

Concurrent Session 3: Joint NSA/ANTF Session: Nutrition and Aboriginal Health

The politics of nutrition in remote communities

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Background - In 1998 an 'Incomes and Expenditure Study' on the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara (APY) Lands in the North-west of SA showed that Anangu in the communities did not have sufficient disposable incomes to access affordable healthy food. The Anangu community controlled regional organisations on the Lands commissioned a team to develop a strategy for their eight community-owned stores to address this problem.

Objective - Given that 85% of the residents live on some form of social security (including CDEP) and in an environment of increasing rates of 'life-style illnesses' the consultations led to the development of a regional stores policy aimed at providing healthy food options while reducing costs and improving management systems in the community stores. The 'Mai Wiru Regional Stores Policy' was adopted by the regional councils in 2001, and Nganampa Health Council received funding support from DoHA in 2002 to implement the Policy across the Lands.

Design - The design and implementation strategy for the Policy is based on a community development approach requiring significant changes to the operations of the stores while leaving them under the ownership and management of the local communities. The Mai Wiru Stores Unit was established within the Environmental and Public Health section of Nganampa Health Council employing a full-time nutritionist, a retail support manager, several Anangu Project Officers and a community development worker.

Outcome - As a single purchasing group the stores have negotiated Preferred Supplier Agreements. Improved management, recruitment and in-store financial systems have been implemented. There is an increase in the range of healthy foods. Plus education and training of the Anangu governing bodies.

Conclusion - Increased support for Aboriginal community generated initiatives by all governments is necessary if an improved health status of residents in remote communities is to be achieved.

Improving the nutritional profile of remote indigenous stores

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Background - On the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara Lands (APY) in the North West of South Australia the Mai Wiru Regional Stores Policy has been in effect since early 2006. It is a community developed and driven policy that is supported with Preferred Supplier Agreements, the Mai Wiru Support Unit and the Mai Wiru Steering Committee.

Objective - The goal of the Mai Wiru Regional Stores Policy is to improve the health and wellbeing of Indigenous persons living on the APY Lands. As 90 – 95% of daily energy intake is obtained from these remote Aboriginal community stores it is vital that the Mai Wiru stores be healthy stores.

Design - Monitoring the Top 10 Seller List overtime, is an effective tool for observing the impact of the Mai Wiru Stores Policy. To improve the nutritional profile of this list it is important to take into account the food security challenges that Indigenous people living in remote communities face on a daily basis.

Outcomes - Since implementation of the store policy in 2006, action taken by Anangu, the stores support unit and store managers have seen a nutritional improvement in the stores product range. Mai Wiru stores have become healthier by reducing access to nutritionally poor products and increasing access to nutritionally superior foods by selling fruit and vegetables as close to landed cost as possible, and even in some cases below.

Conclusion - This community driven and supported policy has enabled positive changes to occur in remote Aboriginal community stores.