⁵² For the purpose of this summary, houses and duplexes will be counted as living units. Each house therefore equals one living unit, and each duplex two living units. This column also represents the number of living units added to the general housing stock annually. In cases where the housing stock diminishes, for example a two living unit duplex is converted into a one living unit house, the appropriate number is subtracted from the housing stock. Equally, in the case where a house is built to replace another, no addition is made to the total housing stock.

⁵³ One room cottages.

⁵⁴ Families moved into these three houses in December 1977. However essential services were not connected until 1978 due to delays caused by a dispute between DAA and DONT's DHC, regarding responsibility for these connections.

⁵⁵ DHC designed.

		03. Basso's Farm	House: 2	
		05. Anthelk-Ewlpaye	House: 16, 25 Duplex: 17 / 18, and 19 / 20	
		11. Inarlenge	House: 6	
1983	12	08. Ewyenper-Atwatye	House: 17, 20	113
		09. Yarrenyty-Arltere	House: 2, 12 Duplex: 11 / 13	
		11. Inarlenge	House: 7, 8, 9	
		12. Ilyperenye	Duplex: 3 / 4	
		14. Mpwetyere	House: 3	
1984	5 (6-1)	04. Mt Nancy	House: 10 (Duplex: 9 / 10 converted into one house)	118
		06. Nyewente	House: 14	
		08. Ewyenper-Atwatye	House: 28	
		11. Inarlenge	House: 10, 11	
		13. Ilparpa	House: 6, 7	
1985	2	05. Anthelk-Ewlpaye	House: 26, 27	120
1986	10	05. Anthelk-Ewlpaye	House: 23 Duplex: 21 / 22 Duplex: 8A / 8B (House 8 converted into duplex)	130
		09. Yarrenyty-Arltere	House: 15	
		13. Ilparpa	House: 8	
		15. Ilpiye Ilpiye	House: 1, 3, 9, 13	
1987	7	09. Yarrenyty-Arltere	House: 20 Duplex: 14A / 14B (House 14 converted into duplex)	137
		10. Anthepe	House: 12	
		15. Ilpiye Ilpiye	House: 4, 7, 15, 17	
1988	13	05. Anthelk-Ewlpaye	House: 28	150
		06. Nyewente	House: 8, 9	
		08. Ewyenper-Atwatye	House: 34, 35	
		09. Yarrenyty-Arltere	House: 16	
		16. Karnte	House: 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 12	
1989	17	02. Aper-Alwerrkng	House: 3, 4, 5	167
		05. Anthelk-Ewlpaye	House: 1, 2, 3, 4 & 5 replaced; 24	
		06. Nyewente	House: 11	
		07. Akngwertnarre	House: 14	
		09. Yarrenyty-Arltere	House: 17, 21, 22	
		13. Ilparpa	House: 9, 10	
		15. Ilpiye Ilpiye	House: 10	
		16. Karnte	House: 5, 8, 9, 10, 11	

By 1982 the fourteen camps that had been granted leases before the NT government's 1981 freeze, had all undergone their initial phase of development. The four year period prior to 1982, that is 1978-81 inclusive, had seen the number of town camp houses rise from eight to ninety two. This was the period of rapid development, which by the end of 1989 still accounted for fifty one per cent of the town camp houses. Because no new leases were granted until 1986, all houses built therefore in the 1982 to 1985 period were part of the second phase of more gradual lease development following the initial injection of services.

The third point is that by 1982 all camps were beginning to experience problems associated with the maintenance and management of this housing stock. The rapid development of leases had not been equally matched by a development of services aimed at maintaining or managing them. DAA saw that its funding responsibilities began and ended with the provision of housing; that Tangentyere had no role to play in support services; and that camps themselves were responsible for the rest. Tangentyere and town camp members, in particular Chairman Wenten Rubuntja and Coordinator Geoff Shaw, saw that the management and maintenance of houses were critical to the long term success of the town camp programme. The simple provision of housing stock would not solve the housing problem if this stock was allowed to fall into disrepair.

Table 9: Alice Springs Town Camp Annual Housing Programme - Summary

Year	Total Leases Granted	New Living Units	Total Living Units	% Total Living Units
1973	1	5	5	92 = 55%
1976	3		5	
1977	5	3	8	
1978	7	24	32	
1979	9	20	52	
1980	12	16	68	
1981	14	24	92	
1982	14	9	101	28 = 17%
1983	14	12	113	
1984	14	5	118	
1985	14	2	120	
1986	15	10	130	47 = 28%
1987	15	7	137	
1988	16	13	150	
1989	16	17	167	

It has been argued in earlier chapters that town camps had only survived because campers were able to resist official attempts to remove them. But now, having won land tenure and basic services, the threat to their existence had not disappeared. Community leaders understood that if camps, and in particular the new houses, were allowed to become derelict, not only would the health and social well being of residents be undermined, but it would spell the political end of the town camp movement. Antagonists, ever present especially within the NT government and its administration, and DAA, would be able to proclaim the irresponsibility and the waste of the tax payers money, public sympathy would disappear, and yet another failed Aboriginal housing project would result. A related threat to town camps was the persistent official view that they were a temporary housing solution. Town campers had to reassert again and again that town camps were not transient camps for visitors and others passing through. Nor were they a left over from the days of the assimilation policy. That is, they were not there as training camps in which traditional Aboriginal people would learn the necessary skills of modern urban living, and from which they would graduate to standard town suburbia. They were to remain a permanent and legitimate form of urban community living. All of this hinged on the one condition, that the camps and their facilities remained in working order.

A significant change occurred in Tangentyere's relationship with government agencies, when in 1981-82 ADC replaced DAA as the town camps' and Tangentyere's major funding body. Established in July 1980 under the Aboriginal Development Commission Act 1980,⁵⁶ ADC aimed to achieve self-determination and self-management for Aboriginal people by assisting them develop enterprises and become economically independent rather than remain dependent on welfare type subsistence grants (ADC 1982b: 4-5; ADC 1987:4). From the 1981-82 financial year ADC assumed the additional responsibility of DAA's Housing Grants-in-Aid Program, the funding Housing Associations or Aboriginal Corporations received for ongoing planning, building, management and maintenance of their housing programmes (ADC 1982b:4; ADC 1982c: 3,29), and thus became the major Alice Springs town camp funding body.

Although this move initially created some confusion, it also marked the beginning of an era of better relationships with bureaucrats. In the early years enough ADC staff in the Alice Springs regional office, had enough understanding and commitment to the concept of self-determination, to allow trust and cooperation between themselves and Aboriginal organisations like Tangentyere to develop. After the years of opposition from DAA, DHC and NT government departments, this was seen by Tangentyere as an important advance.

In the early 1980s the 'problem' of town camps was also an uncomfortable political issue for the Australian government. A 1982 House of Representatives Select Committee on Aboriginal Affairs report, Strategies to Help Overcome the Problem of Aboriginal Town Camps, identified town campers as the most socially disadvantaged group in Australian society (ADC 1985a:18). This report resulted in the establishment of the national Town Campers Assistance Program, TCAP, in 1984, whose aims included secure land tenure for town campers, the provision of employment and training, and an improvement in living conditions; through the provision of essential services, housing and shelter (DAA 1984:42). The TCAP was also administered by ADC.

In 1983 ADC announced that it aimed to house all Aborigines by 1988 (ADC 1984: 3). For three consecutive years, 1983-85, DAA and ADC combined forces and carried out national Aboriginal housing surveys. In September 1983 they found a need for 16,281 new dwellings, and declared that it would take ten years to meet this need at current spending rates. However the 1984 survey indicated an increased need for 17,206 new dwellings (ADC 1985b:20), and the 1985 survey a need for 17,273 new dwellings (ADC 1987:44). Despite the building programmes, the demand was growing rather than diminishing. ADC acknowledged in its 1984-85 annual report, that one of the factors contributing to this unwelcome rise was the need to replace existing houses (ADC 1985b:20). Tangentyere argued that if houses were adequately managed and maintained, they would not need such frequent replacement. This suggestion is born out by the fact that no house on an Alice Springs town camp has had to be replaced because of damage. The five original 'cabins' built at Anthelk-Ewlpaye in 1973 by DAA, were also replaced in 1989-90 because their design was unsatisfactory, and renovations over the years had failed to remedy this.

⁵⁶ The Aboriginal Development Commission Act 1980 was repealed by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission Bill 1989, Section 202. The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission, which replaced both DAA and ADC, formally came into operation on 5 March 1990.

The argument that houses alone were not solving all town camp problems was supported by some very disturbing research in the 1980s. Alice Springs town campers demonstrate a variety of complex social problems characteristic of a colonised and dispossessed society, including alcoholism, unemployment, poverty, poor education and poor health. A 1986 CAAC paper, The Health of Alice Springs Town Campers, presented alarming figures on the health status of the NT Aboriginal population. For example, it found that Aboriginal babies are four times as likely to die before the age of twelve months as non-Aboriginal babies; that Aboriginal men were twenty two times more likely and Aboriginal women twenty five times more likely to die from infectious diseases than non-Aboriginal men and women; and that Aboriginal people in the NT have a life span some twenty years shorter than that for non-Aboriginal people. However in preliminary morbidity studies in 1985-86, CAAC also found that the Alice Springs town camp Aboriginal population experienced much poorer health than the rest of the Central Australian Aboriginal population. In particular, in a study of a sample of 120 children, they found that while non-Aboriginal children spent an average of 1.5 days in hospital during the first two years of their life, Aboriginal children from the town spent an average of 5.3 days, Aboriginal children from Utopia station⁵⁷ spent an average of 9.5 days, but town camp Aboriginal children spent an extraordinary average of thirty five days (Moody & Nelson 1986).

Similar figures exist in the area of employment and education, highlighting the low economic status of town campers. In 1987 less than one quarter of the town camp labour force of 410, was employed. That is, ninety six of the 1,192 people identified on town camps in June 1987 were in employment, and only sixty six of these were in full-time employment (Khalidi 1989:210-214). In the same study, it was found that over fifteen per cent of town campers five years and over, had never been to school, and fifty two percent had only been to primary school (Khalidi 1989:199). Khalidi (1989:217) found a high correlation between basic primary education levels, for example literacy, and employment.

DROP IN NEW HOUSES AND DEVELOPMENT OF SUPPORTS

In the four year period, 1982-85 inclusive, the total number of new houses built on Alice Springs town camps was twenty eight, which accounts for seventeen per cent of the total number at the end of 1989. This was a marked drop, and can be compared, for example, with the eighty four houses built in the four years prior to this, 1978-81 inclusive, which accounts for fifty one per cent of constructions up to the end of 1989.

Throughout 1983-84, Tangentyere researched and prepared submissions to a variety of funding bodies for support services covering a broad range of identified needs including services for old people, young people and women, homemakers, financial advice and support, alcohol research, and training (Boughton, Bob, 1988, personal interview, 24 March). Over a period of several years Tangentyere was remarkably successful in these submissions. Funding was achieved by transferring ADC funding for capital items like new houses, into different items like trees and equipment,⁵⁸ and wages; from a number of different government departments and programmes; and from other bodies, in particular the ABTA.

⁵⁷ Utopia station is an Aboriginal owned cattle station, 150 kms north east of Alice Springs.

⁵⁸ There is contention between ADC and Tangentyere over what constitutes capital and recurrent funding.

Housing Support Services

For many town campers the experience of moving into a house has been an extraordinarily difficult one. It is a huge drain economically as the tenants are suddenly subjected to rent, electricity, water and sewerage bills, plus the need to purchase household items like detergent, toilet paper and cleaning equipment. It also has significant social consequences. Family relationships, of absolute primary concern in Aboriginal culture, may be threatened because of problems associated with overcrowding, cleaning, and financially managing a household. Traditional responsibilities such as mourning the death of a family member may be in conflict with the new responsibilities associated with household living. New skills have to be learned, for example, how to defrost a fridge without puncturing the gas tubes, how to clean a stove and so prevent it catching on fire, and how to keep a flush toilet from blocking up.

Housing support programmes aimed at assisting people cope with budgeting, problem solving, and creating a healthy and pleasant environment for themselves and their visitors.

i) Housing Office

The Community Development office, or Housing office, has gradually grown to include three full-time field officers, a hygiene officer, a coordinator, a Westpac bank agency with staff to assist with budget advice and collection of payments for rent, and bills such as electricity, water and sewerage, a rents clerk, and a book keeper. Deductions from wages and social security payments are made to assist with this.

ii) Homemakers

Tangentyere's homemaker service began in earnest on a permanent basis in 1986. It provides a variety of services including assistance and advice to tenants regarding: moving into a house for the first time; the use of household equipment such as stoves, fridges and flush toilets; budgeting and rent and bill payments; community and household problems associated with such things as overcrowding and alcohol; adapting traditional responsibilities to new responsibilities which come with permanent housing (for example, traditional responsibilities following death); and generally making use of the variety of services offered by Tangentyere (Dixon 1985: 79). It services about 619 householders aged between twenty and sixty years (Tangentyere 1987-88: 18).

iii) Land Management

The land management section's primary role is that of environmental health. It developed out of a recognition of the health problems associated with traditional Aboriginal people living in a settled community, and of the importance of environmental factors in determining the success of Aboriginal housing programmes (Reser 1979, see Dixon 1985: 132). Land management concentrates on the use of plant material to provide cheap and effective ways of improving the environment by providing dust suppression, cooling in summer with shade trees and vines, wind breaks, fuel wood, food, filtering and absorption of waste water, ground covers and limiting vehicle traffic areas. A service is provided for individual houses and for communal areas used for recreation, meetings and visitors.

There is also a legal requirement for land management. Most town camp special purpose leases include a covenant that the lessee will be responsible for dust suppression. Although no Alice Springs town camp lease has yet been forfeited on these or any other grounds, the NT Department of Lands and Housing did make such a threat to Anthelk-Ewlpaye. This Housing Association received a letter stating that the Minister would forfeit its lease on the grounds that

You have failed to comply with clause 7 of the lease which requires that the leased land shall be dust suppressed and drained for stormwater to the satisfaction of the Administrator by the 15th October, 1979 (Department of Lands and Housing, c. 1979).

The threat was not carried out.

Despite the arguments for environmental health, Tangentyere has had great difficulty in maintaining its land management service except for a brief period between 1984 and 1987 when it was enthusiastically funded. In its 1984-85 Annual Report ADC went so far as to say

Tangentyere Council also provides landscaping services to the Alice Springs town camps, planting fruit trees and other trees for shade and the control of dust. The project was initiated by the Commission and it has been successful in attracting support from other Departments and non-Government organisations. Some twenty people are employed on this project, six by way of funds from the Commission (ADC 1985b:22).

DAA and ADC funding cuts in 1987 were severe and resulted in the collapse of the upgrading and maintenance programme around individual houses, and severely curtailed nursery activity. In order to minimise the impact of unemployment for fifteen or so permanent labourers, including those undergoing training at the time, the land management section launched immediately into enterprise activities, a long term aim of the department because of its considerable expertise in the area. However it has been forced into the enterprise field at the expense of its primary function on town camps. While producing income on jobs in the outside community, for example, landscaping road ways, the programme is as yet not successful enough to fund the employment of workers to continue maintenance work on the camps. As a result the environment on town camps is deteriorating.

Social Supports

i) Old People

Tangentyere's June 1987 town camp survey estimates a total of at least 168 old and disabled people living permanently on the camps (Tangentyere Council, n.d.:2). In 1983 these old people began holding their own meetings and formed the Old People's Committee. The Old People's programme, which began in 1984-85, includes a bus run specifically for old people to do their shopping, collect pensions and go on bush trips; an old people's worker; plus a home care service which assists old people in need with shopping, cleaning, washing and budgeting, and liaises with CAAC health service over specific health problems

ii) Women

Tangentyere's 1985 population study estimated that there were 348 women aged sixteen years and over, permanently resident on town camps (Simmons 1987:9). Women began holding their own meetings from 1982, the women's committee grew out of these meetings, and from 1987-88 a woman's officer has been employed at Tangentyere. The committee assists women become more involved in Tangentyere's programmes and participate in policy making, in particular regarding issues which impact on them.

iii) Recreation

Tangentyere's 1985 survey indicated that less than one in six Aboriginal town camper adults in Alice Springs had employment (Simmons 1987:15). Youth unemployment has long been recognised to result in boredom and anti-social behaviour including alcoholism. Tangentyere's recreation programme, established in 1983, is aimed at generating activities like sports, hunting and fund raising for unemployed boys aged between fifteen and twenty one years, the highest 'at risk' group for juvenile crime. Funding has been limited and no programme for girls has yet been developed.

An After School Service including activities like swimming, sports, arts and crafts, and bush trips, also began in May 1986 for the 178 or so town camp children aged between five and twelve years (Simmons 1987:9), after school hours. The service also includes a limited school holiday programme for an estimated 249 children aged five to fifteen years (Simmons 1987:9).⁵⁹

iv) Tangentyere Liquor Committee

The Tangentyere Liquor Committee began meeting in 1983 to confront the enormous problems associated with excessive alcohol consumption on town camps. These problems were compounded that year when the NT Government passed legislation which prohibits the drinking of alcohol in public within two kilometers of any licensed premises, effectively the town area.⁶⁰ This law was specifically directed at Aboriginal drinkers who often chose places like the dry Todd River bed in which to drink, and were considered an embarrassment by town authorities and bad for the tourist industry. Banned from the town hotels because of dress regulations, town camps became the 'safe' place for drinkers. So that while the authorities congratulated themselves on the success of the regulations, town campers were faced with great social disruption.

The Tangentyere Liquor Committee has concentrated its efforts on two areas. Firstly, the establishment of Aboriginal controlled social clubs, and secondly, opposing the granting of take-away liquor licences especially those associated with food outlets and shops in the town of Alice Springs and surrounding areas. To date, land for one social club to the south of Heavitree Gap was granted after years of negotiation with the NT government in late 1989, and funding from ADC and ABTA to develop the site looks promising. However despite Tangentyere's opposition to new liquor licences being granted, the number of outlets rose from sixty three to seventy four from 1986 to 1988, despite the fact that the town population did not rise (Hill 1989, quoted in Tangentyere Council, Letter, 12 June 1989). The NT has more liquor outlets per capita than any other state in Australia, nearly double the national average, and Alice Springs itself has 36.7% more liquor outlets per capita than the rest of the NT. Nineteen of those outlets have take-away licences (Tangentyere Council, Letter, 12 June 1989).

In January 1989 Tangentyere also supported the establishment of Aboriginal Alcohol Awareness (AAA), which began under the auspices of a Tangentyere community development worker, who had himself battled successfully to overcome an alcohol problem (Lyon 1990:110-112).

⁵⁹ The Simmons (1987) report refers to figures obtained in June 1985.

⁶⁰ Two amendments to the Summary Offences Act in 1982 resulted in the Summary Offences Amendment Act 1982. Under Section 45D this act declared that "A person shall not, within 2 kilometers of premises licensed under ... (the Liquor Act) ... drink liquor in a public place or on unoccupied private land". The amendment was assented to on 14 December 1982.

Training

Since its establishment in 1977 members have insisted that training and employment for town campers is an important function of Tangentyere. With an approximate eighty seven per cent unemployment rate on town camps (Tangentyere 1987-88:26), the issue of unemployment and consequent poverty is a critical one. However without training, employment is impossible. Under Section 8 of its Act, ADC was responsible for providing training for Aboriginal people to work in projects associated with its funding (Australia, Aboriginal Development Commission Act, 1980; ADC 1985a:17,19). In 1983 an ADC training officer, Dennis Florez, investigated Tangentyere's training needs and reported that Tangentyere required two training officer positions, and that the training of Tangentyere's members or clients was as important a training function as the training of its staff. ADC funded one of these positions, and in 1985-86 ABTA funded the construction of a training building at Tangentyere. Tangentyere has been able to provide a broad range of training, training support and work experience programmes, including four year apprenticeships. A major source of funding for training, however, was DAA's Special Works Program which provided twelve month work experience for previously unemployed town campers. It was a major blow to Tangentyere when DAA discontinued the Special Works Program in June 1987, and replaced it with a thirteen week work experience, Community Training Program, which has been of limited value to Alice Springs town campers.

ADC's response to the reduction of Tangentyere's capital budget, which resulted from the transfer of funds into recurrent budgets, was at first tolerant. It was prepared to be flexible and where possible accommodate Tangentyere's demands. Senior people within ADC at the time, including Mike Shegog the Alice Springs Regional Director and Charles Perkins the Chairman in Canberra, were committed enough to see that what Tangentyere was asking was actually reasonable and sensible, even if it wasn't strictly within ADC policy, and they were therefore prepared to support it. Those who had the power to block the transfer of funds from capital to recurrent budgets, therefore, were not prepared to do so. However there were warnings that as Tangentyere's recurrent funding grew, disquiet in Canberra was also growing.

ADC, a new national organisation, also experienced inevitable disorganisation and confusion with its new responsibilities and practices, and this may have contributed to its willingness to cooperate with Tangentyere as well.

By 1984 the ADC was attracting sufficient controversy nationally over its allocation of funding, for the House of Representatives to initiate an enquiry.⁶¹ In anticipation of this enquiry, in 1983-84 ADC carried out its own internal review to assess its programmes and policies. The major objective of this review was to strike a balance between the demand for services, and the limited resources available to meet this demand, and thus establish funding priorities (ADC 1985a:11; ADC 1987:2). The House of Representatives Standing Committee on Expenditure's "inquiry into the efficiency and effectiveness of" ADC (ADC 1985a:11), produced an interim report on 5 October 1984. This report contained thirty five recommendations, including the need for ADC to develop and maintain a Corporate Plan; to ensure that housing stock is better maintained by both providing training for tenants in house care and maintenance, and by introducing financial incentives; and to rationalise current Aboriginal housing funding by placing it all under ADC, including DAA's homemaker programme (ADC 1985b:15).

⁶¹ This controversy was not necessarily well based, and was often felt to be initiated by non-Aboriginal Australians who resented the idea of Aboriginal advancement.

The upshot of these two reviews was the establishment of ADC's Corporate Plan, formally approved by the Commissioners in June 1986 (ADC 1987:6). The major objective of this Plan was to

maximise the well-being, self-determination and self-management of Australian Aboriginals (ADC 1987: 3).

The Plan argued that if Aboriginal people were to achieve self-determination and self-management they would need to become economically independent. With economic independence as a major objective, ADC gave priority to capital funding and building up an asset base, rather than recurrent funding (ADC 1987: 3-5). Much to the detriment of housing bodies like town camps and Tangentyere, ADC applied its self-sufficiency objective to the Housing Grants Program which provided for

grants to incorporated Aboriginal organisations to enable them to plan, build, buy, upgrade and administer houses for Aboriginals, and at the same time to provide employment and training for Aboriginal workers (ADC 1985a: 17).

All recurrent funding to housing bodies and resource organisations such as Tangentyere, from that time, came under threat.

TANGENTYERE'S BUILDING PROGRAMME

In line with its objective to increase employment and training opportunities for town campers, in 1982 Tangentyere also persuaded ADC to allow it to establish its own building team. ADC's move to allow and fund Tangentyere's Works department to extend beyond a repairs and maintenance service and into a building service, provided a significant boost to employment and training opportunities for town campers and local Aboriginal labour. In particular, for the first time in Central Australia, Aboriginal town campers had access to apprenticeships in all of the building trades. Using a preferred tender arrangement between Tangentyere and the camps, and including in the contract funding for training Aboriginal apprentices and employing local unskilled Aboriginal labour, the first two houses were built in 1982, one at Basso's Farm and the other at Aper-Alwerrkngge. Throughout 1983 Tangentyere expanded its building capacity on the town camps, and into bush communities.

Town campers were thus once more involved in the building of their own houses, which had not occurred since its first building project, the seven community facilities in 1978; outside contractors had been used. But it began to run into problems. Firstly, in its eagerness to Aboriginalise the organisation and to provide employment opportunities for local Aboriginal people, Tangentyere overlooked, or was unable to meet the need for adequate training and supervision on a management level. Put simply, people were promoted beyond their competence, and were not given the necessary training to obtain skills. Secondly, it was extremely difficult for Tangentyere to supervise building projects, especially out bush. Tangentyere had to rely a lot on its tradesmen but was unable to compete commercially with building contractors for good builders. It found it difficult to find people with good building experience, capable of supervising and costing projects, prepared to work out bush and on town camps, and capable of training and working with Aboriginal people, all on a salary below that of builders in the general industry. At best some builders were incompetent, at worst out to defraud the organisation. Building programmes consistently went over budget, especially on bush jobs. The result was a demoralised work force and alarming losses. Thirdly, Tangentyere did not possess adequate financial management systems for it to adequately supply up to date information about such a large volume of activity. Subsequently it was unable to monitor its project budgets effectively or contain blow-outs on the costs of contracts before they had gone over budget.

The fourth problem that this project faced was that ADC had its own agenda in supporting it, an agenda different from Tangentyere's and town campers'. ADC supported the building programme on the basis that it envisaged Tangentyere becoming a major Aboriginal building company, a successful enterprise, which would ultimately fulfil its aim of reducing Aboriginal dependence on subsistence government funding grants. But this objective did not match Tangentyere's on a number of important issues including training, employment of local Aboriginal labour, and the development of maintenance and support services. ADC basically saw that the rest of Tangentyere's functions were irrelevant, and with the abolition of recurrent funding, would disappear. Tangentyere on the other hand, saw that the building programme could only work if it went hand in hand with these other programmes essential to its integrated approach.

By July 1984, after two years operation, Tangentyere's building programme was severely curtailed. By then the organisation was carrying a substantial debt of around \$200,000 from over-runs on construction contracts, and had to increase charges in some areas and reduce operations in others in order to balance its books.

THE NT GOVERNMENT

During this period the NT government quite relentlessly pursued its objective of assimilation, or monoculturalism, that is, denying any valid cultural difference or need between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Territorians. Some of this was directed specifically at town campers, in the areas of land, essential services and sacred sites.

Land

As has been discussed above, the freeze on new leases imposed in 1981 continued throughout this period, until 1986. Likewise, in the Territory in general, the government opposed Aboriginal land claims under the Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act 1976, and excisions for Aboriginal people on pastoral properties. As early as 1971 the Gibb Report, commissioned by the Liberal-Country Party government, had recommended that Aboriginal groups be given an area of land on which to live on pastoral properties, either by agreement with the pastoralist, or by excision (DAA 1975:6; Heppell 1979:183: Land Rights News, January 1988:29). However no such excisions had been made. This particularly affected many Arrernte town camp families who had been forced off their lands by the pastoral properties surrounding Alice Springs. To combat this, and because it was considered a vital issue by town campers, on 22 June 1984 these families formed Ingkerreke Council, an outstation resource centre, at Tangentyere, and began to move back onto their country. Ingkerreke has survived on donations, 'chuck in' by members, a CLC loan, and a small annual grant from DAA, and its services include the provision of transport, shelter in the form of tin sheds, generators, bore repairs, water carting and submission writing.

Essential Services

In November 1982 the NT government announced that as from July 1983, it would no longer pay essential service costs for communal areas on town camps. That is, it would no longer pay for power or water used in town camp street lights, sewerage pumps, playgrounds, park areas, community facilities or ablution blocks, despite the fact that the NT was given money for this purpose in the form of a direct grant from the Commonwealth government. The NT government called this a 'user pays' programme: the people who used the street lights would have to pay for them.

At the same time the NT government also ceased to install, maintain, read or bill water meters for individual households on the town camps. Instead it chose to bulk bill each camp. The irony of this move was that it was totally contrary to a 'user pays' system, a system that Tangentyere had always supported, arguing that individual households had to be responsible for their bills.

This dispute raged throughout 1983, 1984 and into 1985. When the camps had not paid the communal bills from July 1983, the Chief Minister of the NT, Ian Tuxworth, threatened to disconnect essential services to them. On 4 November 1983 the Federal Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, Clyde Holding, intervened and attacked the NT government.

What they are doing, in order to handle their own domestic situation is virtually double dipping, they are saying alright well we have got this money from the Commonwealth and although it was expressly agreed it was to include the provision of these services to these particular communities we are going to have another go at these communities. Well that is alright, I mean what will happen if he wants to engage in this level of confrontation is that we will finish up paying, I mean we are not going to leave Aboriginal communities without water - but we are not going to pay twice and that is going to affect the total fiscal relationship between the Commonwealth and the Northern Territory and I think to the disadvantage of the Northern Territory (Holding 1983).

Town campers and Tangentyere entered into lengthy discussions with NT government departments, the Department of Community Development (DCD), Transport and Works, and Northern Territory Electricity Commission (NTEC). These were difficult meetings. At one, held on 24 May 1985, Roger Brailsford⁶² from DCD, put forward what came to two options for the town camps, which probably came closest to revealing the NT government's true position. The first was that the NT would meet the costs of all communal areas except street lights

*on the proviso that such (ablution) blocks were sign posted as public in the usual manner, both inside and immediately outside the SPL.*⁶³

The second was that the NT resume the full subsidy to all communal services, as it was prior to June 1983

on the proviso that: A) toilets are signposted public, and B) that Tangentyere remove all Private Property signs from SPLs (Tangentyere Council, Minutes, 24 May 1985).

Tangentyere saw both these options as a further attempt by the NT government to undermine the right of town camps to exist as a legitimate form of community. Brailsford was encouraged to elaborate:

Roger Brailsford (DCD): The problem we've had in the past is people go around and have a look at the leases, and the first thing they see is a bloody great private property sign out the front.

*Geoff Shaw (Tangentyere): Who is this? People who want to go and take photos or Government departments?*⁶⁴

Eva Briscoe (Yarrenyty-Arterre): Government departments must be.

Roger Brailsford: Certainly, yes. I mean you know we're talking about a situation that exists between Tangentyere on the one hand and Government departments and Cabinet on the other. So sure (Tangentyere Council, Minutes, 24 May 1985).

Tangentyere rejected both options, and the issue was finally resolved in 1985 with the NT agreeing to pay for all essential services except street lights, and restoring water meters to individual houses.

Alice Springs DAA staff, including the Regional Director Geoff Hansen, attended the meetings, but strictly as a mediatory force. Hansen was adamant that DAA could not be seen to be taking sides in the dispute, despite his Minister's clear position. Such was Hansen's determination, that when Tangentyere produced the above ABC radio transcript of the Minister, supplied by DAA's own media personnel, Hansen argued that DAA media transcripts were for internal use only, and forbade his staff to make any further items available to Tangentyere.

⁶² Roger Brailsford had worked for the Welfare Branch of the NT, which became the Welfare Division of the NT, which became DAA. Following NT self-government in 1978 he worked for DCD, and he was seen by town campers to be well embedded with assimilationist policies.

⁶³ SPL stands for Special Purpose Lease.

⁶⁴ Town campers have a long history of opposing bus companies and taxi drivers taking tourist drives through their camps so tourists can take photos.

Sacred Sites

The third prong of the NT government's Aboriginal offensive during this time was an attack on sacred sites. Two incidents in particular affected Alice Springs traditional owners, most of whom were town campers. The first was Ntyarlikele-Tyarneme caterpillar site, a rocky outcrop which was a registered sacred site under NT Sacred Sites legislation. In 1982, in complete disregard to the site and Aboriginal culture, the NT government authorised that the site be bulldozed to make way for a road to the town's casino and other developments (Yeperenye Yeye, March 1983:18-19; Yeperenye Yeye, August 1983:36). As Thomas Stevens, traditional owner, explained to Yipirinya school children:

This next picture shows Dad and I standing at Ntyarlikele-Tyarneme. Well you can see that there's a road there now, but it never used to be like that. The Ntyarlike caterpillar belonging to this site was still alive before this road went through (Stevens 1984).

Then in 1983, following a flood in Alice Springs, the NT government announced that it would push ahead with a plan to develop a recreation / flood mitigation lake at Werlatye-Therre, another registered sacred site just north of the old Bungalow Aboriginal reserve, on the northern end of the city. Traditional owners occupied the site in April 1983 to guard it from threatened bulldozers (Yeperenye Yeye, August 1983:36). A joint Federal - Territory enquiry was held to break the impasse (Central Land Council 1984:31), and in September 1984 it found

that for a variety of environmental, hydrological, engineering and social factors the construction of a dam on the Todd River was totally unsound for either recreation or flood mitigation purposes (Alexander 1988).

Traditional owners and the NT government were able to agree on some flood mitigation recommendations, but these were then ignored by the government. Following a major flood in Alice Springs in the Easter of 1988, the NT government then, in a cynical attempt to rouse local racism, once more attacked traditional owners and sacred sites. The Chief Minister, Mr Steve Hatton announced:

"It is about time that we, as a community, started coming to terms with the competing interests of protecting a sacred site and protecting the lives and property of all the people of Alice Springs," Mr Hatton said on Friday. "I'm not going to have people drowned and millions of dollars of property lost for the lack of implementing an adequate and technically feasible solution." (Northern Territory News, 5 April 1988:6).

Roger Vale, the Legislative Assembly Speaker in the NT parliament joined in: *"The sacred site has prevented a flood mitigation dam being built in the northern end of the Todd River," an angry Mr Vale said. "As a result we have had this tragedy." (Sunday Territorian, 3 April 1988:5).*

The period of Tangentyere's expansion, overlapping with the establishment of the new Aboriginal bureaucracy, ADC, and the first period of the Hawke Federal Labor government, occurred during the formulation of new government policies as a variety of self-determination. Tangentyere flourished during these years, as it had the enthusiastic participation of the people, coupled with the relatively generous approach of the Federal government. But not all policy authorities accepted this approach to self-determination or self-management. In particular, the NT government, largely motivated by an older assimilation policy, were resistant to self-determination and therefore to the development of town camps and to Tangentyere.

Chapter Six

TANGENTYERE - AFTER 1985

From 1985 the Federal government's approach to Tangentyere, and to Aboriginal self-determination, changed. Tangentyere faced increasing resistance and opposition from the government regarding adequate programme funding. This change was due to policies of economic 'rationalisation', which although not new, became more fully applied after 1985. The Federal government and its bureaucracies, in turn, re-defined in practice at least, the policy of self-determination. Self-determination became instead a policy of self-management within a determined economic mainstreaming policy. The NT government, in continuation of its hostility to both town camps as separate entities and to Tangentyere Council, supported this mainstreaming enthusiastically, even though its earlier attempts at mainstreaming Aboriginal housing in the town had failed. While the Federal government was prepared to support, or at least not oppose the town camps, as long as they were economically rational, sections of the NT government wanted to abolish them.

I will show in this chapter how these directions of policy were carried through, firstly, by the Federal government reviewing organisations and then using the reviews to justify cutting finances; secondly, by the same government proposing that recurrent funding was a matter for local groups and communities, regardless of their inability to manage this; and thirdly, through the NT government's attempt to incorporate the town camps into elements of suburban life.

GOVERNMENT REVIEWS AND FUNDING CUTS

Within the four year period, 1985-89, Tangentyere was submitted to four separate external reviews: an ADC review in 1985 which produced the Dixon report in September 1985; an ADC commissioned Price Waterhouse review of the Administration and Finance departments in November 1985, which resulted from the ADC Alice Springs Regional Manager, Rob Jackson's rejection of the Dixon evaluation of these two sections; an ADC initiated combined funding agencies review, between December 1986 and March 1987, which was never completed; and a DAA commissioned Ernst and Whinney Services review, between July 1988 and May 1989. The first and last of these were particularly significant.

The first indication that ADC was about to 'rationalise' Tangentyere's funding and services came in April 1985, when the ADC Canberra office questioned Tangentyere's recurrent budget, requesting detailed information on all aspects of Tangentyere's operations. This was followed in May with a recommendation from ADC's senior staff in Canberra ⁶⁵ to the ADC Commissioners, that Tangentyere's recurrent funding be cut back by up to seventy five per cent from 1 July 1985, on the grounds that firstly, too much money was going into recurrent costs in Tangentyere; and secondly, some programmes being funded were not the responsibility of ADC. Similarly, ADC aimed to phase out all recurrent grants to the camps by 1 July 1988 (Tangentyere Council, Internal Note, 21 April 1986). Additionally, Tangentyere's operations were to be reviewed by an ADC consultant to assist it to identify where the cuts were to be made.

With the assistance of the ADC Alice Springs office, and a lot of effort, Tangentyere lobbied successfully for an independent review to be carried out before any of the funding cuts were implemented. ADC Canberra approved the current level of funding for six months, until 31 December 1985, pending this review. A review team of eight was established, headed by Rod Dixon as the independent

⁶⁵ General Manager Rob Winroe and Assistant General Manager, Housing Division, Bill Koller.

coordinator; ⁶⁶ including two Tangentyere management representatives, Geoff Shaw and Bob Durnan; but no ADC commissioners, and no representatives from Tangentyere's executive or the Alice Springs Combined Aboriginal Organisations.

The review was extensive and looked at every aspect of Tangentyere's functioning, not just ADC funded projects. Its report on 20 September 1985 made many recommendations for changes within Tangentyere, but its overall thrust was supportive of the programmes and approach to work, and tried to find ways to enable the survival and further development of those programmes (Tangentyere Council, Internal Note, 21 April 1986). The report commented favourably for example, on Tangentyere's excellent rate of rent collection - eighty six per cent (Dixon 1985:7,216).

- *average rentals charged and average rentals collected are, respectively, 171% and 207% of the national average for the ADC grants-in-aid housing programme ...*
- *average rentals charged and average rentals collected are, respectively, 486% and 594% of the regional average (Northern Territory - Central) (Dixon 1985:216).*

It found that ADC's stipulation that rents cover all housing recurrent costs (repairs and maintenance, administration, rates etc.), could, however, never be met, and indeed no welfare housing programme in the country was able to achieve this (Dixon 1985:7).

While it did recommend the discontinuation of ADC funds for some programmes, it did so on the basis that either these should first be funded adequately to operate as self-sufficient or enterprise programmes (for example, design department); or that alternate funds should first be negotiated and secured for their continuation, and that ADC should take responsibility for such negotiations. It argued for example, that ADC should negotiate with Department of Employment and Industrial Relations (DEIR) for funding for some Tangentyere training functions; and that DAA should fund some positions, for example, in the Community Development section, given that DAA was funding community advisors on other Aboriginal communities (Dixon 1985:12). In other cases, it recommended an increase or maintenance of ADC's current responsibility and funding, or a sharing of funding responsibility with other funding bodies, for example, land management (Dixon 1985:12), and training (Dixon 1985:127). The review also noted that

approximately 70 per cent of Tangentyere's Works Department recurrent budget and all its Land Management budget have been inaccurately allocated as 'recurrent' and could be capitalized subject to other recommendations (Dixon 1985:14).

⁶⁶ Dixon had wide experience working in the Canberra bureaucracy and for Aboriginal community organisations in the Kimberleys. At the time of the review he was lecturing in Aboriginal development studies at the Darwin Institute of Technology.

The review found that, contrary to the assertion that Tangentyere's recurrent costs were burgeoning unjustifiably, even with the inaccurate allocation of ADC funds as recurrent rather than capital items, the overall recurrent costs per individual house were decreasing (Dixon 1985:13). It argued that one would expect the opposite to occur, that as houses got older, repairs and maintenance costs would increase. Given the wear and tear that town camp houses endure, one would expect this to be particularly marked, however the opposite was occurring. ⁶⁷

The review argued that part of the process of keeping repairs and maintenance costs down was the continuation of an active preventative programme, including client training, homemakers, tenancy support, and an alcohol programme (Dixon 1985:8).

It recommended the establishment of a regional coordination committee made up of all Tangentyere's funding departments, DAA, ADC, DEIR, NT Health, NT Housing Commission and Department of Community Development; plus the Central Australian Aboriginal Congress, Tangentyere and others "to plan an integrated programme for service delivery to the Alice Springs town camps" (Dixon 1985:9). And it argued that, given Tangentyere's fragmented funding, each funding body should contribute an additional twelve and a half per cent of project budgets for administrative and accounting support (Dixon 1985:9). ⁶⁸

Following the review, ADC agreed to a second extension of six months funding, now until June 1986, so that alternate funding arrangements could be negotiated without disrupting Tangentyere's services. However the recommendations were largely ignored by ADC and the other government departments. Before negotiations began, even before ADC Commissioners were presented with the full findings of the review, the January to June 1986 budget was cut (Tangentyere Council, Letter, 20 November 1985). ⁶⁹ Then in April 1986, more funding cuts for the 1986-87 financial year were announced, in line with a twenty per cent funding reduction to the Central Australian region as a whole (Tangentyere Council, Minutes, 8 May 1986:3). The Alice Springs ADC office indicated not only that Tangentyere's recurrent budget was to be cut by 56.2%, but that ADC was to reallocate the town camps' budgets extensively, significantly increasing their capital allocation, but slashing their recurrent allocation by 96.6% (Tangentyere Council, Internal Note, 1986a).

⁶⁷ Kahlidi's (1987:202-3) 1987 survey of the town camps found that the average number of persons per room in town camp houses was more than twice as high as for town Housing Commission houses with Aboriginal occupants. It found that town camp houses were overcrowded with an average of 4.4 persons per bedroom.

⁶⁸ In 1985 Tangentyere was obtaining funding from 17 government, semi-government and non-government agencies to run its programmes for town campers (Dixon 1985:8).

⁶⁹ A cut of \$120,685 from that recommended, to \$390,000. With ADC Alice Springs support an extra \$40,000 was obtained, but a shortfall of \$80,000 remained (Tangentyere Council, Letter, 20 November 1985).

At a meeting of potential funders, ADC, DAA, DEIR and Department of Community Development, called by Tangentyere on 10 April 1986 to discuss the proposed cuts, each agency spelt out its position. Rob Jackson, Alice Springs Regional Manager of ADC, made it clear that he was not suggesting that Tangentyere's services were not "needed, necessary or required" (Tangentyere Council, Minutes, 10 April 1986), but that ADC could not accept funding responsibility for all of them. He argued

I am prepared to support the Building/Works program 100%, I am prepared to support the Design program 100%, no contribution to Land Management, no contribution to Community Development, no contribution to Training, and about 35% of the Administrative and Financial cost. In addition to that, \$600,000 in Capital Works (Tangentyere Council, Minutes, 10 April 1986).

DCD indicated that it was also facing a six per cent funding cut and could only manage to hold Tangentyere's current funding level; DAA that its programme only allowed it to consider supporting programmes currently under way, nothing new, except the Tangentyere Liquor Committee club programme and a percentage of the computerisation programme; and while DEIR indicated available funding for employment training, it was outside funding guidelines to fund a training officer position within Tangentyere (Tangentyere Council, Minutes, 10 April 1986). Because of the special needs of town campers, a training officer position - someone to support trainees and apprentices, provide remedial teaching and negotiate with training organisations - had been recognised as the fundamental training need of Tangentyere's since a report by ADC in 1983 on Tangentyere's training needs.

In short, all the funding bodies failed to offer adequate support, and once more DAA and ADC, the federal bureaucracies set up to meet Aboriginal needs and support Aboriginal initiatives, refused to act as advocates on Tangentyere's behalf. At the meeting, for example, neither DAA nor ADC encouraged DEIR to be more flexible in the allocation of its available funding, or to review the guidelines of its funding. The bureaucrats simply used their narrowly cast guidelines to justify inaction, and they were united against Tangentyere in this process.

A cut in the town camps recurrent budgets of 96.6% and in Tangentyere's recurrent budget by 56.2% would have resulted in real cuts to jobs and services, in administration, finance, community development (including rent collection and the bank), land management, training, cleaning, and repairs and maintenance, of more than seventy per cent (Tangentyere Council, Internal Note, 1 May 1986). Tangentyere's training programme, community development programme and most of the Land Management programme were all to be discontinued; grants for accounting and administration were to be halved to service only the Design and Works programmes; and all running costs, except insurance payments, of the sixteen town camps with leases were to be abandoned by ADC, resulting in a further job loss including thirty one part-time cleaners and yardsmen, the bank/rents clerk and research. Tangentyere estimated the total job loss to be twenty one full-time positions, thirteen of which were Aboriginal; and thirty four part-time positions, thirty three of which were Aboriginal (Tangentyere Council, Internal Note, 1986b). All but six of the Aboriginal positions were held by town camp residents, meaning that the cuts would result in the loss of thirty five per cent of total town camp employment overnight (Tangentyere Council, Internal Note, 1986b).

Not only were town campers' self-management capacities and independence being totally undermined with the whole town camp support, maintenance and management system under threat, but so were the considerable DAA and ADC capital investments in the camps, such as houses, ablution blocks, fences, landscaping, furniture, other improvements, tools and equipment, costing in excess of ten million dollars since 1977 (Tangentyere Council, Internal Note, 21 April 1986). Trained staff were at risk of dismissal and the fall in town camper living standards with such a loss in jobs and services would be catastrophic. The whole future of the town camps and Tangentyere was at stake.

Tangentyere called on Aboriginal people and organisations and their supporters in Alice Springs, to offer support in the form of pressure on ADC, DAA, DCD and DEIR to intervene in the crisis and establish an equitable funding arrangement. A rally was held on 1 May 1986, and Aboriginal spokespeople and NT ALP politicians expressed their concern and support, not only for Tangentyere but for the whole Central Australian region, as many communities were facing similar cuts. Four demands were ratified at the rally. The reductions to town camp services, in particular the loss of thirty six per cent of town campers' jobs, and ADC funding cuts to the region were condemned. They called on the NT Minister for Community Development to convene a meeting between the various ministers and agencies to solve the crisis; and lastly, they demanded that ADC continue funding until December 1986, or until alternate funding had been secured (Tangentyere Council, Internal Note, 1 May 1986).

The Combined Aboriginal Organisations of Alice Springs wrote to the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, drawing his attention to recent ADC policy changes, in particular the twenty per cent reduction of grants for Aboriginal housing in Central Australia; and the abandonment of its responsibility for subsidising the maintenance and management of housing stock, training, housing and tenancy support services to Alice Springs town campers, and for Tangentyere programmes. The Combined Aboriginal Organisations argued that these changes in ADC's Aboriginal housing policies were destructive and irresponsible and that ADC had become "out of tune with the needs and wishes of the Aboriginal people of Central Australia" (Combined Aboriginal Organisations, Letter, 7 May 1986). It called on the Minister to examine the legitimacy of such policy directions and to ensure Central Australian Aboriginal people, including town campers, are

supplied with adequate resources under conditions which enable them to achieve rapid social and economic development with true self-management and self-determination (Combined Aboriginal Organisations, Letter, 7 May 1986).

The following day the General Manager of ADC, Rob Winroe, met with town campers at Tangentyere. The meeting was a confused one. Winroe argued that ADC's primary role was to increase Aboriginal Australians' economic independence through the purchase of land holdings, houses and other assets, and creating enterprise opportunities. This Aboriginal independence, he argued, threatened non-Aboriginal Australians. In order to inhibit it therefore, other government departments united and refused to meet their own particular funding obligations so that ADC was forced to divert its scarce funds into these areas. As a consequence, ADC was left with less resources to invest in future Aboriginal economic independence. To counteract this, he argued, ADC was now withdrawing funding from Tangentyere in an endeavour to force other agencies to assume their proper funding responsibilities (Tangentyere Council, Minutes, 8 May 1986).

The argument was flawed. ADC had a responsibility to secure alternate funding before withdrawing; functions such as training and land management were ADC functions; and in taking over the DAA Housing Grants-in-Aid programme in 1981-82, ADC had taken on a separate responsibility for housing low income families,

which could not become part of its general enterprise and self-sufficiency programme.

The meeting was thrown into total confusion when Winroe denied that a decision had yet been made to inflict funding cuts on either Central Australia or Tangentyere. *Mervyn Franey [Tangentyere]: Jackson has said it. He hasn't said it may be this and it may be that, he said this is going to happen like that. Land management's gone, Community Development Officers are gone, the bank and most of administration is gone, training's gone. He has said that.*

...
Rob Winroe: ... We only wish that your concern was felt by the white bureaucrats and they had a tinge of conscience about what happens to this organisation. We don't want to do anything to upset Tangentyere. I've indicated this morning that we require solidarity from you for a fellow Aboriginal organisation that is trying to get others to recognise their responsibilities. ...

Barb Shaw [Tangentyere]: It's very difficult to promote solidarity amongst Aboriginal groups if you are going to have Aboriginal money cut back on this organisation to please white racists. There's lots of ways to attack racists, I don't think it should be done in a way that Aboriginal organisations will feel the crunch.

Rob Winroe: Don't you understand what I've been saying this morning. There is no cut backs.

Interjections

Rob Winroe: The Commissioners haven't met yet - they don't meet till June.

Peter Stuart [Tangentyere]: Then where does Jackson get his information from?

...
Rob Winroe: ... Your talking about what the officers are saying they will put to the Commissioners but the Commissioners can decide whatever way they like. Because it's an Aboriginal organisation that's how we work. One of the things is that we have to take your views back to them and say "these Aboriginal people are upset about this".

Johnny Carter [Tangentyere]: In other words, don't listen to Jackson.

Rob Winroe: No, no. He's doing his job in terms of trying to warn you and trying to get your support to pressure other agencies (Tangentyere Council, Minutes, 8 May 1986).

A second meeting was held at Tangentyere ten days later, this time with both Rob Winroe and Charles Perkins, Secretary of DAA, in attendance. Winroe informed Tangentyere that the Chairman of the Commission, Shirley Macpherson, had agreed to recommend to the Commissioners that Tangentyere's current level of funding continue for a further twelve months

to allow you to make these adjustments we're talking about in terms of who is responsible for what function in Tangentyere. Let me make it quite clear that no one is questioning the legitimacy of what you do. We realise you do very valuable work and all that. The Commission in making decisions does not reflect that it is not a worthwhile thing, it's just not within the Commission's responsibility (Tangentyere Council, Minutes, 18 May 1986).

Perkins reiterated

So what's going to happen, the good news is that everything's going to stay as is and we've got a whole year to work it out between government departments, yourselves and who's going to pick up responsibilities, like DAA, DEIR, Department of Community Services here in the NT, Department of Social Security those sorts of departments (Tangentyere Council, Minutes, 18 May 1986).

Despite the reprieve, Tangentyere was concerned that arguing for funding should not be left up to Tangentyere alone. Geoff Shaw spelt this out.

I want to raise that right through this whole exercise we've been the up-front people. We're just the recipients of all these dollars that are floating around. We've got 12 months to really get stuck in with ADC, DAA and the NT Government. I think there should be more correspondence floating between funding bodies like DAA and ADC, to the NT Government. What's happening is that we're the ones that are carrying the can, trying to get everybody to meet and we're writing off letters and they're coming back and telling us ... [they don't] want to have a joint meeting ... It has to be a couple of prongs approach, not just us mob doing it. ... Because in 12 months time we'll still be arguing with this mob [NT Government] and they think we're the ones arguing and trying to get funds because we're the ones that want the money. DAA and ADC should be much more strong in saying to the NT Government and say 'look, we're putting up this amount of money and you mob should be coming to the party too' in terms of TMPU ⁷⁰, [and] Training from DEIR. Cause they'll come and talk to us and they'll go away and write a report and say they can't possibly fund us. So what happens? (Tangentyere Council, Minutes, 18 May 1986).

Tangentyere was concerned that ADC become committed to this process, something it had so far failed to do. As Geoff Shaw indicated, "ADC was set up to argue with DAA for funds for housing" (Tangentyere Council, Minutes, 18 May 1986). But despite the 1985 review recommendation that ADC should approach DEIR and negotiate on Tangentyere's behalf for funding for its training officer position before ADC withdrew funds, Jackson acknowledged that there had not "been any specific representations as far as Tangentyere's concerned" (Tangentyere Council, Minutes, 18 May 1986). Perkins responded to this call, undertaking to set up a task force, "within the next week or so" of department people and their Ministers to "look at these funding responsibilities" (Tangentyere Council, Minutes, 18 May 1986). Again this had also been a review recommendation, but despite this, and Perkins' undertaking, such a task force was not established at this time.

ADC remained committed to its own policy, making no adjustment in the face of the stated needs of town campers or the lack of realism in its own stance. Self-determination became not town campers identifying their own needs and setting their own priorities, but town campers operating within guidelines established in Canberra. Under these guidelines, building new houses became a priority over the maintenance and management of existing ones. If a house fell into disrepair on the town camps, there was no funding for restoration or renovation, but there was funding to build a brand new one instead.

ADC stayed with its commitment to fund enterprises, reduce recurrent funding, and demand self-sufficiency. In its 1985-86 and again in its 1986-87 Annual Reports, it announced that ADC had achieved significant improvements in the recurrent expenditure component of the Housing Grants Program, having cut it from four million dollars in 1980-81, to \$3.7 million in 1985-86, to \$1.8 million in 1986-87, that is taking it from 18.3% of the Housing Grants Program, to 10.4%, to 5.4% (ADC 1987: 42; ADC 1988: 40). ADC also continued to ignore review recommendations that it was responsible for training and land management functions (Dixon 1985: 12,127).

⁷⁰ Town Maintenance and Public Utility (TMPU) includes funding for the garbage service and maintenance of communal ablution block and park services.

Tangentyere's funding problems were compounded in the twelve month reprieve period, to July 1987, by further threats of funding cuts from DAA, ADC and the NT government. In April 1987 Perkins, Secretary of DAA, informed the organisation *that Tangentyere was about to become "history", and that it was "over" as a town campers' organisation, and that Tangentyere should be reviewed by a major accounting firm and restructured as a major building enterprise ... (Tangentyere Council, Internal Note, February 1989).*

Subsequently, in October 1987, Tangentyere was notified that DAA funding for the year was

conditional upon Tangentyere's acceptance of an independent review and commitment to restructuring its operations so as to be less dependent on Government programs with a greater emphasis on entrepreneurial and training initiatives (Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, quoted in Tangentyere Council, Internal Note, February 1989).

Then, in December 1987, the NT government announced that "funding for the provision of services on town camps is being phased out" (NT Minister for Mines and Energy, quoted in Tangentyere Council, Internal Note, February 1989), and as if on cue, in February 1988 ADC announced further funding cuts (Tangentyere Council, Internal Note, February 1989).

For the third year in a row Tangentyere sent representatives to lobby in Canberra. On its return the delegation understood that some reasonable steps had been negotiated, including: limiting ADC cut backs; an agreement with DEET ⁷¹ to renegotiate Tangentyere's training package; support from DAA in negotiations with DEET; DAA funding for land management; and DAA assistance to negotiate with all Tangentyere's funding bodies. However, shortly after their return to Alice Springs, Tangentyere was informed by the Alice Springs DAA office that

no final decisions about [Tangentyere's] funding can be made until [the Minister] received reports on two proposed Reviews, namely a functional Review of Tangentyere and a review of local government funding in the NT (DAA, quoted in Tangentyere Council, Internal Note, February 1989).

DEET followed suit in May 1988, refusing to renegotiate a training package until DAA's review (Tangentyere Council, Internal Note, February 1989).

The next major problem became actually getting the review done. Despite assurances that it would be quick and take only six to eight weeks, it was to take until May 1989. DAA insisted on substantial control. It attempted to set the terms of reference and vetoed several of the most suitable applicant reviewers. Ernst & Whinney Services were chosen, despite Tangentyere's opposition to a review team with no Aboriginal cultural or social experience. However, while the review was critical of some services and systems at Tangentyere it clearly concluded that the "need for such an organisation is without question" (Ernst & Whinney 1989:1). Tangentyere has, it argued, the "ability to supply services that non-Aboriginal organisations would find extremely difficult" (Ernst & Whinney 1989:1). The review's major criticism of Tangentyere was in the area of administrative and accounts systems, and its solution was that DAA should fund a financial administrator at Tangentyere, who would "integrate the various systems necessary to produce greater efficiency" (Ernst & Whinney 1989:1).

⁷¹ Department of Employment and Industrial Relations (DEIR), was replaced by the Department of Education, Employment and Training (DEET).

Tangentyere was at odds with the report's recommendation that the financial administrator should determine the organisation's activities on the basis of 'financial suitability', for example, by subcontracting work on the basis of cost efficiency rather than utilising Aboriginal labour (Ernst & Whinney 1989: 45); and the emphasis on restructuring the organisation management by reducing the role of the elected Executive committee (Ernst & Whinney 1989: 39). But the report also argued in favour of Tangentyere in the following areas. Firstly, that contrary to ADC and DEET policy, neither mainstreaming nor further enterprising were realistic options for town camps or Tangentyere in the immediate future (Ernst & Whinney 1989: 36). Secondly, that town camps should join the CDEP programme (Ernst & Whinney 1989: 2).⁷² This was a programme that Tangentyere had been advocating, but which DAA had opposed for town campers. Thirdly, it agreed that funding should be allocated according to Tangentyere's own priorities, including recurrent funding for housing support services, rather than just capital funding for new houses (Ernst & Whinney 1989: 38). In fact the report argued that housing without relevant training and support systems would generate, rather than solve, town camper problems. Houses would ultimately become uninhabitable and require replacement (Ernst & Whinney 1989: 29). Fourthly, that funding guidelines, in particular those of DEET, should be more flexible so that they could be directed to meet real needs (Ernst & Whinney 1989: 3,47), and cover administrative costs to the organisation (Ernst & Whinney 1989: 10). Fifthly, that funding should be in three year blocks so that Tangentyere would be secure enough to plan ongoing programmes (Ernst & Whinney 1989: 38). And finally, that funding should be centralised to one or two agencies to simplify administration and reporting, but until that was possible, a Review Steering Committee of the various funding agencies should be established to coordinate funding, and pressure funding bodies on Tangentyere's behalf (Ernst & Whinney 1989: 36). The report recommended the "maintenance of a stable level of funding" (Ernst & Whinney 1989: 36), but no funding increase, except for the DAA funded administrator position. It argued that the gains made, if the above measures were implemented, would be sufficient, especially if Tangentyere could

determine the direction of funding expenditure. It will ensure needs are addressed rather than programs implemented (Ernst & Whinney 1989: 2).

Once again, however, the recommendations of the review were largely ignored. For Tangentyere, it proved yet another costly exercise in delay tactics. Tangentyere's experience was that long and protracted reviews and conflicts with funding bodies were costly, not only in terms of resources, but also in morale. At best, Tangentyere would be able to maintain things as they had been, there appeared no room for advance.

⁷² Community Development Employment Project, CDEP, was introduced in a few SA and WA communities in 1977, and reviewed in 1983. Communities who decide to participate in the project, opt to have individual unemployment benefits paid to the community in a lump sum, rather than to individuals. The community also receives a loading of up to twenty per cent to cover materials and administration, and community members are employed to carry out community works rather than receive money as unemployed people (DAA 1984:16).

A Committee of Funding Agencies, COFA, was however established, but once again Tangentyere found that it served as a vehicle to unite funding agency resistance to Tangentyere programmes, rather than as a vehicle to meet Tangentyere needs, as advocated in the review. Following a meeting on 20 August 1989, Bob Durnan was prompted to note that

much of the meeting was wasted by what appeared to be deliberate use of red herrings, obstructionism and sheer provocation (by DAA in particular). At times the alliance of DAA, DEET and DLH people on dredging up of old issues (which we thought had been dealt with and laid to rest by the 12 month DAA/Ernst & Whinney review) had overtones of a premeditated decision to render the meeting unproductive. The total effect was a severe demoralisation of Tangentyere personnel: having been besieged by funding agencies for over 4 years, and in particular, having had the last 12 months with the review draining much of our management resources etc, we now appear to find ourselves back in square one, with DAA and DLH both clearly on the attack and effectively egging on DEET to continue its eight years of guerilla warfare against Tangentyere receiving fair and adequate (and honest) treatment (Tangentyere Council, Internal Note, 20 August 1989).

Tangentyere believes that the funding bodies, in particular DAA, had hoped that the review would have argued in favour of mainstreaming, and in particular in favour of the NT government's scheme for the incorporation of town camps into mainstream local government bodies. This would have then justified their moves to dismantle a large part of Tangentyere's services, in favour of them being provided by the Alice Springs Town Council, in areas such as the maintenance and management of parks and gardens and public ablution blocks, and the provision of garbage services; thus reducing the autonomy of Tangentyere and, consequently reducing Tangentyere's ability to pressure them to honour their own funding responsibilities.

NT GOVERNMENT MAINSTREAMING AND COMMUNITY GOVERNMENT

Despite the rejection of the NT government's special housing project in Alice Springs after protests led by the Citizens for Civilised Living in 1979, that government continued to explore ways of reducing the development of a strong town camp system. A NT cabinet decision, dated 21/22 May 1981, on the "Development of a Strategy for the Provision of Camping Areas for Aboriginals in Darwin, Katherine, Tennant Creek and Alice Springs", sounded an early warning regarding government plans for town camps. Not only were all applications for town camp land tenure to be rejected "until adequate and rational use is made by Aboriginals of existing land grants", heralding the beginning of a freeze on camps which lasted in Alice Springs until 1986; but Municipal authorities were declared to be the responsible body for "the regulation of camping areas within Municipal boundaries". They were encouraged to take up this responsibility, to "formalise liaison with umbrella organisations and to employ Aboriginals to assist them in working with camp residents" (NT Government, Cabinet Decision, 21-22 May 1981).

From 1985, the NT government began more actively promoting local government administration of Aboriginal communities, whether isolated communities on Aboriginal land, or town camp communities within existing municipalities (Mowbray 1990:22). Under the NT Local Government Act there are two forms of local government. Municipal governments include cities, towns and shire councils, and Community governments include smaller communities such as Aboriginal settlements (NT, Legislative Assembly, 1989:2-3).

Local government is part of the NT's mainstreaming policy, officially adopted following NT elections in March 1987 (Staines 1990:5). The government mainstreamed service delivery, restructuring its departments, so that instead of having one or two which specifically acted on behalf of Aboriginal communities, each department became responsible for "providing its area of service to all Territorians including Aboriginals whether on communities or elsewhere, in an equal fashion" (Staines 1990:5). With the official adoption of this policy, the local government scheme was pushed with a new vigor. As the Minister for Local Government, Terry McCarthy, explained, "We have a mainstreaming policy and Local Government has to catch up with that" (Tangentyere Council, Minutes, 5 July 1990). In the NT, municipal governments have become the vehicle for mainstreaming Aboriginal services.

However the Aboriginal response to this scheme has not been favourable, both on bush communities and in town camps. The NT government's hostility to the Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act, in particular its provision for granting inalienable freehold title to Aboriginal land, is no secret (Dalrymple 1988). Under the Act, the NT government has had little access or influence over Aboriginal communities on Aboriginal land in Central Australia. However, through the community government scheme, the NT government gains greater access and control over bush communities. For example, it plays a significant role in the selection of staff employed by Community Councils (Mowbray 1989:13); it can intervene, and even negate local decisions, with little or no consultation (Mowbray 1989:14-15; Mowbray 1990:23); and it goes a long way toward negating the authority of traditional owners, given under the Commonwealth Land Rights legislation (Dalrymple 1988; Mowbray 1990:23). Rowse (1990) advances this analysis of the Community Government scheme and its critics. However, I shall limit my discussion to its effect on town campers and their resource organisations, which are not affected by the Federal land rights legislation.

For town campers the situation is slightly different, though no less threatened by the NT government's moves. While Tangentyere has been willing to consider incorporation as a Community Council, the NT government has refused this on the grounds that there can not be a local government within a local government (Tangentyere Council, Internal Note, 29 September 1988). "By definition an area can only be governed by a single statutory local government" (Staines 1990:12). The NT government is proposing, therefore, that the Alice Springs Town Council take control of municipal type services provided by Tangentyere on the town camps. ⁷³

In its promotion of the scheme, the NT government argues that it will avoid duplication of services such as garbage services, and even "community facilities / playing areas, public recreation and other possible areas" (Tangentyere Council, Minutes, 5 July 1990), and thus save money, and even improve the quality of service (Tangentyere Council, Internal Note, 29 September 1988).

The NT government also claims to oppose separate development, which is how it characterises Tangentyere with its provision of municipal services to a certain section of the community, "on racial grounds" (Tangentyere Council, Internal Note, 29 September 1988).

Separate development is not acceptable to the Northern Territory Government.

Elected Local Government must move towards providing an appropriate and equitable level of municipal services to all residents, whether they

⁷³ Similarly for other NT municipal centres including Tennant Creek, Katherine, Elliot and Borroloola.

are on Aboriginal Town Camps or not (NT, Legislative Assembly, 1989: 8).

There is apparently no provision for town camp communities to determine that this is really what they want.

The Alice Springs Town Council has supported Tangentyere's resistance to the move on the grounds that Tangentyere is much better able to provide services to the town camps, and also arguing that

nothing has been proved that there is duplication or that any of Tangentyere's services are those of the Town Council (Tangentyere Council, Minutes, 5 July 1990).

While the Minister is prepared to tolerate this, he does so only on the grounds that it is "a Town Council decision" (Tangentyere Council, Internal Note, 29 September 1988). He has stated that

Unless there's an agreement between the Local governing body and the Town Camps in an area to have the Town Camp Organisation delivering the services (I'm referring only to municipal services) it's not legitimate (Tangentyere Council, Internal Note, 29 September 1988).

Tangentyere and the Town Council have established the 'Alice Springs Aboriginal Town Camps Advisory Committee' to work on the matter.

Despite the fact that the NT government was attempting to transfer the authority vested by town campers into their organisation, into the hands of an outside body, the government does not see this as an attack on Aboriginal self-determination. It argues that Aboriginal people, including town campers, should have their elected representatives on the Town Council, and should ensure that the Council represents, and provides its services, to all members of the community, including themselves (Tangentyere Council, Internal Note, 29 September 1988). It claims that local government promotes "community self-management at a grassroots level" (NT, Legislative Assembly, 1989: 1), and the Minister labels opposition from Aboriginal groups as "divisive and confrontationist ... on matters of Aboriginal self-determination" (NT, Legislative Assembly, 1989: 4).

While the Minister stresses the NT government's policy is to "deliver services to Aborigines through mainstream services" (Tangentyere Council, Minutes, 5 July 1990), Mowbray points out that the NT government's mainstreaming of local government is designed to "to supplant Aboriginal-controlled organisations" (Mowbray 1990: 26), and is "a belated effort to counter power gained by town campers" (Mowbray 1990: 26). This, he concludes, is a revival of assimilation practices (Mowbray 1990: 26). Rowse (1990: 81) also argues that the autonomy of Tangentyere is under threat from this programme, and that it is a "betrayal of self-determination as towncampers have begun to experience it" (Rowse 1990: 75).

Tangentyere fears an alternate agenda which is primarily one of undermining the very structure and independence of the town camps as they have developed, opening them up; and undermining Tangentyere and Aboriginal initiatives and independence generally. Such fears may be well grounded. At a meeting with the Office of Local Government, the Alice Springs Town Council and Tangentyere, the Minister responsible for local government stated:

I am concerned that Tangentyere are developing separate to the community.

I would hope future town camps would be subdivisions to be serviced by Tangentyere for some functions, Town Council for others (for example, roads).

The minute taker then simply noted that:

The Minister talked for a while about his dream of opening up town camps, of how town camps will in time see the wisdom of joining the mainstream community (Tangentyere Council, Minutes, 5 July 1990).

Although the NT government, on being challenged by Tangentyere, has sought to distance itself from a discussion paper prepared by a consultant for the Office of Local Government, the sentiments of the paper are very similar to those expressed by the Minister. Its Executive Summary suggests that

only those parts of the leases set aside for residential development should be granted to the town camp organisation. Remaining areas including roads and common space and facilities should be freeholded to the relevant council.

These actions will ensure the primacy of local government, and reinforce NTG's mainstreaming policy (Frampton 1990: 1).⁷⁴

The document suggested that in late 1989 the Minister for Local Government proposed that for future town camps

the area to be leased should only embrace residential buildings and that roads, recreation space and other public areas should be freeholded to the local government council (Frampton 1990:2).

This would ensure services are provided by municipal governments rather than Aboriginal organisations, and thus stop separate development, and duplication of services (Frampton 1990:3); ensure the "eventual integration of the two 'communities'" (Frampton 1990:3,7); and open the way for private home ownership on town camps (Frampton 1990:12).⁷⁵

Opening up town camps, taking the control of their membership and development out of town campers' hands, in the words of a Tangentyere spokesperson, Barbara Shaw, "goes against everything that Tangentyere is all about" (Tangentyere Council, Minutes, 5 July 1990). Wenten Rubuntja shared this concern.

We got lost in the welfare days. ... Then we started Tangentyere Council. We picked up people out of the drain. We asked for Traditional Land from NT Government (Tangentyere Council, Minutes, 5 July 1990).

Wenten argued that the NT government and Tangentyere had to work together, and accused the NT of "not following the wishes of Aboriginal people," in particular regarding Tangentyere's application for new leases, and Sacred Site protection (Tangentyere Council, Minutes, 5 July 1990). He indicated the Aboriginal communities' lack of trust in the NT government, based on very recent experiences of the government undermining the authority and autonomy of Aboriginal people and their organisations.

In 1989, despite widespread Aboriginal opposition, the NT government amended its Sacred Site protection legislation, amongst other things removing ultimate control of site protection from Aboriginal custodians, and giving the Minister for Lands the final authority (Land Rights News, July 1989:4).

⁷⁴ NTG stands for NT government.

⁷⁵ NT government staff made this suggestion during the essential service dispute meetings in 1985. Roger Brailsford from the Department of Community Development suggested that Tangentyere remove all 'Private Property' signs from town camps, if the NT government were to pay for essential services to communal areas. See Chapter Five.

In April 1990 the NT Minister for Lands and Housing informed Tangentyere that outstanding town camper land needs would not be considered by the government until Tangentyere had consulted Mbantariya Council. Mbantariya Council claims to be the council of Alice Springs traditional owners, but it has always been controversial. For example, in 1985 it attempted to have secret negotiations with the NT government Chief Minister, Ian Tuxworth, over a large land grant for itself on the eastern side of the town. This was to create a "village concept to enable us to maintain traditional activities", including the possible housing of the controversial Aboriginal artifacts of the Strehlow collection; but in return was to allow the NT government to proceed with its plans to flood Werlatye-Therre, a sacred site on the northern side of the town, for a recreation lake and flood mitigation dam (Mbantariya Council, Minutes, 20 January 1985). One member taped the meeting and had minutes circulated to traditional owners who had not been invited to the meeting. During the meeting it was stressed that the government should

just talk to us mob not to anybody else. Just talk to Mbantariya mob, any Government mob. Not to come into Tangentyere, just us mob (Mbantariya Council, Minutes, 20 January 1985);

and the Chief Minister drafted a letter to this effect, which those present signed. Other complaints about Mbantariya include allegations that significant traditional owners, including members of town camps and of Tangentyere's executive, are not invited to, or notified of its meetings; it held no elections for office bearers for many years; its main organisers leave many traditional owners feeling intimidated and manipulated; and it is hostile to Tangentyere (Tangentyere Council, Letter, 5 April 1990). In an exchange between the NT Minister for Lands and Housing, and Tangentyere, the Minister explained that because Mbantariya is incorporated under Commonwealth legislation, it is "up to the Commonwealth to ensure that they follow the rules about meetings, voting etc. I can't investigate these allegations" (Tangentyere Council, Minutes, 18 April 1990). To which Geoff Shaw responded:

You are instructing us to negotiate but they don't hold proper meetings.

The Minister remained adamant.

They are legitimate as far as we are concerned (Tangentyere Council, Minutes, 18 April 1990).

It is worth noting that the NT government has never hesitated to question the legitimacy of the NT land councils, even though they are also incorporated under Commonwealth legislation. In a statement to the NT Legislative Assembly, prior to NT elections on 27 October 1990, the Chief Minister, Marshall Perron moved a motion calling on the Commonwealth to transfer administration of the Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act, 1976, to the NT. The motion considered that

many Aboriginal Territorians have a growing disaffection with Commonwealth administration of the Land Rights Act and have a desire for tribally based land titles and a Land Council system more in keeping with their aspirations (NT, Legislative Assembly, 1990).

Clearly NT support of Mbantariya Council is no more than shrewd backing of one of the few Aboriginal organisations which has shown itself to be amenable to the government's outlook.

A third example of NT government activities attempting to undermine the authority and autonomy of Aboriginal people and their organisations, is the NT government's challenge of Tangentyere's status as a public benevolent institution, and thus its eligibility for payroll tax exemption. This challenge, which began in 1985, has taken the form of a long legal process, involving considerable cost and resources, and with the case finally going to the Alice Springs Supreme Court in March 1990. On 4 May 1990 the Judge found that Tangentyere was indeed "a public benevolent institution" (Tangentyere Council Inc, v The Commissioner of Taxes, 4 May 1990), but the NT government has lodged an appeal against this ruling which is yet to be heard (Tangentyere Council Inc, v The Commissioner of Taxes, 4 May 1990; Land Rights News, July 1990:8; Nettheim 1990:11-12).

The Commonwealth government has approved the NT government's local government scheme. Rowse notes that in 1989 DAA declared its "support of the broad concept of the NT system of community government" (DAA, quoted in Rowse 1990:65). Subsequently, DAA NT has been silent and done nothing to defend town camper organisations like Tangentyere in Alice Springs, Julalikari Council in Tennant Creek, Gurungu Council in Elliot, and Mabunji Resource Association in Borroloola, from NT attempts to undermine Aboriginal control. Rowse points out, however, that while the Commonwealth government goes on directly subsidising a range of Aboriginal resource organisations like Tangentyere, the need to make "any commitment to the Community Government" (Rowse 1990:69-70) is postponed. This may be so, but for Tangentyere, operating as it does within the Alice Springs municipal area, positive support for its provision of municipal services is more urgent because all funding for these services comes through the NT government, not the Commonwealth.

TCHIP

In July 1988 the Federal and NT governments announced an Accelerated Infrastructure Programme for town camps, which later became known as the Town Campers Housing Infrastructure Programme, TCHIP (Heppell 1989:1). In the words of the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, TCHIP was to

remedy the town camp situation in the Territory on a once and for all basis over a three year period (Heppell 1989:1).

Given the history of Aboriginal housing in this country, it is extraordinary that a Minister for Aboriginal Affairs in 1988, could be naive enough to assume that a sharp injection of capital funds, on a one off basis, was the sort of action sought by Aboriginal people. It demonstrates profound ignorance of the history of Aboriginal housing; is totally contrary to the model developed by Tangentyere; and goes against Aboriginal housing research findings throughout the country. ⁷⁶ TCHIP is due to expire on 30 June 1991 (Staines 1990:4).

The programme involves \$30.3 million allocated to NT town camps, over three years; \$12 million from the Commonwealth government, and \$18 million from the NT government; and the NT is responsible for its administration (Heppell 1989:1). For Tangentyere the programme was initially fraught with problems. Firstly, it was for capital funding only, with no recurrent funding. Tangentyere has always tried to build houses only on the basis of recurrent funding being available to manage and maintain them. Secondly, much of Tangentyere's housing need in 1988 was dependent on groups first being granted land tenure. Without land tenure, no houses could be built for those in greatest need. Thirdly, Tangentyere believed that the town camp housing need is now secondary to that of outstations and excisions on pastoral leases. In fact, there is reason to believe that if, in particular, excisions were granted on pastoral properties surrounding Alice Springs, many traditional

⁷⁶ See Chapter Seven.

owners awaiting or occupying town camp housing, would return to their own country.

Tangentyere was, however, able to spend much of its allocation on the upgrading of essential services. Karnte was granted land tenure in 1988, and with the TCHIP funds, seven houses were built there in 1988, and a further five in 1989. In all the camps a total of thirteen new houses were built, and a duplex converted into a single house in 1988; and a total of seventeen houses, including the replacement of the five cottages originally constructed at Anthelk-Ewlpaye in 1973, were built in 1989. Tangentyere also allocated TCHIP funds to research, in particular a study of the "social and cultural impacts of development and special service provision ... on selected town camps" (Heppell 1989:41); outlining likely patterns of demographic change over the next ten years; identifying potential and existing problems; advising on optimal population densities; and specifying mechanisms by which Tangentyere could ensure maximum "self-regulation, self-reliance and autonomy for town camp communities" (Heppell 1989:41).

Although the NT had been involved in Aboriginal housing on Aboriginal communities, through ADC funds to the NT Housing Commission ⁷⁷ in 1987 (Tangentyere Council 1987-88: 35), the advent of TCHIP in 1988 gave the NT far greater power and influence over Aboriginal communities than it had previously enjoyed. While to date it has not been overwhelmingly successful in its attempts to undermine Tangentyere, it has, with DAA and ADC support, managed to ensure that similar town camper representative and resource organisations in other town centres are given little support, for example Gurungu Association in Elliot and Mabunji Resource Association in Borroloola. Julalikari Council, Tangentyere's equivalent in Tennant Creek, has been extremely critical of the allocation of TCHIP funds in these communities. In Borroloola, ADC, DAA and the Office of Local Government have, according to Julalikari, "conspired to push the Borroloola Town Camps on to the Borroloola Community Government Council" (Julalikari Council, Letter, 8 March 1989). The Borroloola Council has, in turn, been unable to either negotiate adequately with the town campers, or to involve them in programmes affecting their communities, let alone let them control such programmes. On receiving \$40,000 from ADC for urgent repairs and maintenance of camp houses, the Council immediately nominated outside contractors to do the work. No thought was given to town camp employment, except for the job of "cleaning out the Pit Vault Toilets" (Borroloola Community Government Council, Minutes, 22 February 1989). The Council minutes simply state that

It was decided that it would be cheaper to empty the Pit Vaults than to replace them with new ones. It was agreed that aboriginal labour be used wherever possible.

An unknown scribe has hand written across copies of the minutes sent down to Tangentyere:

Down the shit pits? It looks like the only labour the Aboriginal Community are getting out of these ADC funds are wages for getting down the shit pit.

While the Commonwealth government pushed its economic rationality line, it abandoned any commitment to recurrent funding, and thereby generally to housing maintenance and management services, and training. This was totally contrary to self-determination as Tangentyere understood it, that is that town campers themselves identify their needs and determine their priorities. It was not even a particularly economically rational position. If town campers were to become self-managing and economically independent, as the government desired, this required capital seeding, sufficient training and the capacity to maintain, manage and thus protect capital assets.

Commonwealth pressure on the NT government to increase its area of responsibility for Aboriginal communities, including town camp communities, without significant additional funds, gave the NT government greater access to, and responsibility for Aboriginal people generally, and gave its programmes of mainstreaming Aboriginal communities and services increased legitimacy. The NT government continues to undermine Aboriginal people, their culture, their lifestyle and their organisations.

⁷⁷ Now Department of Lands and Housing.

Chapter Seven

ABORIGINAL HOUSING - TANGENTYERE'S CONTRIBUTION

After its establishment in 1977, Tangentyere built on the work of the AHP, and has gone on to develop the most comprehensive and successful Aboriginal housing programme in this country. The broad definition that Tangentyere applies to Aboriginal housing is fundamental to, and underlies the success of this programme. It includes four significant elements. Firstly, that Aboriginal communities control their housing process, including the acquisition and layout of their land, the design and ongoing management of their housing. Secondly, that successful housing is dependent on good design and technology so that it is not only robust, but is sensitive to Aboriginal cultural values and life styles. Thirdly, that housing, no matter how well designed, will not be successful without ongoing management and maintenance support services. And finally, that successful housing goes beyond the building and maintenance of houses. Communities must also tackle other issues relevant to a healthy lifestyle, including the protection of important cultural values and sites, and confronting social problems like unemployment and alcohol abuse, if they are to remain successfully housed in the long term.

In contrast to this comprehensive, integrated approach to housing, governments and their agencies have approached the Aboriginal housing problem in a much more narrow and focussed manner. For governments, housing has been a logistics issue, and their activities have been directed at providing the maximum number of houses with the limited finances available.

Sanders (1989,1990) has characterised these two approaches as two different agendas. The second he calls the 'dominant' one, because it has the support of governments and their agencies. It focuses on numbers, on the notion of a "massive and urgent nationwide Aboriginal housing need" (Sanders 1989: 1). This agenda is statistically based, that is based on regular housing surveys which quantify the number of housing units and expenditure required to 'overcome' the Aboriginal housing problem. Over the last twenty years, with governments committed to the improvement of Aboriginal housing conditions, this agenda has led them to committing between twenty five and thirty five per cent of Aboriginal Affairs portfolio annual budgets to housing programmes (Sanders 1990: 41-2). But despite this vast expenditure, the housing need, as quantified by the DAA and ADC housing surveys, has grown rather than reduced.⁷⁸ As Sanders puts it,

provision of additional housing stock in a chase to overcome the enormous backlog of ever expanding Aboriginal housing need (Sanders 1989: 4).

Because the solution has been perceived simply in numbers, this agenda has led to extravagant and naive claims. The ALP pledged in its 1971 policy, "to properly house all Aboriginal families within a period of 10 years" (in Heppell 1979: 20). In 1983 ADC announced that it aimed to house all Aborigines by 1988 (ADC 1984: 3); and in 1988 the Federal Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, Gerry Hand, promised to "remedy the town camp situation in the Territory on a once and for all basis over a three year period" (Heppell 1989: 1). This agenda has consistently been shown to fail to achieve its goals.

⁷⁸ According to Sanders (1989, 1990) the backlog of housing units required rose from 11,000 to 16,200, between the years 1975 to 1988. See also ADC and DAA annual reports and Chapter Five.

The first agenda, referred to by Sanders as the alternate or marginal agenda, focuses not on numbers, but on process. It stresses the "extent to which housing must be appropriate to circumstances, and integrated with strategies for the provision and management of more basic community infrastructure" (Sanders 1989:1). According to this agenda, the improvement of housing or shelter must be part of an overall package of improved living conditions (Sanders 1989:6). Its proponents therefore see the Aboriginal housing problem not primarily as "one of overcoming a massive and urgent housing supply deficit, but rather one of providing and facilitating the management and maintenance" of appropriate shelter and services (Sanders 1989:7). Its emphasis is on the development of appropriately designed housing, and the provision of recurrent funding for maintenance, management and community support services. This is the agenda advocated by organisations like Tangentyere, which together with the work of several other researchers, has contributed to a steadily growing body of information or knowledge, that counteracts the dominant agenda advocated by governments and their agencies. I will look particularly at the work of Dillon (1986, 1988), Dillon & Savage (1988), and Memmott (1988a, 1988b, 1990), on Tangentyere's housing programme; Ross (1983, 1987) who studied Aboriginal housing issues in north west WA, and Nganampa Health Council et al (1987), whose study focussed on Aboriginal housing and health issues on the Pitjantjatjara Lands in SA. The work of these researchers follows on from that of Heppell (1979) and Heppell & Wigley (1981), both of whom were employed by the AHP in the 1970s, and who even then advocated the need for integrated community services, and may be seen as early advocates of the alternate agenda.

In their discussion of the development of the Mt Nancy camp in 1976, Heppell & Wigley (1981:111-113) highlighted the fact that for town campers, not only was housing only one of a number of issues they wished to confront, but it was not their priority issue. Their first concern was for land tenure, then security, then a community ablution block, then maintenance and management of that facility, and finally housing. (See Chapter Three.) Similarly, as they established Tangentyere, town campers made it clear that they saw the development of their communities as an issue that was far broader than the simple provision of housing. From the very beginning, obtaining land tenure, security, garbage collection, fire wood, power, water, sewerage, employment, education, maintenance and management, and sacred site protection were all raised as priorities. Over the years at Tangentyere, the need for transport, cultural activities and kinship relationships, and access to traditional lands on pastoral properties, have also been shown to have priority over housing in some circumstances. Memmott for example, argues that the value Central Australian Aboriginal people place on a house is unlikely to supersede the value they place on the importance of observing customary law after a death (Memmott 1990:136).

In an article aptly titled "Aboriginal Housing - Process not Product", Dillon (1986) asserts that the "provision of permanent housing for remote Aboriginal groups does not necessarily confer the benefits that policy-makers intend". In fact, if not properly implemented, it can instead result in "severe social disruption" (Dillon 1986:14). The challenge in developing Aboriginal housing programmes, is therefore, to improve people's living conditions without destroying the positive aspects of their traditional lifestyles. Dillon and Savage, both architects at Tangentyere, stress the need to take into account a number of sometimes conflicting factors when designing houses for traditional Aboriginal people (Dillon & Savage 1988; Dillon 1988:22). Architects need to respect traditional Aboriginal customs and values, which include a preference for outdoor living; kinship obligations and the practice of living in large extended family groups; a need to be able to see and hear, from their houses, general activities in the rest of the camp; privacy needs; and the significance of relationships with neighbouring houses. These issues result in the need to develop features like suitable outside living spaces, and durable finishes to cope with high occupancy rates.

At times these particular needs are difficult because of their apparent contradictions. For example, the need for visibility throughout the camp, and yet for privacy; or the need to develop outside living spaces and yet a strong preference expressed for conventional-looking houses. In Alice Springs non-Aboriginal housing typically features no development of outside living spaces, but high energy consuming, internally oriented, air-conditioned houses. Architects must also take into account the Central Australian arid climate with its extremes of temperature, both hot and cold; an unfamiliarity with household technology; security needs; a high level of social problems; budgetary constraints both for the original building and its ongoing management, maintenance, and energy use; and constraints to do with availability of materials. Many of these issues were first raised by Heppell & Wigley (1981).

Memcott (1988a, 1988b, 1990) has carried out research on Tangentyere's housing programme, and has been involved in anthropological research of traditional Aboriginal living patterns, or domiciliary practices, with the objective of developing housing programmes that will reduce rather than promote stress, and assisting Aboriginal tenants understand the consequences associated with permanent housing so that they can control the necessary adjustments (Memcott 1988a: 40; Memcott 1990: 118). This includes examining different cultural constructs of privacy and crowding; traditional Aboriginal beliefs regarding health and sickness which do not always conform to household hygiene; kinship obligations and sharing; the high mobility of individuals and families both between houses and between communities; and traditional Aboriginal practices surrounding conflict and death. Central Australian Aboriginal people, for example, are required by traditional law to follow certain practices following the death of a family or community member. These practices are called in English, 'sorry business', and involve people moving away from the living area of the deceased person for a period of time, and the person's name not being mentioned. Traditionally the deceased person's belongings were also destroyed by fire. In today's times the conflict between the demands of this practice, and permanent housing, are often stressful. Houses cannot be abandoned or burnt, but nor can they be lived in. Through Tangentyere, Alice Springs town campers have developed a number of practices which go some way towards meeting the demands of both cultures. For example, houses may be vacated and locked up for a period, and then smoked, or repainted, making it possible for house members to return. In some instances, when it is deemed impossible for the original household to return, the camp may orchestrate a general house exchange, so that the original household is housed elsewhere and another household moved into the house. Sometimes, depending on traditional relationships, this swapping of houses may involve more than one camp.

Memcott has also documented Tangentyere's house designing consultation process, which includes town campers being actively involved in determining the layout of the lease, the number of houses to be built at any one time and the allocation of those houses. Tangentyere's architects consult with prospective tenants to design the houses, and part of this consultation process involves tenants being taken to inspect existing houses, of different designs, and discussing their features with architects and residents. In some cases existing house designs are accepted completely; in others existing designs are used after minor alterations; and in others a new design is developed. He has compiled a comprehensive record of the development of each of the 167 Alice Springs town camp houses built by the end of 1989, including the year they were built, and major renovations or extensions. The purpose of this inventory is to assist in the monitoring of particular house designs and technologies, and the evaluation of their successes and failures.

Memcott (1990: 45) concludes that Tangentyere, and its counterpart in Tennant Creek, Julalikari Council,
should not only be encouraged and thanked, but regarded as experimental models of self-determined management that are of national significance and that might be studied and adapted for use in other regions and states (Memcott 1988a: 45).

Alice Springs Aboriginal town camp communities are not alone in insisting that the provision of housing is only one of a whole range of needs that they have. Sanders (1990: 44) argues that as early as 1973, W.D. Scott's study of national Aboriginal housing needs had questioned the need for housing as Europeans view it, for traditional Aboriginal communities, arguing instead that their needs were, to quote Scott,
more related to mobility, recognition of land tenure, (and) maintenance of community health standards (Sanders 1990: 44).

Two other studies of traditional Aboriginal housing have been carried out in recent years, and the findings and recommendations of these studies have been very supportive of the sorts of programmes developed at Tangentyere. Most significantly, they emphasise the importance of Aboriginal people initiating and being in control of the process; careful design, including the development of outside living areas; and the provision of ongoing support services. Like Tangentyere, both reinforce the view that illplanned housing without support services will not have the desired effect of housing people and improving their life style, but will result in stress and health risks.

In 1986-87 Nganampa Health Council carried out a study of Pitjantjatjara community needs from an environmental and public health perspective. The UPK report, as the study became known, examined in detail the "living conditions and facilities of ten communities" (Nganampa Health Council et al 1987: 1), and identified nine factors as significant community needs if community health was to be improved. In order of priority, these are: washing people, washing clothes and bedding, waste removal, nutrition, reducing crowding, separating dogs and children, dust control, temperature control and reducing trauma (Nganampa Health Council et al 1987: 2). Housing as such, is not on this list.

The report found that houses, per se, did "not improve health" (Nganampa Health Council et al 1987: 51), but that "some of the things houses can provide if well designed and maintained MIGHT enable people to improve their health" (Nganampa Health Council et al 1987: 51). These essential 'things' required by Pitjantjatjara people, if they "are to be able to participate in the nine healthy living practices" (Pholeros 1990: 11), mentioned above, and thus improve their health, were referred to as 'health hardware' by the report, and included such things as working generators to produce power for a bore pump, water, pump, pipes, water tank, hot water system, taps in working order, sinks and plugs, working drains to remove waste, clean towels and clothes, soap and other cleaning materials (Pholeros 1990: 11).

Badly managed and maintained housing "not only no longer provides health hardware ... but will be a real health hazard" (Nganampa Health Council et al 1987: 52), and therefore the report stressed that:

Maintaining the asset (and ... health hardware facilities) is as important if not more important than providing the original asset (Nganampa Health Council et al 1987: 52).

Although the report found that Pitjantjatjara people in the study used houses in a significantly different way to non-Aboriginal people, for example it found that eighty per cent of the people spent seventy per cent of their time living on the outside rather than inside their houses, it could not identify an 'ideal' house design that could be used as a prototype. It argued instead that the essential point of the house was its provision of health hardware. It agreed with the general proposition that houses should be designed to meet the people's needs, and included here the need for the area outside the house to be well designed and developed, but found that often people's real, or most basic needs for such things as water, or toilets that work, were overlooked. These basic health and safety requirements could only be met by adequate management, repair and maintenance programmes. They were less dependent on the house design. It found that under current government housing funding guidelines, including no funding for consultation or maintenance of the house, no amount of increased funding for new housing was likely to result in an increase in the total number of habitable houses over time. Put simply, as new houses are built, others will fall into disrepair and become health hazards and be abandoned. Unless governments and their agencies reconsider their funding guidelines, this process will continue (Nganampa Health Council et al 1987:51-52; Pholeros 1990:11-13).

Ross's 1987 study on Aboriginal housing needs resulted from research with Aboriginal people in northwest Australia in 1980-81 (Ross 1987:9). Like the UPK report, she found that Aboriginal people use houses differently from non-Aboriginal people, and that they also differ significantly from one another in their use of, and priorities in housing (Ross 1987:151). She argues that if housing programmes are to be successfully implemented for Aboriginal people, not only must they be properly consulted about their needs, they must have control over the decision making process (Ross 1987:152). In WA, where land tenure has been denied Aboriginal people, consultation has often been ignored by governments and their agencies.

Ross's study raises the need for Aboriginal people to be given the information, time and assistance necessary to decide what sort of housing they need, including whether they actually want housing in the first place (Ross 1987:152). She argues (Ross 1987:169) that some people may choose to remain in traditional shelters if they can be supplied with essential services, in particular water, separately. Campers should not be obliged to accept a house, if what they really want is water or security. Ross argues that issues such as land ownership, management responsibilities, and rent charges, are important things to be understood by future tenants, and important things to be considered in the design brief (Ross 1987:159). She also found that a successful housing programme involved the help of a homemaker services after the people had moved into their houses - rent collection was good and tenants' employment improved (Ross 1987:163). Ross concludes that despite the extra time and costs involved in long negotiations, the results in terms of better rent payments, houses better able to cope with the high wear and tear, less repairs and maintenance, fewer abandoned dwellings, and houses remaining habitable, made this process cost effective in the long term (Ross 1987:164-165,169).

The need for culturally sensitive design work is not confined to traditionally oriented Aboriginal people in Central Australia. Spence (1988:94) indicates that architects designing housing for Aboriginal families in Redfern, Sydney, also found that frequent overcrowding created a need for resilient materials in houses; that residents had a preference for spending a lot of time outside the house, and therefore particular attention had to be directed to the development of that area; tenants generally had low personal incomes and therefore energy efficient houses were necessary to avoid high electricity bills; and tenants emphasised their security needs. Interestingly, as in Central Australia, Sydney Aboriginal people also expressed a desire for conventional looking houses, though architects greeted a recent departure from the most conventional options available as a sign of a new cultural confidence, likening it to recent developments in urban Aboriginal art.

In the late 1980s two videos were produced in Central Australia by Aboriginal people, to assist Aboriginal communities regain control of their housing and related health and lifestyle problems. The first, House Business, was produced by Tangentyere in 1987, and the second U.P.K. Report of Uwankara Palyanyku Kanyintjaku, was produced by Nganampa Health Council in 1989, and arose out of the 1987 report of the same name.

As both of these video's are an attempt to return control to Aboriginal people, both include a discussion of earlier times when Aboriginal people were in full control of their shelter needs. "In the old days, people had good management and looked after everything, food, places, water and game," the narrator in the UPK video says.

Nowadays people live a bit differently - store, Toyota, rifle, windmill tank, house, flush toilet, lots of taps, flour, sugar, tin of meat, tea leaf, grader, truck, money, ... [and] ... Council, Chairman, Executive, ... book keeper, visitors centre, policeman, budget, meeting, telephone, health service.

Therefore new management strategies have to be worked out.

Because there are now so many things, people need to think about and plan a new way of living. If there is no story [plan] a lot of problems arise and people suffer. So Anangu need to make a new plan. A direct line ... This is called in English, "Plan of Management". You must make the road first. Think about it, talk about it. Get your advisors to discuss it with you.

Geoff Shaw, General Manager of Tangentyere and narrator in Tangentyere video, House Business, opens with the following statement:

In the early days people made their own wiltja, their own wirlie, their own humpy. They knew where to get the right material, how to build it, which way to face their wiltja, and how to stop the rain and wind from coming in. Today everything's changed. Today, we've got a lot of worry with houses.

The video sets out, therefore, "to show you ways you can help your own communities with Aboriginal housing, sort out your own housing problems for yourselves", that is, to return to Aboriginal people the control they once had over their shelter needs, to allow them once more to be self-determining.

The Tangentyere video was produced to assist communities contemplating housing programmes, by providing information on the sorts of issues they need to consider before the event. It was based on the assumption that with information on the consequences of permanent housing, communities will better be able to anticipate problems and either avoid or prepare for them. For example, if the community does not have a large water supply, or if it does not have an available plumbing service, it should not consider flush toilets, but stay with the old pit ones. Similarly, houses mean rent and bills. If people do not want to pay rent, or are unable to do so, they should not build houses. The community will also need to consider how it is going

to help tenants budget for and pay rent and bills, and to provide for repairs and maintenance.

It suggests that the first decision a community must make, is to choose between humpies, tin sheds and houses. Shaw outlines the good aspects of humpies, with no rent or electricity bills, not much cleaning, kids don't need to be watched so much, families can shift about more easily, and humpies are warm while houses are sometimes cold. On the other hand, humpies may mean a struggle to get water, toilets and showers, to keep dry in the wet, lack security for locking up things, and make it harder to keep clean, which can lead to kids getting sick. Tin sheds result in small rents and no bills. They are easy to look after, some can be moved around reasonably easily, and they are cheaper to build which is an advantage if there is not enough money for brick houses. However they are hot in summer and cold in winter, though Thomas Stevens demonstrates on the video that with careful siting, a wind break, a pot belly stove, access to water, planting trees and vines, and creating outside living spaces, he has been able to keep his tin sheds comfortable, warm in winter and cool in summer.

The second major decision the Community must make is to decide on a 'town' plan. To plan for roads, houses, clinic, store, essential services, school and even future development. Then it must think about, and get expert advice on choosing the right sort of housing. The video raises a number of issues a community will need to bear in mind: the number of rooms for a house; temperature control; the area outside and around the house and planting; suitable windows and window protections; security; toilets, bathrooms and laundries, making the point that flush toilets are not a good idea if the community hasn't a lot of water, or a reliable and affordable plumbing service; and working with architects and builders. The fourth issue discussed is particularly relevant, and deals with the sorts of problems and issues people will need to confront once they have housing. Things like furniture and equipment the householders will need to buy; paying rent and other bills; budgeting; educating household members about not wasting water and electricity; repairs and maintenance, including the community organising a repairs and maintenance programme; alcohol problems; homemakers and learning about household technology like electric stoves; a system of spare keys; and finally, dealing with traditional obligations that conflict with living in a permanent house, such as sorry business.

The Nganampa Health Council video, like the report, provides specific recommendations on such things as an effective system for reporting maintenance problems. It stresses that it is essential that some maintenance needs, in particular those related to community safety, are attended to immediately. Water services like toilets and drains, and dangerous electrical faults come into this category. Because community health, in particular the nine factors identified by the report, are dependent on the supply of power, water and waste removal, and the supply and maintenance of health hardware items like pumps, taps, baths, plugs and soap, community maintenance programmes should be well organised and effective, and the primary responsibility of community managers.

In the light of the failure of the dominant agenda to achieve its own goals, and the success of the alternate agenda such as Tangentyere's, to house, manage and maintain housing stock, and provide employment, training and other social supports, it is to be hoped that the alternate agenda will in the future receive more support from governments and their officials.

Government's must realise that people who are housed, but without available housing support services, will not remain housed, and the capital investment of the housing will quickly deteriorate. For others, the concern may be more that people who are inappropriately housed, without support services, will not experience the benefits for which the housing was designed, but instead experience increased stress and health risks, until they are forced to abandon the housing, which is demoralising and disempowering for the Aboriginal people involved, and politically damaging for governments whose programmes allow this to happen.

Chapter Eight

CONCLUSION

Aboriginal town camps or fringe camps developed around Alice Springs in Central Australia in the 1880s, as a direct consequence of the invasion and occupation of Aboriginal lands by non-Aboriginal settlers. They reflected both the way in which non-Aboriginal people attempted to deal with this 'problem' of an indigenous population, and how Aboriginal people responded and resisted. Throughout the 1900s Governments and their agencies perceived the town camps as undesirable and developed strategies to remove them, but all attempts to do so failed.

Tangentyere developed in 1977 as a product of the town camper's struggle for recognition and basic rights. Through Tangentyere, town campers have developed a model of housing and community development which is based on their right and endeavour for self-determination, at least to the level of the Australian government's own definition of that concept:

Self-determination means Aboriginal people having the authority, resources and capacity to control the future of their own communities within the legal structure common to all Australians (Australia, House of Representatives Standing Committee On Aboriginal Affairs 1989: 3).

The four key elements of Tangentyere's programme are: that Aboriginal town campers control the development of their communities; that housing and other camp developments are carefully designed to fit the lifestyles of their Aboriginal residents; that adequate housing support services are developed; and that housing is integrated into a whole range of town camp community needs and priorities, including employment, training, alcohol problems and cultural maintenance. The need for ongoing research underlies these key elements.

Australian and NT governments and their agencies have been threatened by this endeavour and opposed aspects of it. They have continued to do this despite the fact that government attempts to otherwise house town camp people have been rejected or failed; and despite the fact that Tangentyere has demonstrated significant success in designing, constructing, maintaining and managing houses and camp facilities, and in providing essential town camp housing and social support services. Measures of Tangentyere's success include its high rate of rent collection - eighty six per cent- which is 207% and 594% higher than the average for ADC's grants-in-aid housing programme nationally and regionally respectively (Dixon 1985:216); and the reduction in house maintenance costs, which is attributed to successful preventative programmes (Dixon 1985:13). Researchers in the area of Aboriginal housing have also endorsed Tangentyere's approach. In fact, even reviews initiated by government agencies with the aim of curtailing Tangentyere's activities have only been critical of some details of its operation, and have consistently supported its overall programme.

Governments and their agencies have rejected Tangentyere's broad agenda for political reasons, on the grounds that it draws in many issues which they see as nothing to do with housing, for example the preservation of sacred sites; but also because they consistently fail to approach their funding responsibilities in a comprehensive and integrated way. They do not recognise the housing process as Aboriginal people have defined it, that is the process of providing housing, integrated with related needs such as employment, training, repairs and maintenance, old people's needs and grog problems. By rejecting this agenda for their own narrow one, with the provision of capital funding only, governments are ensuring the gradual deterioration of camp assets, and the inevitable consequences that follow on from that.

This action and its result, also demonstrates the consequence of governments and their officials not having a clear understanding of, or commitment to, the concept of Aboriginal self-determination.

Town campers, through their organisation Tangentyere Council, have demonstrated the value of Aboriginal self-determination. By taking control of their own lives, their land, housing and services, and by determining their own priorities, town campers have been able to solve, in just a few years, a problem that governments had struggled with for many.

The mythology of racism in this country portrays Aboriginal people as people who demand and waste services, particularly houses. Non-Aboriginal Australians grow up hearing the story of how Aboriginal people burn the floor boards of their houses. No explanation is given for this phenomena, it is presumed that they are too lazy or ungrateful or stupid to go outside and collect the fire wood. It is ironical that in reality it is Aboriginal people who are demanding an inherently conservative agenda, of preserving and maintaining what they have, and having to resist the attempts of governments and their agencies to impose new houses on them without the necessary support programmes.

The solutions for Alice Springs town campers are simple. They include:

- that governments and their agencies accept the right of the town camps to exist and develop;
- that governments and their agencies acknowledge Tangentyere Council with its broad and comprehensive agenda, and that it is a successful housing organisation and a responsible representative agency for town campers;
- that governments and their agencies adjust their funding arrangements accordingly:
 - to support this integrated programme, thereby reducing the number of funding agencies with which town campers must negotiate;
 - allowing Tangentyere and the camps to determine the allocation between recurrent and capital funding, though all the while remaining accountable for proper expenditure;
 - providing medium term funding, on a three year basis, thereby enabling Tangentyere to develop long term programmes with some security, while remaining accountable in the usual way for public money expenditure.

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