

COMMUNITY WORKFORCE PLAN
IYARRKA -
IMANPA, MUTITJULU AND
KALTUKATJARA (DOCKER RIVER)



Legal Disclaimer

This report has been prepared by Desert Knowledge Australia on behalf of the Northern Territory Government. The views and conclusions expressed in this report are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views, policies, or positions of any other affiliated body or organisation.

Copyright in this report and its contents is owned by Desert Knowledge Australia unless otherwise stated. No part of this publication may be reproduced, distributed, or transmitted in any form or by any means without prior written permission, except as permitted under the Copyright Act 1968 (Commonwealth).

This report may include confidential information provided by third parties. Such material is included with the consent of the relevant contributors and must not be disclosed, reproduced, or used for any other purpose without the express written approval of the original owner of that information.

While every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy and completeness of the information contained in this report, Desert Knowledge Australia provides no representation or warranty as to the reliability, currency, or suitability of the information for any particular purpose. To the maximum extent permitted by law, Desert Knowledge Australia disclaims all liability (including, without limitation, liability in negligence) for any expenses, losses, damages, or costs that may be incurred as a result of the use of or reliance upon the information contained in this report.

This report is provided for general informational purposes only. Any use of this report, including by third parties, is at the user's own risk. Desert Knowledge Australia accepts no responsibility or liability to any party for any loss, damage, or consequences arising from reliance on or use of the information contained in this report.

This disclaimer, and any disputes arising out of or in connection with the report, shall be governed by and construed in accordance with the laws of the Northern Territory, Australia. The courts of the Northern Territory shall have exclusive jurisdiction to settle any such disputes.

Contents

Introduction	4
Purpose of the Report	4
Report Format	4
Data Collection Framework	6
Data Collection and Review	6
Methodological Limitations	7
Executive Summary.....	8
Introduction	10
Step 1: Community Context.....	10
Community Profiles and Demographics	10
Infrastructure and Services	12
Step 2: Workforce Research	18
Target Group	18
Target Group Definition.....	18
2.1 Workforce Demographics	19
Working Age Population.....	19
Labour Force Participation	19
Employment Status	20
Community Development Program (CDP) Participants	21
Jobseeker Recipients	23
Individual Incomes.....	24
2.2 Skills in the Community	26
Education.....	26
Literacy and Numeracy.....	28
Vocational Education and Training (VET)	29
Engagement in Tertiary Education	33
Qualifications.....	33
2.3 Employment.....	34
Key Employment Industries.....	35
Occupational Distribution	36
Workforce Demand	37
2.4 Economic Context.....	42
Gross Regional Product (GRP)	43
Cost of Living in Remote Communities	46

Transportation Costs	47
Regional Household Expenditure	48
Household Income.....	49
Socio-Economic Disadvantage.....	50
Investment and Opportunity: Current Funding Allocations.....	51
Step 3: Identifying Future Needs – Community Aspirations and Workforce Planning Opportunities.....	55
Office of the Central Australian Regional Controller (OCARC) Community Meetings: Expressing Local Priorities	55
School Action Plans: Education-Based Employment Opportunities	57
MacDonnell Regional Council - Regional Plan.....	59
Workforce Planning Opportunities	61
References:.....	66

Introduction

Purpose of the Report

The Northern Territory Government (NTG) has engaged Desert Knowledge Australia (DKA) to develop Community Workforce Plans for communities in Central Australia. The initial pilot reports focus on Ntaria (Hermannsburg) and Ti Tree (including Pmara Jutunta). In collaboration with the Department of Trade, Business, and Asian Relations (DTBAR), this initiative seeks to identify community priorities to unlock economic growth in remote Aboriginal communities in Central Australia, embracing local leadership and governance and delivery of targeted skills, training, employment and enterprise services and support.

Following the completion of the pilot reports and in line with updated requirements, this report provides a comprehensive analysis of the current demographic and economic landscape, establishing a baseline for future Community Workforce Planning. The consolidated data contained in this report will enable both community stakeholders and government bodies to pursue the following objectives:

- Enhance community awareness and understanding of current and future industry, business, and workforce opportunities within both local communities and the broader regional cluster;
- Support the development of key initiatives aimed at creating employment opportunities and pathways through targeted training and industry development;
- Facilitate increased engagement in apprenticeships, traineeships, and school-to-work pathways, particularly focusing on youth;
- Optimise the use of existing training facilities and identifying future training needs;
- Identify foundational skills, literacy and numeracy, and pre-employment training needs through extensive stakeholder engagement.

Report Format

The structure of this report follows the framework developed by Informed Solutions (Informed Solutions (NT) Pty Ltd, 2014), mapping the key steps identified in the planning method flowchart outlined below.

Steps 1 and 2 of the framework focus on providing a comprehensive understanding of the community context and workforce landscape, identifying community demographics, existing infrastructure and services, education and training opportunities and outcomes, key local industries and employers, workforce demand, and economic indicators.

Steps 3 and 4 are informed by community consultation activities conducted throughout the course of the project, or through secondary sources such as past meeting notes where direct consultation has not yet occurred. These steps aim to identify the future needs of community members, undertake an issues analysis, and assess barriers, opportunities, and limitations. Additionally, they focus on determining the leadership and coordination required to implement recommendations arising from community input. In cases where direct consultation has not yet taken place, it is essential that future engagement be undertaken to validate community issues and barriers, and to prioritise aspirations based on the insights gathered from previous consultations

Steps 5 and 6 outline the implementation strategies and recommendations developed by the community to drive this work. These steps will identify actions, responsibilities and accountabilities, ensuring that all stakeholders including VET training organisations, industry employers, local employers, community, the Northern Territory and Federal Government collaborate effectively to deliver the community workforce plan. This stage will include the establishment of a coordinated governance approach to workforce planning by engaging stakeholders through a Stakeholder Reference Working Group to guide decision-making and implementation of workforce plans.

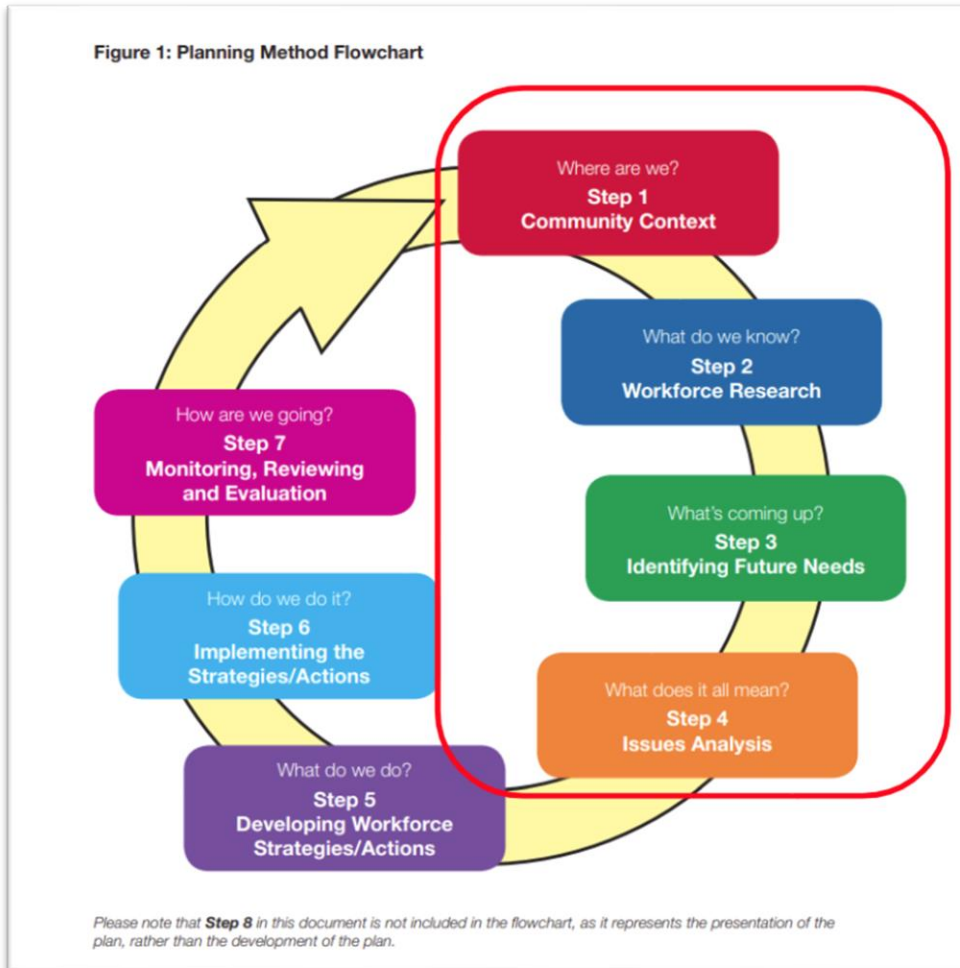


Figure 1: Planning Method Flowchart

Step 7 establishes the mechanism and timeframe to review the data and issues identified in Steps 1 to 4, and to monitor the strategies and actions from Step 5. This process ensures that the Workforce Plan remains responsive to changing conditions, allowing for necessary adaptations. It involves both quantitative and qualitative analysis such as workforce participation data and stakeholder feedback and should be guided by the nature of the strategies developed. Existing targets, including Closing the Gap and NTG employment goals, should be incorporated and reviewed in collaboration with governance groups, Local Decision Makers (LDMs), and other stakeholders. This process should be ongoing, with plans to be reviewed annually or biannually, as scheduled by the relevant governance groups.

Data Collection Framework

Based on feedback received from the development of the Pilot reports, this report utilises the framework as a guide, focussing on collating data for Steps 1 to 4.

The data has been organised into the following categories:

1. **Community Demographics and Skills**
 - a. Population statistics and trends - Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS)
 - b. Workforce participation rates
 - c. Educational attainment levels
 - d. Existing skill sets and qualifications
 - e. Training program completion rates
 - f. Skills gaps analysis
2. **Organisational Mapping**
 - a. Active employers and service providers
 - b. Current business operations
 - c. Employment capacity
 - d. Service delivery frameworks
 - e. Organisational growth potential
3. **Economic Analysis**
 - a. Gross Regional Product data
 - b. Employment statistics
 - c. Major industry presence
 - d. Economic drivers and barriers
 - e. Market opportunities
4. **Infrastructure and Development**
 - a. Planned infrastructure projects
 - b. Funded Project timelines and phases
 - c. Required workforce capabilities
 - d. Employment pathways
 - e. Skills development requirements

Data Collection and Review

The project phases outlined below detail the steps taken to ensure the accuracy and relevance of the collected data:

1. Collection of publicly available data (e.g., Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) demographics, Department of Social Services (DSS) data)
2. Review of internal Northern Territory Government (NTG) reports (e.g., Remote Towns Jobs Profiles, Remote School Action Plans and Office of the Central Regional Coordinator (OCARC) consultations.
3. Stakeholder consultation (with existing employers and relevant government departments)
4. Community governance and stakeholder validation of data
5. Production of three distinct report formats:

- a. Comprehensive technical report
- b. Community-focused version
- c. Government presentation format

Methodological Limitations

To ensure appropriate interpretation of findings, several methodological and data limitations are acknowledged:

1. Data Currency and Geographic Limitations

This analysis relies primarily on 2021 Census data and 2023 Remote Towns Jobs Profile information, which may not fully reflect current demographic and employment conditions in 2025.

2. Data Perturbation

The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) applies data perturbation to census data to protect individual privacy, particularly in small communities. This involves small random adjustments, which can cause totals from disaggregated data to differ slightly from published totals. While these adjustments do not significantly impact broader analyses, minor inconsistencies may arise in smaller datasets. These discrepancies are a deliberate feature of the data and have been considered in this report.

3. Desktop Research Constraints

As a desktop research exercise, this report has not incorporated direct community consultation to validate findings. The absence of primary data collection means current skills, training preferences, employment barriers, and community capacity have not been directly assessed from community members' perspectives. This limitation is particularly significant when considering validity of information that may influence workforce participation and the appropriateness of proposed solutions in the most recent environment. We assume that any solutions being tried because of the information from this report would be stress tested in communities prior to large scale implementation.

4. Data Gaps

Several important data points are unavailable, including:

- Qualification levels of current job holders
- Industry-specific employment data that aligns with VET training categories
- Positions held in Industry categories. For e.g. Professional, Scientific and Technical Services was the industry that hired the second highest number of Aboriginal workers in the region. It would be insightful to know the positions they filled within the industry.
- Where data refers to jobs filled by Aboriginal people, it would be valuable to distinguish between local Anangu residents and Aboriginal employees from outside the region. This distinction is important for developing targeted workforce strategies that build capacity within the local community.

These gaps constrain the ability to precisely match training needs with employment opportunities across all communities.

5. Implementation Planning Limitations

While the report identifies strategic opportunities for workforce planning, it does not include detailed implementation planning elements such as cost estimates, prioritisation frameworks, or assessment of past workforce initiative effectiveness in these specific communities. As such it is important to view this report as a foundation for community-led consultation to validate findings and collaboratively develop implementation strategies that are responsive to local priorities and capabilities.

Executive Summary

This report examines the workforce planning landscape across Imanpa, Mutitjulu and Docker River communities in the Northern Territory, providing a foundation for Community Workforce Plans that support improved economic participation.

Workforce

The workforce research provides a data-driven snapshot of employment trends across the Central Australian communities of Imanpa, Mutitjulu, and Docker River, using 2021 Census and 2023 CDP data from the Remote Job Profiles. It highlights a significant untapped Aboriginal workforce, with only 34% (138) of the 403 working-age residents actively participating in the labour force and over half not engaged in employment or seeking work. Labour force participation varies between communities, with Docker River showing the lowest rates, underscoring the need for locally tailored strategies. CDP engagement remains high, particularly among the prime working-age group (25–44 years), but long-term employment outcomes are limited. Most residents report very low personal incomes, signalling ongoing economic vulnerability.

Education and Training

The analysis of education and training across Imanpa, Mutitjulu, and Docker River reveals systemic challenges that limit workforce readiness, including critically low school attendance, declining vocational training engagement, and minimal post-school qualifications. Most students are Aboriginal and speak Indigenous languages at home, yet current education systems rely heavily on English-only assessments and delivery models. Literacy and numeracy barriers persist, contributing to low school engagement and poor NAPLAN performance. Vocational Education and Training (VET) enrolments show some growth in sectors like construction and primary industries in Imanpa and Mutitjulu, but overall completion rates are low, and engagement in critical service sectors such as health, education, and community services has declined.

Employment

Employment across Imanpa, Mutitjulu, and Docker River is concentrated in community-based service roles, with Aboriginal workers holding half of the total 174 local jobs, primarily in Public Administration and Safety, Professional, Scientific and Technical Services, and Art and Recreation Services. However, there was no Aboriginal representation in managerial roles or within the Primary Industry sector, despite recent increases in VET enrolments in the sector. Current job vacancies (53 in total) are mostly in professional and community service roles with 13 positions (24% of vacancies) being Indigenous identified roles. However, only 3% of vacancies were entry-level roles, creating a significant barrier for job seekers without formal qualifications, such as the 281 CDP participants across the region.

The analysis highlights a mismatch between available roles and community skill levels, with most vacancies requiring Certificate III or higher.

Economic Context

The economic analysis of Imanpa, Mutitjulu, and Docker River highlights both the region's strong resident-driven Gross Regional Product (GRP) and the disconnect between resident added economic value and Aboriginal employment. Despite the Accommodation and Food Services sector generating the largest GRP contribution, the 2023 Remote Jobs Profiles data indicate Anangu from these three communities are not employed in this area, underscoring the need for targeted pathways into high-value sectors. Public Administration and Community Services remain the dominant areas of Aboriginal employment, while high costs of living, low household incomes,

and socio-economic disadvantage, reflected in the regions Decile 1 SEIFA rankings continue to limit workforce participation and readiness.

Significant government investment, approximately \$267 million across the broader region presents opportunities to better link local training and employment initiatives with well-funded sectors such as health, education, and arts. However, without intentional alignment and locally embedded job pathways, this investment risks bypassing Anangu communities.

Identified future community needs:

Community-identified aspirations across Imanpa, Mutitjulu, and Docker River present a compelling foundation for place-based workforce planning. Through OCARC meetings and school and council planning processes, residents have outlined clear priorities, including housing repairs and maintenance, access to training, mechanic workshops, youth engagement, enterprise development, bilingual education, and better service access - that also serve as practical pathways to local employment and skills growth. These aspirations signal not only a demand for improved services but also an opportunity to embed training and jobs into projects that address local community needs.

Significant funding streams, such as the \$40 million On Country Learning Measure and commitments from the MacDonnell Regional Council to increase Aboriginal employment and support local enterprise, further reinforce this potential. By aligning workforce planning strategies with community-identified priorities and ensuring coordination among schools, councils, and service providers, these initiatives can generate long-term employment, support enterprise creation, and foster economic resilience. Closing the feedback loop with communities will be critical to sustaining engagement and trust as these opportunities are implemented.

Workforce planning Opportunities

Drawing on demographic data, local planning frameworks, education trends, and economic context, the report outlines the following strategies for workforce planning across the three Anangu communities of Imanpa, Mutitjulu, and Docker River:

1. Aligning training with local employment sectors – Match VET and job pathways with growth areas like construction, health, and tourism.
2. Simplifying access to training – Address financial and administrative barriers to 100-point identity requirements, White Cards, and certification.
3. Expanding on-Country and language-responsive learning models – Deliver training in first languages and cultural contexts.
4. Strengthening entry-level and transitional pathways – Create stepping-stone jobs and job readiness programs.
5. Translate VET skills into jobs – Link training outcomes with paid placements in regional job markets.
6. Build Aboriginal leadership pathways – Support Anangu advancement into supervisory and management roles.
7. Localise economic benefits – Embed Anangu employment KPIs in funded programs and strengthen local governance.

Introduction

Step 1: Community Context

Community Profiles and Demographics

This section provides an overview of Imanpa, Mutitjulu and Docker River, including their geographical location, demographic profile, and the services available in each community. This information provides a foundational understanding that is important for informing workforce planning.

Communities	Imanpa, Mutitjulu and Docker River													
Languages	The primary language spoken in all three communities is Pitjantjatjara. The other languages spoken in Mutitjulu, Imanpa and Docker River are Luritja/Pintupi, Southern Luritja and Ngaanyatjarra respectively.													
Traditional owners	The traditional owners of Mutitjulu, Imanpa and Docker River are the Anangu.													
Population	<p>Table 1: Total Community Populations</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th></th> <th>Imanpa</th> <th>Mutitjulu</th> <th>Docker River</th> <th>Total</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Total Population</td> <td>124¹</td> <td>296²</td> <td>229³</td> <td>649</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p><i>Source: Compiled from Australian Bureau of Statistics (2021). 2021 Census of Population and Housing Community Profiles for Imanpa, Mutitjulu, and Docker River.</i></p>					Imanpa	Mutitjulu	Docker River	Total	Total Population	124 ¹	296 ²	229 ³	649
	Imanpa	Mutitjulu	Docker River	Total										
Total Population	124 ¹	296 ²	229 ³	649										
Indigenous status	<p>Table 2: Community Aboriginal Population</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th></th> <th>Imanpa</th> <th>Mutitjulu</th> <th>Docker River</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Aboriginal Population</td> <td>106 (85%)</td> <td>246 (83%)</td> <td>195 (85%)</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p><i>Source: Compiled from Australian Bureau of Statistics (2021). 2021 Census of Population and Housing Community Profiles for Imanpa, Mutitjulu, and Docker River.</i></p>					Imanpa	Mutitjulu	Docker River	Aboriginal Population	106 (85%)	246 (83%)	195 (85%)		
	Imanpa	Mutitjulu	Docker River											
Aboriginal Population	106 (85%)	246 (83%)	195 (85%)											
Location	<p>Imanpa, Mutitjulu and Docker River are situated in the Central Desert region of the Northern Territory, with Alice Springs serving as the main regional centre.</p> <p>Imanpa: Imanpa is a Community Living Area southwest of Alice Springs within the Mt Ebenezer Pastoral Lease.⁴</p> <p>Mutitjulu: Mutitjulu is located at the base of Uluru (also known as Ayers Rock) within the Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park, a globally recognised World Heritage Site located 4.5 hours southwest of Alice Springs.⁵</p> <p>Docker River:</p>													

¹Australian Bureau of Statistics (2021) Census of Population and Housing, Imanpa I01 Selected Person Characteristics by Indigenous Status by Sex.

²Australian Bureau of Statistics (2021) Census of Population and Housing, Mutitjulu I01 Selected Person Characteristics by Indigenous Status by Sex.

³ Australian Bureau of Statistics (2021) Census of Population and Housing, Docker River G01 Selected Person Characteristics by Sex.

⁴ BushTel (n.d.) Community Profile – Imanpa <https://bushtel.nt.gov.au/profile/51>.

⁵ BushTel (n.d.) Community Profile – Mutitjulu. <https://bushtel.nt.gov.au/profile/120>.

	Kaltukatjara is in the Petermann Ranges in the far south-western corner of the Northern Territory, 7 kms east of the Western Australian border and part of the Petermann Aboriginal Land Trust. ⁶																				
Access	<p>Imanpa: The community is accessible by road (Lasseter Highway) from Alice Springs. The Lasseter Highway is sealed to the community turn off.⁷</p> <p>Mutitjulu: Mutitjulu is located 470 km southwest by road from Alice Springs. The community is accessible all year round by road (sealed) via Lasseter Highway (Alice Springs to Yulara) and Uluru Road (Yulara to Mutitjulu).⁸</p> <p>Docker River: Alice Springs to Docker River is 670 km via Uluru. The 183 km from the Olgas is unsealed. The community is on the Outback Way. It's approximately a 7-hour drive from Alice Springs.⁹</p> <p>The Centre Bush Bus provides weekly transport service between Imanpa, Mutitjulu, Docker River and Alice Springs. The service operates from Alice Springs to Docker River, with scheduled stops at Imanpa and Mutitjulu, on Wednesdays and Saturdays. The return journey from Docker River to Alice Springs runs on Thursdays and Sundays.</p> <p>Table 3: Bus Timetable and Costs</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="391 958 1497 1285"> <thead> <tr> <th>Destination</th> <th>Frequency</th> <th>One-way Fare (Adult)</th> <th>One-way Fare (Child)</th> <th>Return Fare (Adult)</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Imanpa</td> <td>Weekly</td> <td>\$140</td> <td>\$120</td> <td>\$280</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Mutitjulu</td> <td>Weekly</td> <td>\$160</td> <td>\$130</td> <td>\$320</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Docker River</td> <td>Weekly</td> <td>\$200</td> <td>\$150</td> <td>\$400</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p><i>Source: Centre Bush Bus (n.d.) Bus Timetables. https://centrebushbus.com.au/bus-timetables/</i></p>	Destination	Frequency	One-way Fare (Adult)	One-way Fare (Child)	Return Fare (Adult)	Imanpa	Weekly	\$140	\$120	\$280	Mutitjulu	Weekly	\$160	\$130	\$320	Docker River	Weekly	\$200	\$150	\$400
Destination	Frequency	One-way Fare (Adult)	One-way Fare (Child)	Return Fare (Adult)																	
Imanpa	Weekly	\$140	\$120	\$280																	
Mutitjulu	Weekly	\$160	\$130	\$320																	
Docker River	Weekly	\$200	\$150	\$400																	

⁶ BushTel (n.d.) Community Profile – Kaltukatjara <https://bushtel.nt.gov.au/profile/66>.

⁷ BushTel (n.d.) Community Profile – Imanpa <https://bushtel.nt.gov.au/profile/51>.

⁸ BushTel (n.d.) Community Profile – Mutitjulu. <https://bushtel.nt.gov.au/profile/120>.

⁹ BushTel (n.d.) Community Profile – Kaltukatjara <https://bushtel.nt.gov.au/profile/66>.

Internet Access	Table 4: Community Internet Access			
	Community	Mobile Coverage	Broadband Access	Wi-Fi Hotspot Availability
	Imanpa	Telstra	Not available	Available in the vicinity of the Learning Centre, 24hours,7 days.
	Mutitjulu	Telstra	Telstra	Available in the vicinity of the Rec Hall. 8am-8pm daily.
	Docker River	Telstra	Telstra	Available in the vicinity of the Shiny Shed, Lot 141. 11am-9pm daily.
<i>Source: Data compiled from BushTel (n.d.) Community Profiles for Imanpa, Mutitjulu and Docker River. www.bushtel.nt.gov.au/profile</i>				
Freight Services	<p>Freight services to the communities of Imanpa, Mutitjulu, Docker River are primarily Central Desert Transport (CDT) and Centre Bush Bus:</p> <p>Central Desert Transport (CDT): delivers to Imanpa fortnightly and Mutitjulu weekly, on the Thursday. It delivers to Docker River fortnightly on the Wednesday.¹⁰</p> <p>Centre Bush Bus: offers freight services to all three communities. The service runs to the three communities from Alice Springs on the Wednesday and Saturday and returns to Alice Springs the following day i.e. the Thursday and Sunday.</p>			
Local Businesses	Table 5: Local Community Businesses			
	No.	Imanpa¹¹	Mutitjulu¹²	Docker River¹³
	1	Imanpa General Store	Anangu Uwankaraku Punu Aboriginal Corporation	Australian Regional and Remote Community Services Limited
	2	Imanpa Health Centre (Central Australian Aboriginal Congress Aboriginal Corporation)	Australian Regional and Remote Community Services Limited	Docker River Store
3	Imanpa Primary School (Nyangatjatjara Aboriginal Corporation)	Casa Leisure	Kaltukatjara Dialysis Unit	

¹⁰ Central Desert Transport (n.d.) Delivery Areas. www.cdtnt.com.au/delivery-area

¹¹ BushTel (n.d.) Community Profile – Imanpa https://bushtel.nt.gov.au/profile/51.

¹² BushTel (n.d.) Community Profile – Mutitjulu. https://bushtel.nt.gov.au/profile/120.

¹³ BushTel (n.d.) Community Profile – Kaltukatjara https://bushtel.nt.gov.au/profile/66.

			(Western Desert Nganampa Walytja Palyantjaku Tjutaku Aboriginal Corporation)
4	Imanpa Recreation Centre (NPY Women's Council)	Ininti Store	Kaltukatjara Health Centre (Central Australian Aboriginal Congress Aboriginal Corporation)
5	MacDonnell Regional Council Workshop	Mutitjulu Community Aboriginal Corporation	NPY Women's Council
6	NPY Women's Council Visitor Accommodation	Mutitjulu Health Centre (Central Australian Aboriginal Congress Aboriginal Corporation)	Nyangatjatjara Primary and Secondary College
7	RISE-Ngurratjuta Jobs	Mutitjulu Itiku Munu Tjitjiku Ngura Childcare	RISE-Ngurratjuta Pty Ltd
8		Mutitjulu School	Tjarlirli Art Indigenous Corporation
9		Nganampa Ngura Mutitjulu - NYA Flexible Aged Care	
10		NPY Women's Council	
11		RISE-Ngurratjuta	
12		Walkatjara Art	
<p><i>Source: Data compiled from BushTel (n.d.) Community Profiles for Imanpa, Mutitjulu and Docker River. www.bushtel.nt.gov.au/profile</i></p>			
Regional Businesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Australian Regional and Remote Community Services Limited • Cattle Stations within 200km of Imanpa, Mutitjulu and Docker River: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Curtin Springs Station: Located approximately 108km from Mutitjulu and 101km from Imanpa - Kings Creek Station: Located approximately 176 km from Imanpa - Palmer Valley Station: Located approximately 128 km from Imanpa 		

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Central Australian Aboriginal Congress Aboriginal Corporation • National Indigenous Training Academy (NITA) at Ayers Rock Resort • NPY Women’s Council • RN Employment Services 											
Health Services	<p>Table 6: Community Health Services</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Imanpa</th> <th>Mutitjulu</th> <th>Docker River</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Imanpa Health Centre (Central Australian Aboriginal Congress Aboriginal Corporation)</td> <td>Mutitjulu Health Centre (Central Australian Aboriginal Congress Aboriginal Corporation)</td> <td>Kaltukatjara Health Centre (Central Australian Aboriginal Congress Aboriginal Corporation)</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td>Mutitjulu Community Health Service</td> <td>Kaltukatjara Dialysis Unit (Western Desert Nganampa Walytja Palyantjaku Tjutaku Aboriginal Corporation)</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p><i>Source: Data compiled from BushTel (n.d.) Community Profiles for Imanpa, Mutitjulu and Docker River. www.bushtel.nt.gov.au/profile</i></p>	Imanpa	Mutitjulu	Docker River	Imanpa Health Centre (Central Australian Aboriginal Congress Aboriginal Corporation)	Mutitjulu Health Centre (Central Australian Aboriginal Congress Aboriginal Corporation)	Kaltukatjara Health Centre (Central Australian Aboriginal Congress Aboriginal Corporation)		Mutitjulu Community Health Service	Kaltukatjara Dialysis Unit (Western Desert Nganampa Walytja Palyantjaku Tjutaku Aboriginal Corporation)		
	Imanpa	Mutitjulu	Docker River									
	Imanpa Health Centre (Central Australian Aboriginal Congress Aboriginal Corporation)	Mutitjulu Health Centre (Central Australian Aboriginal Congress Aboriginal Corporation)	Kaltukatjara Health Centre (Central Australian Aboriginal Congress Aboriginal Corporation)									
	Mutitjulu Community Health Service	Kaltukatjara Dialysis Unit (Western Desert Nganampa Walytja Palyantjaku Tjutaku Aboriginal Corporation)										
<p>Secondary school education in Imanpa, Mutitjulu and Docker River is provided through Nyangatjatjara College, which is an Anangu College in Central Australia, and is the only secondary education provider in the Northern Territory south of Alice Springs.</p> <p>It also provides primary school education in Docker River.</p> <p>Primary schooling in Imanpa and Mutitjulu is provided through the Department of Education.</p> <p>Table 7: Community Education and Training Facilities</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Imanpa</th> <th>Mutitjulu</th> <th>Docker River</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Nyangatjatjara College - Imanpa Primary Campus</td> <td>Mutitjulu School</td> <td>Nyangatjatjara College - Kaltukatjara Primary Campus</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Nyangatjatjara College - Imanpa Secondary Campus</td> <td>Nyangatjatjara College (Yulara) – school bus picks up students from Mutitjulu</td> <td>Nyangatjatjara College - Kaltukatjara Secondary Campus</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td>National Indigenous Training Academy (NITA) (at Ayers Rock Resort, Yulara)</td> <td></td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p><i>Source: Data compiled from BushTel (n.d.) Community Profiles for Imanpa, Mutitjulu and Docker River. www.bushtel.nt.gov.au/profile</i></p>	Imanpa	Mutitjulu	Docker River	Nyangatjatjara College - Imanpa Primary Campus	Mutitjulu School	Nyangatjatjara College - Kaltukatjara Primary Campus	Nyangatjatjara College - Imanpa Secondary Campus	Nyangatjatjara College (Yulara) – school bus picks up students from Mutitjulu	Nyangatjatjara College - Kaltukatjara Secondary Campus		National Indigenous Training Academy (NITA) (at Ayers Rock Resort, Yulara)	
Imanpa	Mutitjulu	Docker River										
Nyangatjatjara College - Imanpa Primary Campus	Mutitjulu School	Nyangatjatjara College - Kaltukatjara Primary Campus										
Nyangatjatjara College - Imanpa Secondary Campus	Nyangatjatjara College (Yulara) – school bus picks up students from Mutitjulu	Nyangatjatjara College - Kaltukatjara Secondary Campus										
	National Indigenous Training Academy (NITA) (at Ayers Rock Resort, Yulara)											
Children’s Services	<p>Table 8: Community Children’s Services</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Imanpa</th> <th>Mutitjulu</th> <th>Docker River</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Not Available</td> <td>Mutitjulu Itiku Munu Tjitjiku Ngura Childcare</td> <td>Docker Rive Early Learning Centre (MacDonnell Regional Council)¹⁴</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p><i>Source: Data compiled from BushTel (n.d.) Community Profiles for Imanpa, Mutitjulu and Docker River. www.bushtel.nt.gov.au/profile</i></p>	Imanpa	Mutitjulu	Docker River	Not Available	Mutitjulu Itiku Munu Tjitjiku Ngura Childcare	Docker Rive Early Learning Centre (MacDonnell Regional Council) ¹⁴					
	Imanpa	Mutitjulu	Docker River									
Not Available	Mutitjulu Itiku Munu Tjitjiku Ngura Childcare	Docker Rive Early Learning Centre (MacDonnell Regional Council) ¹⁴										
Community Services	<p>Table 9: Community Services</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Imanpa</th> <th>Mutitjulu</th> <th>Docker River</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>NPY Women’s Council</td> <td>Australian Regional and</td> <td>Australian Regional and</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Imanpa	Mutitjulu	Docker River	NPY Women’s Council	Australian Regional and	Australian Regional and					
Imanpa	Mutitjulu	Docker River										
NPY Women’s Council	Australian Regional and	Australian Regional and										

¹⁴Starting blocks (n.d) - Find Child Care: <https://startingblocks.gov.au/find-child-care/01JC2WYXV48NY9X7WQEB1EDE4N/Docker-River-Early-Learning>

		Remote Community Services Limited	Remote Community Services Limited
	RISE-Ngurratjuta	NPY Women's Council	NPY Women's Council
		Casa Leisure	Tjarlirli Art Indigenous Corporation
		Mutitjulu Community Health Service	RISE-Ngurratjuta
		Nganampa Ngura Mutitjulu - NYA Flexible Aged Care	
		RISE-Ngurratjuta	
		Walkatjara Art	
		Mutitjulu Police Station	

Source: Data compiled from BushTel (n.d.) Community Profiles for Imanpa, Mutitjulu and Docker River. www.bushtel.nt.gov.au/profile

Aboriginal Organisations	Table 10: Aboriginal Organisations Operating in Communities		
	Imanpa	Mutitjulu	Docker River
	Central Australian Aboriginal Congress Aboriginal Corporation (Imanpa Health Centre)	Anangu Uwankaraku Punu Aboriginal Corporation	Central Land Council
	Nyangatjatjara Aboriginal Corporation	NPY Women's Council Aboriginal Corporation	NPY Women's Council Aboriginal Corporation
	NPY Women's Council Aboriginal Corporation	Central Land Council	Central Australian Aboriginal Congress Aboriginal Corporation (Kaltukatjara Health Centre)
		Mutitjulu Community Aboriginal Corporation	Western Desert Nganampa Walytja Palyantjaku Tjutaku Aboriginal Corporation (Kaltukatjara Dialysis Unit)
		Central Australian Aboriginal Congress Aboriginal Corporation (Mutitjulu Health Centre)	Tjarlirli Art Indigenous Corporation
		Walkatjara Art	Nyangatjatjara Aboriginal Corporation
	Nyangatjatjara Aboriginal Corporation		

Source: Data compiled from BushTel (n.d.) Community Profiles for Imanpa, Mutitjulu and Docker River. www.bushtel.nt.gov.au/profile

Government Agencies	Local Government
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MacDonnell Regional Council
	NT Government
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Northern Territory Police, Fire and Emergency Services NT Department of Education NT Health

	<p>Australian Government</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Centrelink (Services Australia) • Department of Children and Families • National Indigenous Australians Agency • Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (Director of National Parks) <p>Commonwealth Statutory Authority</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Central Land Council
Regional Council	Mutitjulu Community Aboriginal Council (MCAC) is responsible for providing local government services, infrastructure management, and community development programs in Imanpa, Mutitjulu and Docker River.
Visitor Accommodation	<p>Visitor accommodation is available in all three communities.</p> <p>In Mutitjulu, the Mutitjulu Community Aboriginal Corporation (MCAC) has accommodation available within the community for contractors and visiting stakeholders. Yulara which is 26 km away from the community offers a variety of other commercial accommodation options.</p> <p>In Docker River, commercial accommodation is available via MacDonnell Regional Council Visitor Accommodation. NPY Women’s Council accommodation is only available to visiting contractors.</p> <p>In Imanpa commercial accommodation is available 70 kms away at Eralunda. NPY Women’s Council accommodation is only available to visiting contractors¹⁵.</p>
Power/Water	<p>Electricity at Imanpa, Mutitjulu and Docker River is supplied at the Northern Territory standard tariff, and standard connection charges apply.</p> <p>Electricity supply at Mutitjulu is provided by Parks Australia.</p> <p>Imanpa has a limited groundwater source with marginal quality water. The water supply has aeration treatment, is disinfected with sodium hypochlorite and monitored monthly for microbes. Imanpa has a fully reticulated sewerage system</p> <p>Mutitjulu water supply is provided by Parks Australia. The groundwater supply is adequate but generally characterised by hardness, and high total dissolved solids affecting colour and taste. Mutitjulu has a reticulated sewerage system provided by Parks Australia.</p> <p>Docker River has marginal quality water due to elevated levels of lead and some hardness. The capacity of the groundwater supply is adequate. Docker River has a fully reticulated sewerage system¹⁶.</p>
Community Events	<p>NPY Women’s Council operates a School Holiday Program in all three communities.</p> <p>Imanpa and Mutitjulu play in the South Australian National Football League - Anangu</p>

¹⁵ Data Compiled from BushTel (n.d.) Community Profile – Imanpa, Mutitjulu and Docker River. www.bushtel.nt.gov.au/profile/

¹⁶ Data Compiled from BushTel (n.d.) Community Profile – Imanpa, Mutitjulu and Docker River. www.bushtel.nt.gov.au/profile/

	Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara (SANFL APY), with the 2025 season commencing in April and running through till the end of August ¹⁷
--	---

¹⁷ Data Compiled from BushTel (n.d.) Community Profile – Imanpa, Mutitjulu and Docker River. www.bushtel.nt.gov.au/profile/

Step 2: Workforce Research

This section presents workforce data for Imanpa, Mutitjulu, and Docker River including demographic details, labour force participation rates, and employment status. This information is useful for understanding the local workforce contexts.

Target Group

To define the target group for this report, DKA considered several factors, including the number of individuals in the labour force including the workforce participation rate, and those classified as not in the labour force.

Target Group Definition

The Target group is the total labour force *less (-)* those who are currently employed *plus (+)* individuals eligible to work but not actively seeking employment

For the purpose of this report, the target group includes individuals who are currently registered under the Community Development Program (CDP) caseload and are either unemployed and actively seeking work, or eligible to work but not actively seeking employment.¹⁸¹⁹

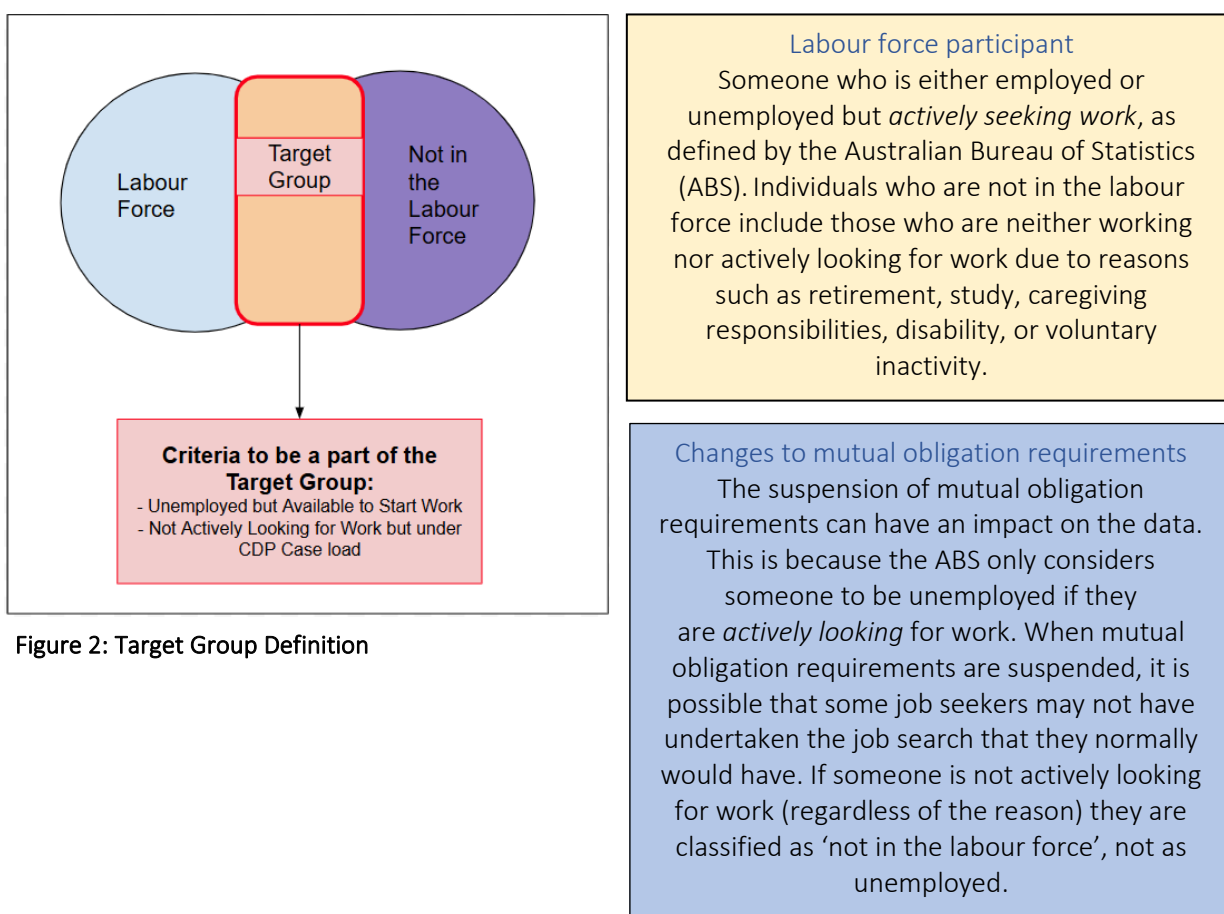


Figure 2: Target Group Definition

¹⁸ Australian Bureau of Statistics, Labour Force Explained. <https://www.abs.gov.au/websitedbs/d3310114.nsf/home/labour+force+explained>

¹⁹ Jobs and Skills Australia. Small Area Labour Markets September Quarter 2024. https://www.jobsandskills.gov.au/sites/default/files/2024-12/small_area_labour_markets_-_september_quarter_2024.pdf

2.1 Workforce Demographics

Working Age Population

Across Imanpa, Mutitjulu, and Docker River, the working age population (15+) consists of 492 people, with 403 individuals (81.9%) identifying as Aboriginal. The distribution varies by community:

- **Imanpa:** 68 Aboriginal working-age residents²⁰
- **Mutitjulu:** 184 Aboriginal working-age residents²¹
- **Docker River:** 151 Aboriginal working-age resident²²

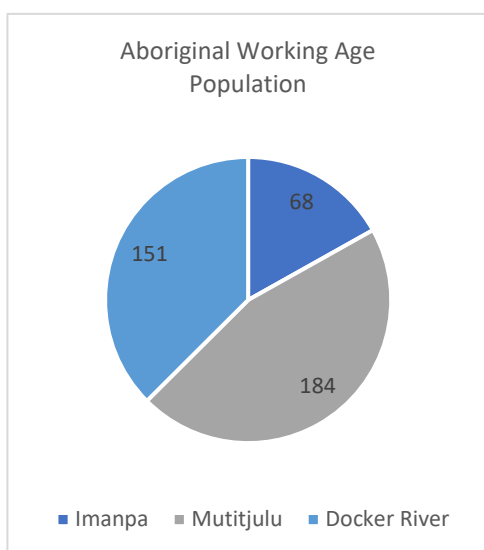


Figure 3: Aboriginal Working Age Population

Source: Compiled from Australian Bureau of Statistics (2021). 2021 Census of Population and Housing Community Profiles

This report aims to address the barriers, successes and complexities faced by the 403 working aged Aboriginal residents of the Iyarrka region with residential addresses in Imanpa, Mutitjulu and Docker River.

Labour Force Participation

Only 34.24% (138 of 403) of the Aboriginal working-age residents in Imanpa, Mutitjulu and Docker River are actively participating in the labour force, while 55.83% (225) are not engaged in the workforce. (9.93% (40) labour force status is not stated):

- **Imanpa:** 27 in labour force; 29 not participating²³
- **Mutitjulu:** 75 in labour force; 89 not participating²⁴
- **Docker River:** 36 in labour force; 107 not participating²⁵

²⁰ Australian Bureau of Statistics (2021), 2021 Census: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples Profile, Imanpa I19 (Canberra: ABS, 2021)

²¹ Australian Bureau of Statistics (2021), 2021 Census: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples Profile, Mutitjulu I19 (Canberra: ABS, 2021)

²² Australian Bureau of Statistics (2021), 2021 Census: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples Profile, Kaltukatjara I19 (Canberra: ABS, 2021)

²³ Australian Bureau of Statistics (2021), 2021 Census: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples Profile, Imanpa I19 (Canberra: ABS, 2021)

²⁴ Australian Bureau of Statistics (2021), 2021 Census: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples Profile, Mutitjulu I19 (Canberra: ABS, 2021)

²⁵ Australian Bureau of Statistics (2021), 2021 Census: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples Profile, Kaltukatjara I19 (Canberra: ABS, 2021)

The non-participation rates are 43% in Imanpa, 48% in Mutitjulu and 71% in Docker River.

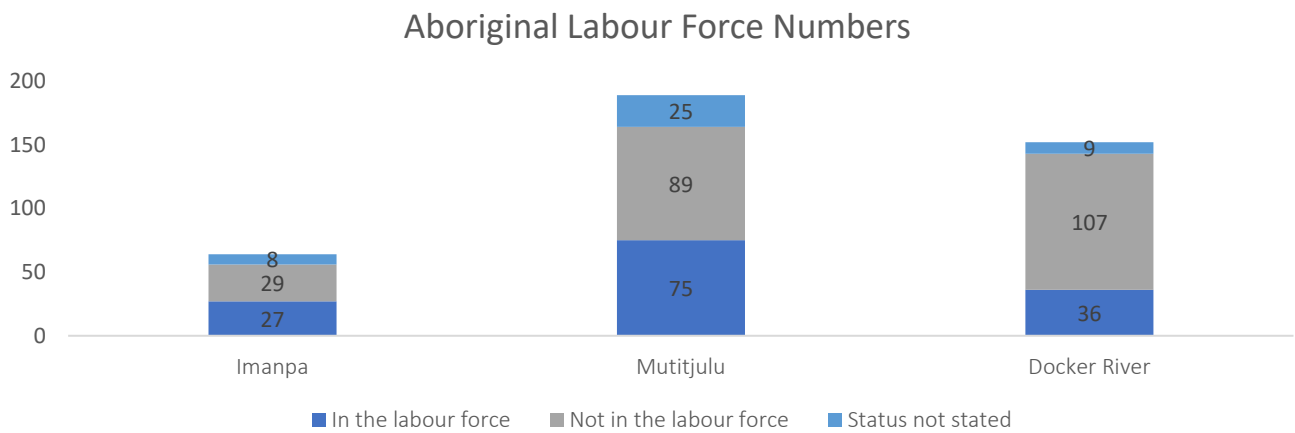


Figure 4: Aboriginal Labour Force Numbers

Source: Compiled from Australian Bureau of Statistics (2021). 2021 Census of Population and Housing Community Profiles

Labour force participation numbers have been drawn from the 2021 Census data of respondents who indicated that they were either 'in the labour force' or 'not in the labour force.' The non-participation rates were calculated as a percentage of the total number of persons aged 15 years and above. This includes individuals whose labour force status was not stated.

Employment Status

2021 census data show 101 Aboriginal residents employed across the three communities: 44 full-time and 57 part-time.²⁶

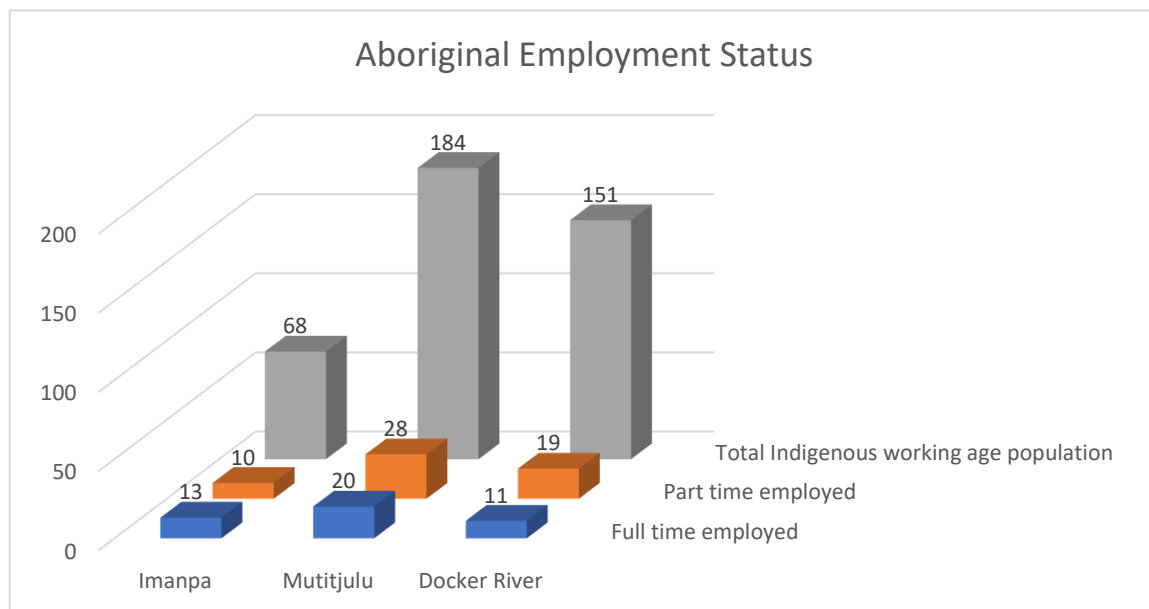


Figure 5: Aboriginal Employment Status

Source: Compiled from Australian Bureau of Statistics (2021). 2021 Census of Population and Housing Community Profiles

²⁶ Australian Bureau of Statistics (2021), 2021 Census: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples Profile, Imanpa, Mutitjulu, and Kaltukatjara profiles I21 (Canberra: ABS, 2021)

Community Development Program (CDP) Participants

The CDP represents a significant aspect of workforce engagement in these communities, with CDP participation numbers significantly higher than employment figures.

Detailed CDP data is available through the 2023 Remote Towns Jobs Profile and provides the following insights into the CDP in Imanpa, Mutitjulu and Docker River. As of December 2023, there were a total of 281 CDP participants across the three communities.

Data shows:

- There were 57 CDP participants in Imanpa.²⁷
 - Of this more than half 32 (56.1%) were aged 25-44 years,²⁸ a prime working-age group with employment rates of 80-85% nationally²⁹
 - CDP Employment outcomes for Imanpa between January-December 2023 were that less than 20 individuals reached the 13-week reporting milestone³⁰
- There were 130 CDP participants in Mutitjulu.³¹
 - Of this close to half 59 (45.5%) were aged 25-44 years³²
 - CDP Employment outcomes for Mutitjulu between January-December 2023 were that less than 20 individuals reached the 13-week reporting milestone³³.
- There were 94 CDP participants in Docker River³⁴.
 - The data for CDP participants aged 24-44 years is not provided, but between January to December 2023, like the other two communities less than 20 individuals reached the 13-week reporting milestone³⁵

The data for CDP participants aged 25-44 years in Imanpa (56.1%) and Mutitjulu (45.5%) indicates they are the largest age group on CDP in these two communities compared to 15-25 and 45+ year olds; this contrasts with national employment trends, where the 25-44 years age group has workforce participation rates of 85-90%³⁶.

Table 11 below shows between 315-338 participants per quarter from July 2023 to March 2025 in the Iyarrka Communities Cluster, with participant numbers remaining relatively stable with minor fluctuations around an average of 325 participants. Employment placement data shows mixed performance with confirmed placements of 22-29 in three quarters during 2023-24 but declining to suppressed numbers (<20) through 2024-25. Broader programme outcomes show concerning patterns with zero outcomes recorded in July-September 2023 and suppressed numbers in all subsequent quarters. The cluster demonstrates early success followed by a significant decline in employment outcomes during the 2024-25.

²⁷ Department of Trade, Business and Innovation, Northern Territory Government (2025). 2023 Remote Towns Jobs Profiles, Imanpa. Northern Territory Government, Darwin.

²⁸ Ibid

²⁹ Australian Bureau of Statistics (2023) Labour Force Survey. Australian Bureau of Statistics, Canberra, 2023.

³⁰ Department of Trade, Business and Innovation, Northern Territory Government (2025). 2023 Remote Towns Jobs Profiles, Imanpa. Northern Territory Government, Darwin.

³¹ Department of Trade, Business and Innovation, Northern Territory Government (2025). 2023 Remote Towns Jobs Profiles, Mutitjulu. Northern Territory Government, Darwin.

³² Department of Trade, Business and Innovation, Northern Territory Government (2025). 2023 Remote Towns Jobs Profiles, Mutitjulu. Northern Territory Government, Darwin.

³³ Ibid

³⁴ Department of Trade, Business and Innovation, Northern Territory Government (2025). 2023 Remote Towns Jobs Profiles, Docker River (Kaltukatjara). Northern Territory Government, Darwin.

³⁵ Ibid

³⁶ Australian Bureau of Statistics (2023). Labour Force, Australia., Cat. No. 6202.0, Australian Bureau of Statistics, Canberra, 2023

Table 11: CDP Flow Caseload

Flow Caseload*							
Community Cluster	2023-2024				2024-2025		
	Jul-Sep 2023	Oct-Dec 2023	Jan-Mar 2024	Apr-Jun 2024	Jul-Sep 2024	Oct-Dec 2024	Jan-Mar 2025
Iyarrka	328	325	338	331	315	315	326

*Flow caseload – a unique count of participants during each quarter (i.e. those who entered and/or exited the program were counted once within the quarter).

Table 12: CDP Participants Placed in Employment

Participants Placed in Employment**							
Community Cluster	2023-2024				2024-2025		
	Jul-Sep 2023	Oct-Dec 2023	Jan-Mar 2024	Apr-Jun 2024	Jul-Sep 2024	Oct-Dec 2024	Jan-Mar 2025
Iyarrka	29	<20	22	25	<20	<20	<20

**This is a distinct count of participants placed into a job based on the community where they were residing at the time.

Table 13: CDP Participants Achieving Outcomes

Participants Achieving Outcomes							
Community Cluster	2023-2024				2024-2025		
	Jul-Sep 2023	Oct-Dec 2023	Jan-Mar 2024	Apr-Jun 2024	Jul-Sep 2024	Oct-Dec 2024	Jan-Mar 2025
Iyarrka	0	<20	<20	<20	<20	<20	<20

Data Source for Tables 11, 12 and 13: National Indigenous Australians Agency (NIAA) Community Development Program (CDP) data request, prepared for Desert Knowledge Australia on behalf of DTBAR, NTG, June 2025

To protect individual privacy, cells with a value between 1 and 19 are suppressed and reported as '<20'. Any other data that may enable derivation of these small counts is withheld and marked as 'n.p.'

- Stable Participant Base:** Iyarrka maintains consistent participant numbers with marginal variation, indicating steady programme engagement without the growth or decline patterns seen in other clusters.
- Strong Initial Performance with Decline:** The cluster achieved substantial employment placements (29-25) during July 2023- June 2024 but experienced a marked decline to suppressed numbers from July 2024 to March 2025.
- Outcomes Pattern:** There were zero participant achievement outcomes recorded in July-September 2023 followed by consistently suppressed broader outcomes.

The broader regional context shows that CDP participants in the South-West Alice Region NT decreased from 280 in July 2023 to 267 as of June 2024³⁷. This data is similar to the CDP data above which shows a marginal drop in the caseload during this period. This may be due to a combination of seasonal work opportunities, participants exiting CDP, changes to program eligibility criteria, participants disengaging or non-compliance with the program requirements. CDP participant placements for that period show 22 and 25 placements respectively in the first two quarters of 2024, but participants achieving outcomes from the placements in both quarters was <20.

³⁷ NIAA (2024). Community Development Program Regional Data Report 2023-2024. www.niaa.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/2024-12/Community-Development-Program-Regional-Data-Report-2023-2024.pdf

Table 14: CDP Regional Date Report 2003-2024

CDP Region number and name	Jul 2023	Aug 2023	Sep 2023	Oct 2023	Nov 2023	Dec 2023	Jan 2024	Feb 2024	Mar 2024	Apr 2024	May 2024	Jun 2024
14-Derby/Gibb River Region WA	1,037	1,028	995	978	972	962	947	942	965	969	933	954
15-East Kimberley Region WA	1,102	1,095	1,094	1,090	1,104	1,106	1,141	1,154	1,150	1,158	1,156	1,216
16-Eyre Region SA	463	465	450	446	454	454	447	455	462	462	467	474
17-Far West Region SA	603	597	596	602	611	616	618	644	640	633	650	666
18 Flinders and Far North Region SA	797	788	767	758	755	757	752	769	776	786	785	796
19-Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara Lands SA	906	913	912	882	872	875	857	855	838	842	839	873
20-South East Alice Region NT	469	473	471	466	458	446	444	447	457	457	428	431
21-South West Alice Region NT	280	279	284	278	281	295	286	269	257	272	285	267
22-West Alice Region NT	492	484	477	466	462	456	462	465	449	455	455	460
23-Alice Springs District NT	849	849	814	829	858	873	855	900	937	965	991	996
24-North East Alice Region NT	530	551	570	594	599	590	589	607	611	594	580	586
25-North West Alice Region NT	703	708	713	723	739	727	737	761	772	781	810	826

Source Data Compiled from the National Indigenous Australians Agency (NIAA) CDP Regional Data 2023-24

Jobseeker Recipients

JobSeeker and Youth Allowance recipients in the MacDonnell Regional Council Local Government Area (LGA) increased from 1,143 (27.6% of population aged 15-64) in March 2020 to 1,523 (36.8%) in December 2024.³⁸

Table 15: JobSeeker and Youth Allowance Recipients in the Northern Territory

JobSeeker		export		reset	
Current month	December 2024		March 2020		
Region - LGA/SA2	Job Seeker and youth allowance recipients	% of 15-64 age population	Job Seeker and Youth allowance recipients	% of 15-64 age population	Change
Northern Territory	23,650	14.5	19,925	12.2	+3,725
Belyuen	23	21.7	18	17.0	+5
Wagait	47	18.7	37	14.7	+10
Darwin Waterfront Precinct	15	5.8	14	5.4	+1
Coomalie	147	18.9	113	14.5	+34
Tiwi Islands	815	47.7	599	35.0	+216
Victoria Daly	730	38.4	494	26.0	+236
West Daly	1,102	53.7	735	35.8	+367
Central Desert	1,188	49.4	908	37.7	+280
MacDonnell	1,523	36.8	1,143	27.6	+380

Source Data from the Department of Social Services (DSS) Regional Development Australia (RDA) NT JobSeeker and Youth Allowance Recipients compiled by .id Informed decisions

³⁸ Profile.id. (2024). JobSeeker and Youth Allowance recipients in the RDA Northern Territory. <https://profile.id.com.au/rda-northern-territory/job-seeker?Geocode=70620>

Individual Incomes

2021 Census data on Aboriginal residents' income from Imanpa, Mutitjulu and Docker River reveals:

- On average, 59.3% of Aboriginal residents (239 individuals) across the three communities reported earning a personal income of less than \$500 per week³⁹. This closely reflects the proportions in each individual community: Imanpa 58.8% (40), Mutitjulu 55.4% (102), Docker River 64.2% (97), showing a variance of no more than 5%.
- The most common personal income range across the three communities is \$150–\$299 per week, with an average of 37.7% of Aboriginal residents (152 individuals) falling into this bracket. However, there is notable variation between communities: 50.9% (77 people) in Docker River, compared to 33% (23) in Imanpa and 28% (52) in Mutitjulu⁴⁰.
- 4.9% of Aboriginal residents (20 individuals) report personal incomes of under \$150 per week⁴¹
- 3.7% of Aboriginal residents (15 individuals) report negative or no personal income⁴²

Figure 6 below presents the distribution of individual incomes across the three communities based on the 2021 Census data.

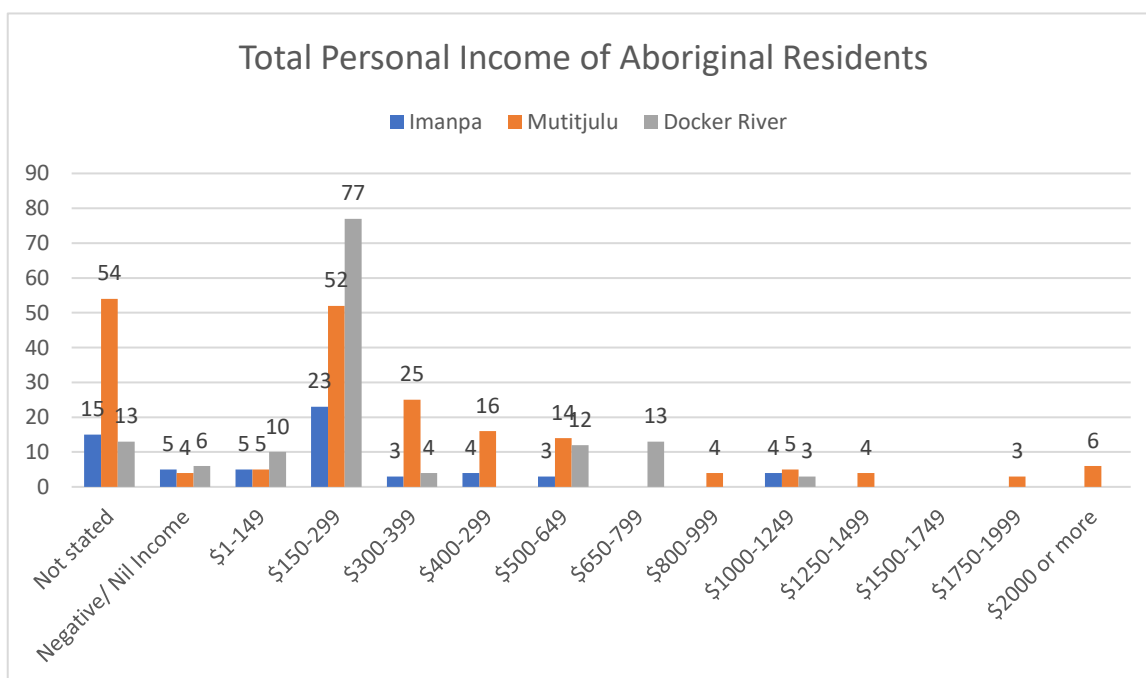


Figure 6: Total Personal Income of Aboriginal Residents

Source: Data compiled from Australian Bureau of Statistics (2021), 2021 Census: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples Profile

³⁹ Data compiled from Australian Bureau of Statistics (2021), 2021 Census: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples Profile, Imanpa I08 (Canberra: ABS, 2021); Australian Bureau of Statistics (2021), 2021 Census: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples Profile, Mutitjulu I08 (Canberra: ABS, 2021); Australian Bureau of Statistics (2021), 2021 Census: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples Profile, Docker River (Kaltukatjara) I08 (Canberra: ABS, 2021)

⁴⁰ Ibid

⁴¹ Ibid

⁴² Ibid

The above demographic and employment data presented highlights several key considerations for workforce planning:

1. Significant labour force potential: With only 34.24% (138 of 403) of Aboriginal working-age residents in the labour force, there is significant unrealised workforce potential that could contribute to community development and local economic growth.
2. A need for tailored approaches: Each community has distinct labour force characteristics and CDP engagement levels which will require customised workforce planning strategies rather than a one-size-fits all solution, for example, Docker River shows lower labour force involvement than Imanpa and Mutitjulu.
3. Economic precarity: The concentration of residents in lower personal income brackets not only indicates income disadvantage but also limited access to stable employment, education, and pathways to economic mobility. This underscores the need for locally tailored employment and training opportunities that address the specific barriers faced in each community.

2.2 Skills in the Community

This section analyses education and training levels across Imanpa, Mutitjulu and Docker River which directly impact workforce capacity and employment opportunities.

Education

The development of a strong future workforce is tied to the educational opportunities and outcomes of young people.⁴³ Core competencies in language, literacy, numeracy, digital skills, and access to higher levels of schooling and vocational training are essential for equipping students with the skills needed for future employment. The data presented in Table 16 from the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (2024) highlights key hurdles in future workforce readiness for students, including low school attendance rates, limited secondary education options, and a lack of vocational training pathways within the communities. These challenges contribute to young people leaving school early and unprepared to enter the workforce. Strategies to boost attendance, strengthen local access to education and training, and creating employment pathways within the community are important to developing sustainable remote workforces.

Table 16: Indigenous Young People Enrolled in an Education Institute

Community	Age groups:	Total Indigenous people in age bracket	Total no. enrolled in an educational institution	% of age group enrolled
Imanpa ⁴⁴	0-4 years	4	0	0%
	5-14 years	32	20	63%
	15-24 years	21	0	0%
Mutitjulu ⁴⁵	0-4 years	23	5	22%
	5-14 years	33	30	91%
	15-24 years	44	0	0%
Kaltukatjara ⁴⁶	0-4 years	20	6	30%
	5-14 years	27	22	81%
	15-24 years	23	8	35%

Source: Data compiled from Australian Bureau of Statistics (2021), 2021 Census: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples Profile, I01

⁴³ Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority (2021), Shaping Our Future: Children's Education and Care National Workforce Strategy. <https://www.acecqa.gov.au/sites/default/files/2021-10/ShapingOurFutureChildrensEducationandCareNationalWorkforceStrategy-September2021.pdf>

⁴⁴ Australian Bureau of Statistics (2021). 2021 Census: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples Profile, Imanpa. I01 Selected Person Characteristics by Indigenous Status by Sex. Canberra: ABS, 2021

⁴⁵ Australian Bureau of Statistics (2021). 2021 Census: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples Profile, Mutitjulu. I01 Selected Person Characteristics by Indigenous Status by Sex. Canberra: ABS, 2021

⁴⁶ Australian Bureau of Statistics (2021). 2021 Census: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples Profile, Kaltukatjara. I01 Selected Person Characteristics by Indigenous Status by Sex. Canberra: ABS, 2021

Table 17: School Profile Data

Metric	Mutitjulu School ⁴⁷	Nyangatjatjara College, Yulara Sub campuses: Imanpa Primary Campus Imanpa Secondary Campus Kaltukatjara Primary Campus Kaltukatjara Secondary Campus ⁴⁸ (* Data from all campuses has been consolidated and reported collectively under Nyangatjatjara College, Yulara)
Location	Mutitjulu	Yulara, Imanpa, Docker River
Year Range	T-6	T-10
Enrolment Numbers	49	61
Aboriginal Students	100%	100%
Non-English Language Background	89%	96%
Student-to-Teacher Ratio	12.25:1	4.06:1
Student attendance rate (Semester 1, 2024)	49%	33%
Students attending 90%+ of the Time	5%	1%
ICSEA Value (National Average)	627 (1000)	637(1000)

Source: © Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) 2009 to present, unless otherwise indicated. This material was downloaded from the ACARA website (www.acara.edu.au) (<https://www.myschool.edu.au/home>) (accessed 14 July 2025) and was not modified. The material is licensed under CC BY 4.0 (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>). ACARA does not endorse any product that uses ACARA material or make any representations as to the quality of such products. Any product that uses material published on this website should not be taken to be affiliated with ACARA or have the sponsorship or approval of ACARA. It is up to each person to make their own assessment of the product

Common educational challenges and contextual factors across the schools include:

- **Cultural Context:** All five schools serve 100% Aboriginal students with non-English language backgrounds. School curriculums, Vocational Education and Training (VET) courses and further education options could incorporate culturally responsive teaching practices, including facilitating classes in Indigenous languages, to improve engagement and learning outcomes (AITSL, 2020; Whatman & Duncan, 2020).
- **Low Socio-Educational Advantage:** The low ICSEA values (within the bottom 5% nationally) indicate that students come from communities with limited socio-educational advantage. This is typically associated with factors such as lower levels of parental education, lower occupational status, and broader socio-economic disadvantage. These conditions can hinder academic achievement and limit students’ pathways into further education or employment. The low ICSEA values underscore the importance of targeted support and resourcing to address the significant educational challenges faced by students in these contexts.
- **Low Attendance:** Attendance rates at both the Mutitjulu school and Nyangatjatjara College campuses (Yulara (attended by Mutitjulu students), Imanpa, and Docker River) are below 50%, with the number of

⁴⁷ Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (2024), Mutitjulu School Profile, My School 2024. <https://www.myschool.edu.au/school/50107>

⁴⁸ Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (2024), Nyangatjatjara College Profiles, My School 2024. <https://www.myschool.edu.au/school/50160>

students attending 90% or more of the time at 5% or lower. This contributes to lower literacy and numeracy outcomes, as evidenced by correlations between attendance rates and NAPLAN scores, which in turn affects workforce readiness.

Literacy and Numeracy

National Assessment Program - Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) performance data indicates that scores across all three community schools are consistently below the national average, with participation rates also remaining low. National averages are provided in brackets alongside the NAPLAN scores in Table 17 comparison.

The NAPLAN results for Mutitjulu School are from 2024, while the most recent available results for Nyangatjatjara College are from 2023.

Table 18: NAPLAN Scores

Subject	Year Level	Mutitjulu School ⁴⁹ Up to T-6	Nyangatjatjara College (Yulara, Imanpa, Docker River campuses) ⁵⁰ Up to T-10
Reading	3	No scores provided	No scores provided
	5	326 (492)	No scores provided
	7	N/A	294 (536)
	9	N/A	No scores provided
Writing	3	No scores provided	No scores provided
	5	335 (485)	No scores provided
	7	N/A	235 (534)
	9	N/A	No scores provided
Spelling	3	224 (401)	No scores provided
	5	292 (486)	No scores provided
	7	N/A	No scores provided
	9	N/A	No scores provided
Grammar	3	194 (409)	No scores provided
	5	228(498)	No scores provided
	7	N/A	No scores provided
	9	N/A	No scores provided
Numeracy	3	258 (404)	No scores provided
	5	310 (489)	No scores provided
	7	N/A	No scores provided
	9	N/A	No scores provided
Participation Rate		87% (95%)	41% (95%)

NAPLAN data may be incomplete due to student absences, exemptions, small cohort sizes, or data suppression for privacy. *No scores provided* indicates unavailable data for that specific subject and year level. *N/A* indicates that the school does not cater to those year levels.

Source: © Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) 2009 to present, unless otherwise indicated. This material was downloaded from the ACARA website (www.acara.edu.au) (<https://www.myschool.edu.au/home>) (accessed 14 July 2025) and was not modified. The material is licensed under CC BY 4.0 (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>). ACARA does not endorse any product that uses ACARA material or make any representations as to the quality of such products. Any product that uses material published on this website should not be taken to be affiliated with ACARA or have the sponsorship or approval of ACARA. It is up to each person to make their own assessment of the product

⁴⁹ Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (2024), Mutitjulu School Profile, My School 2024. <https://www.myschool.edu.au/school/50107/naplan/results>

⁵⁰ Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (2024), Nyangatjatjara College School Profile, My School 2024. <https://www.myschool.edu.au/school/50160/naplan/results>

The data shows:

- **A significant performance gap:** All reported scores are below national averages across all subjects and year levels.
- **Low participation rates:** Nyangatjatjara College which services Primary and Secondary students in Imanpa, Docker River and Mutitjulu through its main and sub campuses have participation rates of 41% which are significantly below the national average of 95%.
- **Incomplete data:** Many scores are not provided, indicating potential issues with test administration or student participation.
- **Remote education challenges:** This data reflects the broader trend of educational disparities for remote Indigenous students highlighted through the National NAPLAN results.⁵¹ As English is not the first language for most students, these results should be interpreted within the broader linguistic context of the communities. The 2021 Census indicates that Indigenous languages are the primary languages spoken with 96% of Aboriginal residents in these communities indicating that they primarily speak an Australian Indigenous language at home. Only 3% of respondents across all three communities speak only English at home.⁵²

The language context impacts learning outcomes and is perhaps best illustrated by the Yulara School NAPLAN scores which although a remote school has scores that are very close to and in some categories higher than 'All Australian Students' scores. A noteworthy differentiation being that 64% of students⁵³ are from an English-speaking household. It also has an ICSEA value of 1002, with the average ICSEA value being 1000. This highlights the need for workforce planning to take into consideration that most Aboriginal community members come from a language background other than English and education and training initiatives are likely to be more effective when delivered in the community's first language.

The language, literacy and numeracy context influences workforce planning and highlights the need for diverse employment pathways. Acknowledging that most remote Aboriginal school leavers come from non-English speaking backgrounds and have distinct learning styles and cultural knowledge systems would strengthen the relevance of these pathways. This context also reinforces the importance of providing ongoing opportunities for skills development.

Vocational Education and Training (VET)

Table 19: VET Student Data 2023 compared to 2016

⁵¹ SNAICC (2024). 2024 NAPLAN results reveal need for early years and transition to school support – SNAICC in the News. <https://www.snaicc.org.au/2024-naplan-results-reveal-need-for-early-years-and-transition-to-school-support-snaicc-in-the-news/>

⁵² Data compiled from Australian Bureau of Statistics (2021), 2021 Census: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples Profile, Imanpa, Mutitjulu and Kaltukatjara I05 (Canberra: ABS, 2021)

⁵³ Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (2024), Yulara School Profile, My School 2024. <https://www.myschool.edu.au/school/50136>

VET STUDENT DATA - IMANPA										
Industry by NT VET Funding	2016 VET Student Enrolments		2016 Unit Completions		2023 VET Student Enrolments		2023 Unit Completions		Student Enrolment Change 2016-23	Unit Completion Change 2016-23
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	No.
Building and Construction	4	31%	4	7%	14	61%	44	100%	10	40
Business and Clerical	0	0%	-	-	5	22%	0	0%	5	0
Community Services, Health and Education	7	54%	29	48%	4	17%	0	0%	-3	-29
Sales and Personal Service	2	15%	28	46%	0	0%	0	0%	-2	-28
Total	13	100%	61	100%	23	100%	44	100%	10	-17
VET STUDENT DATA - MUTITJULU										
Industry by NT VET Funding	2016 VET Student Enrolments		2016 Unit Completions		2023 VET Student Enrolments		2023 Unit Completions		Student Enrolment Change 2016-23	Unit Completion Change 2016-23
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	No.
Arts, Entertainment, Sports and Recreation	30	37%	59	38%	0	0%	0	0%	-30	-59
Business and Clerical	39	48%	76	49%	0	0%	0	0%	-39	-76
Community Services, Health and Education	11	13%	17	11%	6	10%	17	6%	-5	0
Engineering and Mining	0	0%	0	0%	16	26%	72	25%	16	72
Primary Industry	0	0%	0	0%	37	60%	202	69%	37	202
Sales and Personal Service	0	0%	0	0%	1	2%	0	0%	1	0
Tourism and Hospitality	2	2%	2	1%	0	0%	0	0%	-2	-2
Transport and Storage	0	0%	0	0%	2	3%	2	1%	2	2
Total	82	100%	154	100%	62	100%	293	100%	-20	139
VET STUDENT DATA – DOCKER RIVER (KALTUKATJARA)										
Industry by NT VET Funding	2016 VET Student Enrolments		2016 Unit Completions		2023 VET Student Enrolments		2023 Unit Completions		Student Enrolment Change 2016-23	Unit Completion Change 2016-23
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	No.
Arts, Entertainment, Sports and Recreation	0	0%	0	0%	4	33%	4	31%	4	4
Business and Clerical	17	74%	20	32%	7	58%	3	23%	-10	-17
Community Services, Health and Education	6	26%	42	68%	0	0%	0	0%	-6	-42
Primary Industry	0	0%	0	0%	1	8%	6	46%	1	6
Total	23	100%	62	100%	12	100%	13	100%	-11	-49

Source: Department of Trade, Business and Innovation, Northern Territory Government (2025). 2023 Remote Towns Jobs Profiles, Imanpa. Mutitjulu, and Kaltukatjara Northern Territory Government, Darwin.

Data from the 2023 Remote Towns Jobs Profile⁵⁴ reveals that:

➤ In **Imanpa**:

- There was a 76% (10) increase in VET students from 2016 (13 to 23 students).
- VET activity with the most students was Building and Construction (14) followed by Business and Clerical (5) and Community Services, Health and Education (4).
- Building and Construction emerged as a key training area (61% (14) for student enrolments, (50% (55) of unit enrolments, 100% of unit completions)
- Business and Clerical emerged as a new area of interest for VET training activity - 22% (5) of students, 44% (49) of unit enrolments, as opposed to 0% student interest in 2016.
- Community services, health, and education training saw an all-around decline in activity.
- Unit enrolments increased by 58% (48 to 111)
- Unit completions declined by 28% (61 to 44).

➤ In **Mutitjulu**:

- There was a 24% (20) decrease in VET students from 2016 (82 to 62 students)
- VET activity with the most students was Primary Industry with 37 students (60% of total students in 2023). This was followed by Engineering and Mining - 16 students and Community Services, Health and Education - 6.
- Primary Industry emerged as a key training area (60% (37) of student enrolments, 55% (203) of unit enrolments, 69% of unit completions)
- Engineering and Mining emerged as a new area of VET training activity - 26% (16) of students, 32% (118) of unit enrolments and 25% of unit completions, as opposed to 0% students in 2016.
- Community services, health, and education training declined from 11 students in 2016 to 6 students in 2023.
- Unit enrolments increased by 464% (65 to 367)
- Unit completions increased 90% (154 to 293). The most completions were in Primary industry (202), followed by Engineering and Mining (72).

➤ In **Docker River**:

- There was a 47% (11) decrease in VET students from 2016 (23 to 12 students)
- Business and Clerical remained the training area with the most activity, receiving 58% (7) of students. However, this was a 58% drop in students, from 17 students in 2016.
- Arts, Entertainment, Sports and Recreation emerged as a new area of VET training activity in 2022-3 - 33% (4) of students, 9% (7) of unit enrolments, as opposed to 0% students in 2016.
- Community services, health, and education training declined from 6 students in 2016 to 0 students in 2023.
- Unit enrolments increased by 272% (22 to 82)
- Unit completions declined by 79% (62 to 13). The highest unit completions were in Primary Industry (6).

⁵⁴ Department of Trade, Business and Innovation, Northern Territory Government (2025). 2023 Remote Towns Jobs Profiles, Imanpa, Mutitjulu, Kaltukatjara. Northern Territory Government, Darwin.

Table 20: Student count for DET Funded VET Programs in Iyarrka

Program:	2022	2023	2024
Certificate I in Visual Arts	6	5	-
Certificate II in Conservation and Ecosystem Management	9	34	-
Certificate II in Engineering	-	16	-
Certificate II in Local Government	-	9	9
Certificate II in Retail Services	-	5	-
Certificate III in Civil Construction Plant Operations	-	6	5
Certificate III in Conservation and Ecosystem Management	5	5	-
Certificate III in Individual Support	5	5	5
Certificate III in Local Government	-	-	5
Certificate IV in Leadership and Management	-	5	5
Certificate IV in Local Government	-	-	5
Learner Support	5	-	8
NT White Card	-	-	6

* All figures indicated as "5" in the above data have been modified to protect student privacy. Actual values are ≤ 5.

Table 21: A&T count for Apprenticeships and Traineeships in Iyarrka

Program:	2025
Certificate III in Local Government	5

* All figures indicated as "5" in the above data have been modified to protect student privacy. Actual values are ≤ 5.

**The A&T count for all other programs from 2022-2024 was zero.

Source: Department of Trade, Business and Asian Relations. (2025). Data provided to Desert Knowledge Australia for report purposes only. [Unpublished raw data].

The above data was provided to Desert Knowledge Australia by the Department of Trade, Business and Asian Relations for the purposes of this report only. This information is not intended for wider distribution or public circulation without prior written permission from the Department.

The above data depicts the students funded for Certificate programs in the entire Iyarrka region.

As is reflected in the Remote Profiles data for Mutitjulu and Docker River, there was an uptake of Certificate courses in the Primary Industry, and Engineering and Mining Industries in 2023.

In 2024 there was a greater uptake of Certificate courses for working in Local Government. The total student count enrolled in Certificates in 2024 fell significantly from a total of 90 students in 2023 to 48.

These trends have important implications for regional workforce planning initiatives:

1. All three communities experienced a drop in enrolments in Community, Health and Education, which raises concerns about future availability of local workers in these essential fields and has implications for long term local service capacity. In planning for workforce planning, the government could look at incentivising training and job pathways in health, aged care, early childhood, and education with targeted scholarships, traineeships and paid placements. It could also consider mobile training units or cultural support models to re-engage learners in these fields.
2. The overall reduction in VET engagement indicates a need for policy intervention to improve engagement, training accessibility and relevance.
3. There is significant uptake in unit enrolments without matching completions, which either suggest program mismatch, delivery challenges or student support issues.

4. Ongoing investment in building and construction training would align well with the Northern Territory's 10-year remote housing initiative and the increasing need for skilled workers in the sector.
5. Primary Industry emerged as a key area of activity in both Mutitjulu and Docker River in 2023, and continued support would help realise its growth potential in the Northern Territory.

Engagement in Tertiary Education

According to the 2021 Census, no Aboriginal residents in the three communities were recorded as having attended university, other higher education institutions, or vocational education and training programs.

Table 22: Tertiary Educational Institute Attended

Educational Institution Type	Imanpa ⁵⁵	Mutitjulu ⁵⁶	Docker River ⁵⁷
University or other higher education	0	0	0
Vocational education (including TAFE and private training providers)	0	0	0
Other type of educational institution	0	3	0
Type of educational institution not stated	25	19	3

Source: Compiled from Australian Bureau of Statistics (2021). 2021 Census of Population and Housing Community Profiles for Imanpa, Mutitjulu, and Docker River

These findings highlight the need for improved pathways and access to tertiary education in remote communities.

Qualifications

Table 23: Highest Qualification (Non-School)

Non-School Qualification	Imanpa ⁵⁸	Mutitjulu ⁵⁹	Docker River ⁶⁰
Postgraduate Degree, Postgraduate Diploma or Postgraduate Certificate	0	0	0
Bachelor's degree	0	0	0
Advanced Diploma or Diploma	0	0	0
Certificate III & IV	3	5	3
Certificate I & II	0	0	0
Certificate Level, nfd	0	0	4

⁵⁵ Australian Bureau of Statistics (2021) Census of Population and Housing: Imanpa. Table I06, Type of Educational Institution Attending (Full-Time/Part-Time Student Status by Age) by Indigenous Status by Sex. (Canberra: ABS, 2021)

⁵⁶ Australian Bureau of Statistics (2021) Census of Population and Housing: Mutitjulu, Table I06, Type of Educational Institution Attending (Full-Time/Part-Time Student Status by Age) by Indigenous Status by Sex. (Canberra: ABS, 2021)

⁵⁷ Australian Bureau of Statistics (2021) Census of Population and Housing: Kaltukatjara. Table I06, Type of Educational Institution Attending (Full-Time/Part-Time Student Status by Age) by Indigenous Status by Sex. (Canberra: ABS, 2021)

⁵⁸ Australian Bureau of Statistics (2021) Census of Population and Housing: Imanpa. Table I20c, Highest Non-School Qualification: Level of Education (A) By Indigenous Status by Age by Sex

⁵⁹ Australian Bureau of Statistics (2021) Census of Population and Housing: Mutitjulu. Table I20c, Highest Non-School Qualification: Level of Education (A) By Indigenous Status by Age by Sex

⁶⁰ Australian Bureau of Statistics (2021) Census of Population and Housing: Kaltukatjara. Table I20c, Highest Non-School Qualification: Level of Education (A) By Indigenous Status by Age by Sex

Total	3	5	7
-------	---	---	---

Source: Compiled from Australian Bureau of Statistics (2021). 2021 Census of Population and Housing Community Profiles for Imanpa, Mutitjulu, and Docker River

The 2021 Census data reveal few formal qualifications across the three communities:

- 0 residents hold bachelor's degrees or higher
- 0 residents hold Diplomas
- 11 residents have Certificate III & IV qualifications between the three communities
- 0 residents hold Certificate I & II qualifications
- 4 residents have Certificates in not for degree (nfd) studies in Docker River

When viewed alongside current job vacancies, the data highlights the challenges many community members face in meeting qualification requirements for available roles, which are already limited in number. Addressing these barriers to workforce participation may involve expanding on-Country education and training opportunities, increasing access to on-the-job training and traineeships, and reviewing qualification requirements for certain positions to better align with local contexts.

While important initiative like the National Indigenous Training Academy (NITA) exists to empower Indigenous Australians through vocational education and training, young people in remote communities often face challenges navigating the application processes or taking the initiative to enrol. A community support role to assist individuals with the application and relocation processes would help improve participation.

2.3 Employment

Building on the analysis of the education and training landscape, this section of the report examines current employment patterns, key industries, and job vacancies. The employment landscape across Imanpa, Mutitjulu and Docker River reveals trends and opportunities to inform workforce planning. Understanding where jobs currently exist and where demand is growing provides context for aligning training opportunities with employment pathways.

Key Employment Industries

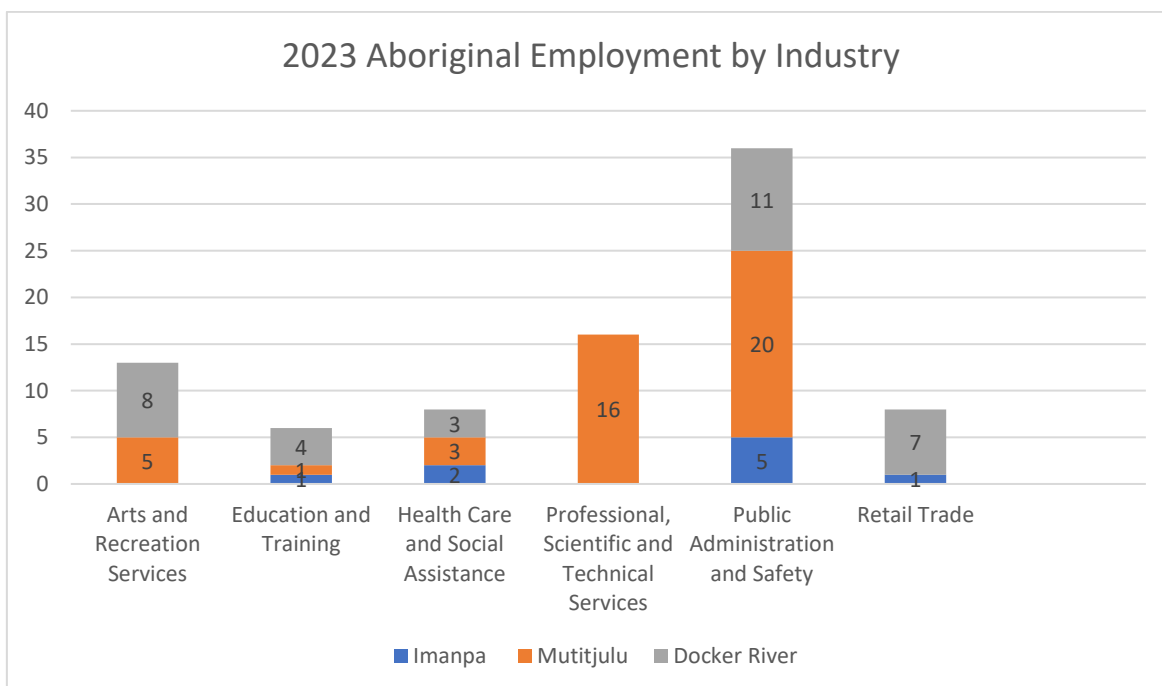


Figure 7: 2023 Aboriginal Employment by Industry

Source: Department of Trade, Business and Innovation, Northern Territory Government (2025). 2023 Remote Towns Jobs Profiles, Northern Territory Government, Darwin

The 2023 Remote Towns Jobs Profile for Imanpa, Mutitjulu and Docker River provides Aboriginal employment data by industry⁶¹:

- Public Administration and Safety had the highest Aboriginal Industry employment total of 68% (36 out of 53 employed across the entire industry). 20 employed were from Mutitjulu, 11 from Docker River, and 5 from Imanpa.
- Professional, Scientific and Technical Services was the industry that hired the second highest number of Aboriginal workers. However, only 35% (16 out of 46 employed across the Professional, Scientific and Technical Services industry) of jobs within the industry were filled by Aboriginal people, and all the positions were filled in Mutitjulu, which suggests higher-skilled or specialised roles are more concentrated in certain areas.
- Arts and Recreation Services had hired 13 Aboriginal people out of a total of 28 positions across the communities (46% of positions within the industry). Imanpa is not represented in this sector as it does not currently have a functioning Art Centre.
- Health Care and Social Assistance employed 8 Aboriginal people (50% - 8 of 16 total positions), 3 being in Docker River, 3 being in Mutitjulu and 2 in Imanpa; fairly evenly distributed among all three communities
- Data from this period indicated there was no employment in Primary Industry across the three communities, despite 39 students being funded to undertake Certificate II and III in

⁶¹ Department of Trade, Business and Innovation, Northern Territory Government (2025). 2023 Remote Towns Jobs Profiles, Imanpa, Northern Territory Government, Darwin. Pg 19.; Department of Trade, Business and Innovation, Northern Territory Government (2025). 2023 Remote Towns Jobs Profiles, Mutitjulu. Northern Territory Government, Darwin. Pg 19.; Department of Trade, Business and Innovation, Northern Territory Government (2025). 2023 Remote Towns Jobs Profiles, Kaltukatjara. Northern Territory Government, Darwin. Pg 19.

Conservation and Ecosystem Management (CIICEM) in 2023, which is classified under the broader Agriculture, Horticulture, Conservation and Land Management Training Package, grouped within Primary Industry.

Occupational Distribution

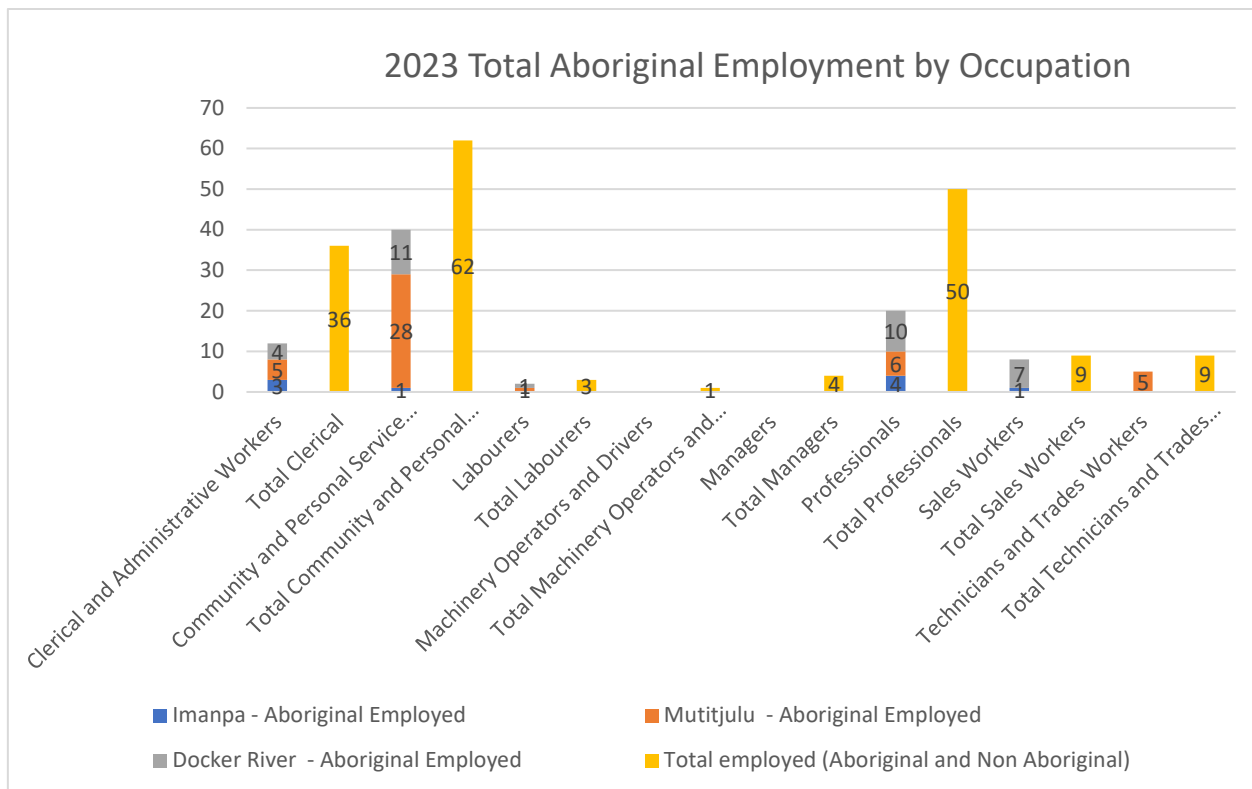


Figure 8: 2023 Total Aboriginal Employment by Occupation

Source: Department of Trade, Business and Innovation, Northern Territory Government (2025). 2023 Remote Towns Jobs Profiles, Northern Territory Government, Darwin

The 2023 Remote Towns Jobs Profile for Imanpa, Mutitjulu and Docker River⁶² provides insight into Aboriginal employment patterns across occupations. Of a total of 174 jobs held across the three communities, 87 (50%) are filled by Aboriginal persons.

- Community and Personal Service Workers formed the largest occupational group with 62 positions and the highest Aboriginal Employment (40 - 66%), reflecting a strong emphasis on service-oriented roles across all communities. These roles often require cultural knowledge and are focused on direct service delivery to the community. These include age care, childcare, social welfare, and hospitality and tourism service sectors.
- Professionals formed the second largest occupational group with 50 positions and the second highest Aboriginal employment rate (20 - 40%), These are teachers, health professionals, and other specialised roles requiring formal qualifications.

⁶² Department of Trade, Business and Innovation, Northern Territory Government (2025). 2023 Remote Towns Jobs Profiles, Imanpa, Northern Territory Government, Darwin. Pg 16.; Department of Trade, Business and Innovation, Northern Territory Government (2025). 2023 Remote Towns Jobs Profiles, Mutitjulu. Northern Territory Government, Darwin. Pg 16.; Department of Trade, Business and Innovation, Northern Territory Government (2025). 2023 Remote Towns Jobs Profiles, Kaltukatjara. Northern Territory Government, Darwin. Pg 16.

- Clerical and Administrative Workers constituted the third largest occupational group with 36 position and 12 Aboriginal filled positions (33%).
- This was closely followed by Sales Workers which employed 9 people across the communities, 8 of which identified as Aboriginal.
- Managers: There were no Aboriginal personal employed in this occupation (0 of 4 positions)⁶³

This distribution underscores strong Aboriginal representation in community and personal service worker roles, while highlighting opportunities for increasing Aboriginal representation in management positions through targeted leadership development pathways.

Workforce Demand

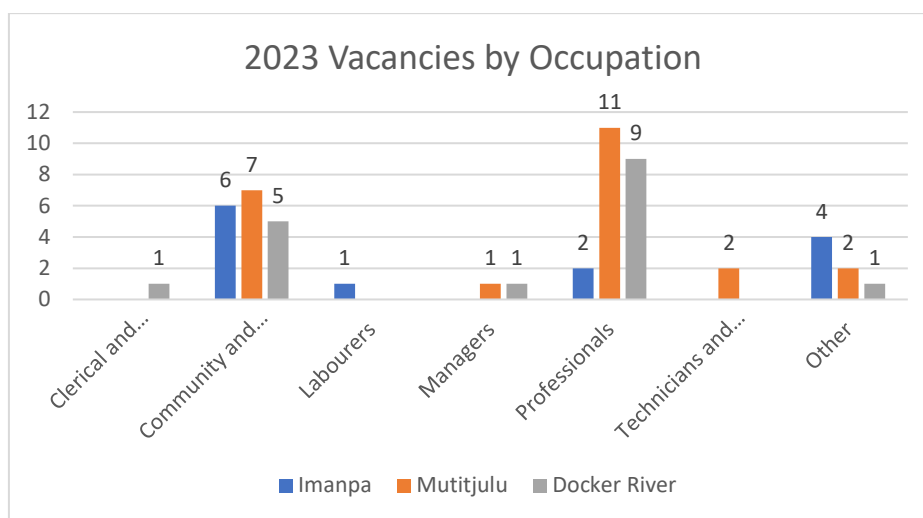


Figure 9: 2023 Vacancies by Occupation

Source: Department of Trade, Business and Innovation, Northern Territory Government (2025). 2023 Remote Towns Jobs Profiles, Northern Territory Government, Darwin

Imanpa, Mutitjulu and Docker River have a total of 53 vacant positions: (Imanpa -13, Mutitjulu -23, Docker River - 17)⁶⁴.

- Professionals accounted for 22 (41%) of the vacancies including 9 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Land and Sea Rangers, 6 Park Rangers, 5 Classroom Teachers, 2 Recreation Officers.
- Community and Personal Service Worker roles accounted for 18 (34%) vacancies, including 4 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Workers, 4 Tourist Information Officers, 3 Family Support Workers, 3 Youth Workers, 1 Welfare Support Worker, 1 Social Worker and 1 Child Care Worker.
- Indigenous-identified roles account for 13 of the vacancies (24% of vacancies)⁶⁵.

⁶³ Ibid

⁶⁴ Department of Trade, Business and Innovation, Northern Territory Government (2025). 2023 Remote Towns Jobs Profiles, Imanpa, Northern Territory Government, Darwin. Pg 16.; Department of Trade, Business and Innovation, Northern Territory Government (2025). 2023 Remote Towns Jobs Profiles, Mutitjulu. Northern Territory Government, Darwin. Pg 16.; Department of Trade, Business and Innovation, Northern Territory Government (2025). 2023 Remote Towns Jobs Profiles, Kaltukatjara. Northern Territory Government, Darwin. Pg 16.

⁶⁵ Department of Trade, Business and Innovation, Northern Territory Government (2025). 2023 Remote Towns Jobs Profiles, Imanpa, Northern Territory Government, Darwin. Pg 16.; Department of Trade, Business and Innovation, Northern Territory Government (2025). 2023 Remote Towns Jobs Profiles, Mutitjulu. Northern Territory Government, Darwin. Pg 16.; Department of Trade, Business and Innovation, Northern Territory Government (2025). 2023 Remote Towns Jobs Profiles, Kaltukatjara. Northern Territory Government, Darwin. Pg 16.

There were 281 Community Development Program participants in 2023 - more than five times the number of job vacancies (53).

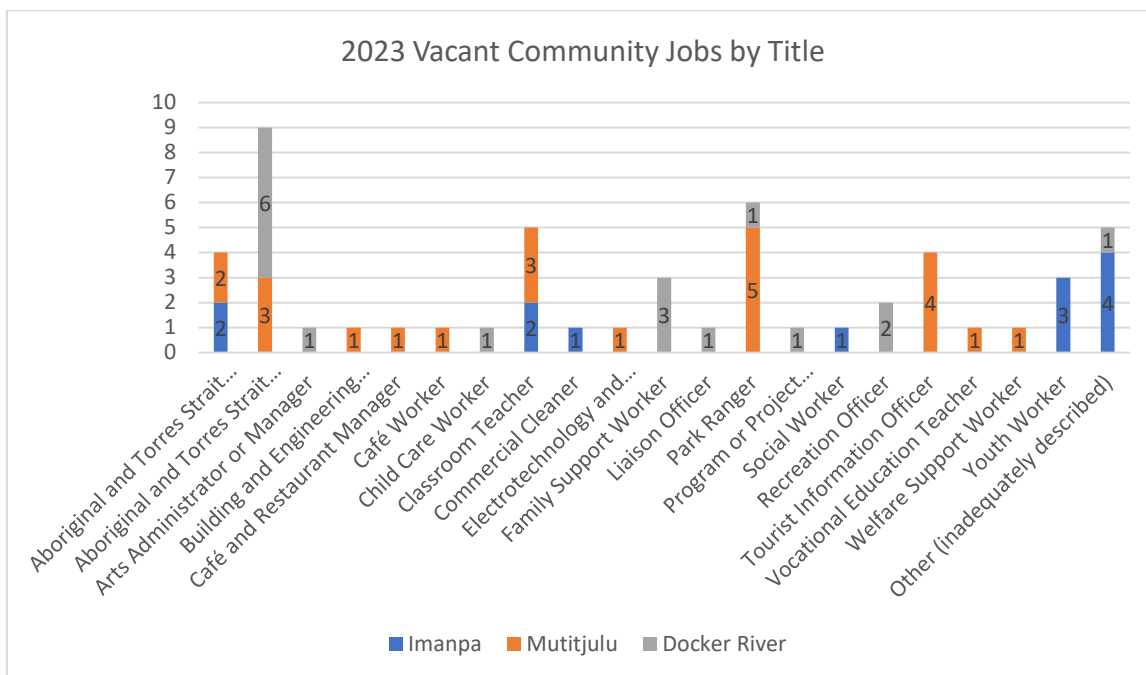









Figure 10: 2023 Vacant Community Jobs by Title








Source: Department of Trade, Business and Innovation, Northern Territory Government (2025). 2023 Remote Towns Jobs Profiles, Imanpa, Mutitjulu, and Kaltukatjara Northern Territory Government, Darwin.







Analysis of 2023 vacancy requirements reveal:

- Entry-level positions requiring minimal formal qualifications: 2 positions (3% of vacancies)
 - Café Worker (1)
 - Commercial Cleaner (1)
- Roles with accessible qualification pathways: account for 13 positions (24% of vacancies) with culturally appropriate training available through Batchelor Institute or on-Country programs, including Aboriginal Rangers (9), and Aboriginal Education Workers (4). These opportunities offer immediate employment options while establishing pathways for further skills development.

Table 24: Qualifications Required and Education Pathways to 2023 Role Vacancies

Occupation	No. of Roles	Qualification	Details	Education/ Training Provider	Cultural Framework
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Worker	4	Certificate III in School Based Education Support	18 months, fee free for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students	Batchelor Institute	Caring for Family and Community 
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Land and Sea Ranger	9	Certificate II in Conservation and Ecosystem Management On the Job Training	6 months, fee free	Charles Darwin University (Alice Springs Campus)	Working on Country 
Arts Administrator or Manager	1	Certificate IV in Leadership and Management	1 year, fee free	Charles Darwin University (Alice Springs, Danala Campus, Online)	Servicing the Community 
Building and Engineering Technician	1	Certificate II in Engineering	2 years, fee exemptions for Centrelink payment recipients, NT government supported places and remote location tuition fee exemptions	Charles Darwin University (Casuarina)	Building the Community 
Café and Restaurant Manager	1	Diploma of Hospitality Management	2 years, fee exemptions for Centrelink payment recipients, NT government supported places and Remote location fee exemptions	Charles Darwin University (Palmerston, Alice Springs Campus)	Servicing the Community 
Café Worker	1	On the job training	-	-	Servicing the Community 
Child Care Worker	1	Certificate III in Early Childhood Education and Care	18 months fee free	Batchelor Institute	Caring for Family and Community 

Classroom Teacher	5	Bachelor of Education (Primary or Secondary)	4 years, Commonwealth Supported places available	Charles Darwin University (Darwin Campus)	Caring for Family and Community 
Commercial Cleaner	1	On the job training	-	-	Servicing the Community 
Electrotechnology and Telecommunications Trade Worker	1	Certificate III in Electrotechnology Electrician	4 years fee exemptions for Centrelink payment recipients, NT government supported places, and Remote location tuition fee exemptions	Charles Darwin University (Alice Springs, Casuarina Campus)	Building the Community 
Family Support Worker	3	Certificate IV in Community Services	1 year, fee free TAFE	Charles Darwin University (Alice Springs, Casuarina Campus)	Caring for Family and Community 
Liaison Officer	1	Diploma of Arts	1 year, Commonwealth supported places	Charles Darwin University (Casuarina Campus)	Servicing the Community 
Park Ranger	6	Certificate II in Conservation and Ecosystem Management	6 months, NT Government supported places for eligible NT residents	Charles Darwin University (Casuarina, Remote Campus)	Working on Country 
Program or Project Administrator	1	Certificate IV in Business	12 months, subsidised by NT Government, nominal fees apply	Batchelor Institute	Servicing the Community 

Social Worker	1	Bachelor of Social Work	4 years, Commonwealth supported places available	Charles Darwin University (Casuarina Campus)	Caring for Family and Community 
Recreation Officer	2	Certificate IV in Community Services	1 year, fee free TAFE	Charles Darwin University (Alice Springs, Casuarina Campus)	Caring for Family and Community 
Tourist Information Officer	4	Certificate III in Tourism	1 year fee free for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students	Charles Darwin University (Palmerston, Alice Springs Campus)	Servicing the Community 
Vocational Education Teacher	1	Certificate IV in Training and Assessment + Degree in area of teaching speciality	1.5 years, fee paying	Charles Darwin University (Palmerston, Alice Springs Campus)	Caring for Family and Community 
Welfare Support Worker	1	Certificate IV in Community Services	1 year, fee free TAFE	Charles Darwin University (Alice Springs, Casuarina Campus)	Caring for Family and Community 
Youth Worker	3	Bachelor of Social Work	4 years, Commonwealth supported places available	Charles Darwin University (Casuarina Campus)	Caring for Family and Community 

Source: Department of Trade, Business and Asian Relations (2023) Remote Towns Jobs Profiles, Northern Territory Government, January 2025, Darwin⁶⁶

⁶⁶ Department of Trade, Business and Asian Relations (2023) Remote Towns Jobs Profiles: Imanpa, Mutitjulu, and Kaltukatjara Northern Territory Government, January 2025, Darwin. Pg 22

This employment analysis highlights the following workforce planning priorities:

1. **Develop Leadership Pathways:** Create pathways into professional and managerial roles through leadership development programs, scholarships or mentoring schemes for Aboriginal staff in education, health and governance, and upskilling initiatives to meet formal qualification requirements.
2. **Target Entry-Level and Transition jobs:** Only 3% of vacancies are entry level. Encourage employers to create more stepping stone jobs and offer job readiness programs linked to these entry roles for CDP participants.
3. **Expand Culturally Appropriate on Country Training:** With 13 roles being Indigenous identified and having accessible pathway programs through Batchelor Institute and On Country training, scale these programs to improve uptake and relevance and create wrap around support for completion.
4. **Align VET completion with Employment Avenues:** VET uptake and unit completion in Primary Industry in Munitjulu in 2023 was significant but according to 2023 Remote Towns Jobs Profile Aboriginal employment data by industry, there was no uptake of jobs in this industry from the region. The Primary Industry is a significant employer and source of economic activity in regional and remote areas of NT¹; avenues to connect VET student graduates with employment pathways into the relevant industry need to be strengthened.

2.4 Economic Context

Economic factors significantly shape workforce participation. This section examines cost of living pressures, income levels, and investment opportunities that influence employment. Understanding this economic context provides key insights for developing strategies that address barriers while leveraging available resources.

Dataset disclaimer - Data Sources

1. *Demographic data is sourced from ABS Census of Population and Housing, 2021, and ABS Regional Population Growth.*
2. *Economic data is sourced from NIEIR, 2024; and .id modelling of NIEIR and ABS Census data.*
3. *N.B. Estimates of employment in small areas is highly challenging due to inabilities to access timely and accurate employment information in Australia. NIEIR make attempts to model annual employment estimates. These will differ from publicly available Census counts due to a number of reasons including:*

- *the Census is a snapshot at a point in time (August) and does not highlight if someone was employed throughout the year at another time.*
- *the Census contains an undercount of the population due to people being absent or not filling out the form on Census Day. See more at <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/people/population/2021-census-overcount-and-undercount/latest-release>;*
- *the Census estimate of 'employed' is based on people correctly filling in the form. This is not always the case as people often fill in their employment status, industry of employment, and/or place of work wrong.*

These reasons lead to varying employment estimates. For example, the ABS Labour Force original estimate of employment in the Northern Territory in August 2021 is 131,000, however, the 2021 census estimate of employed residents is only 107,000.

Gross Regional Product (GRP)

The economic profile of Imanpa, Mutitjulu, Docker River, and Yulara township provides important context for understanding local economic activity and workforce opportunities.

The region's economic output can be measured in two complementary ways:

- Total Place of Work (POW) Gross Regional Product (GRP): \$140.6 million⁶⁷ - which represents all economic value generated within a region, produced by workers who are employed in the region, regardless of where those workers reside.
- Employed Resident GRP: \$112.1 million⁶⁸ – measures the economic value generated by residents of a particular region through their employment, regardless of where they work (even if it is outside the region).

The 20% gap between these two figures (resident GRP is 80% of total POW GRP) suggests that the local economy is largely driven by residents rather than external workers or companies.

Economic activity is concentrated in accommodation, food services, retail, administration, and arts. The region also benefits from the tourism industry in Uluru and Yulara, which is in Iyarrka.

Table 25: Total Regional versus Indigenous GRP Data

Category	POW Workforce Size	Workforce Size (Employed Residents)	POW GRP (\$)	Employed Resident GRP (\$)	POW GRP Per Capita (\$)	Employed Resident GRP Per Capita (\$)
Total	1,495	1,135	140,610,970	112,145,468	94,054	98,806
Indigenous	384	365	40,026,767	37,342,770	104,236	102,308

Data source: ID Consulting Pty Ltd (2025). Economic and Demographic Analysis of the Tanami Region. Unpublished report prepared for Desert Knowledge Australia, 2025

- The total Place of Work GRP for the region is \$140.6 million, while the Employed Resident GRP is \$112.1 million. This shows that the region produces more economic output than what its employed residents alone contribute. The same trend appears for the Indigenous workforce, where Place of Work GRP is \$40.0 million compared to \$37.3 million in Employed Resident GRP. This suggests that the region relies on people coming from outside the area to support its economic activity.
- The POW GRP per capita for Indigenous workers is \$104,236, compared to \$94,054 for the total workforce. Similarly, the Employed Resident GRP per capita is \$102,308 for Indigenous workers, versus \$98,806 overall. This suggests that Indigenous workers in this region may be participating in higher-value roles or working more consistently than average.

⁶⁷ ID Consulting Pty Ltd (2025). Economic and Demographic Analysis of the Tanami Region. Unpublished report prepared for Desert Knowledge Australia, 2025. Demographic data is sourced from ABS Census of Population and Housing, 2021, and ABS Regional Population Growth. Economic data is sourced from NIEIR, 2024; and .id modelling of NIEIR and ABS Census data.

⁶⁸ Ibid

- There are more people working in the region (1,495) than there are employed residents (1,135). This means around 360 people are commuting in to work. For the Indigenous workforce, the difference is much smaller—384 work in the region, and 365 are employed residents, indicating only 19 Indigenous commuters. This shows that while the region overall depends on outside workers, the Indigenous workforce is more locally based.

Table 26: GRP Value added -Employed Regional Residents

GRP Value added – Employed Regional Residents ⁶⁹ :						
Sector	Total Employed Residents Value Added	Indigenous Employed Residents Vale Added	Indigenous Employed Residents % of Total Value Added	Total Employed Residents	Indigenous Employed Residents	Indigenous % of Total Employed Residents (in industry)
Accommodation and Food Services	50,197,327	14,538,600	29%	479	138	29%
Public Administration and Safety	9,286,882	4,467,082	48%	99	38	39%
Transport, Postal and Warehousing	8,334,052	646,821	8%	69	9	13%
Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing	7,342,321	2,017,740	27%	28	8	29%
Administrative and Support Services	7,293,617	3,394,834	47%	72	34	47%
Arts and Recreation Services	6,415,705	2,781,915	43%	118	49	42%
Health Care and Social Assistance	5,118,821	975,688	19%	76	15	20%
Education and Training	5,049,846	917,067	18%	54	10	19%
Retail Trade	3,176,518	1,684,858	53%	63	33	52%
Construction	1,681,568	255,000	15%	8	3	38%
Rental, Hiring and Real Estate Services	1,575,000	1,260,000	80%	14	11	79%
Electricity, Gas, Water and Waste Services	1,458,824	-	0%	8	-	0%
Other Services	1,050,995	523,302	50%	20	10	50%
Professional, Scientific and Technical Services	880,000	528,000	60%	11	7	64%
Wholesale Trade	100,000	-	0%	1	-	0%
Mining	-	-	-	4	-	0%
Manufacturing	-	-	-	3	-	0%
Information Media and Telecommunications	-	-	-	5	-	0%
Financial and Insurance Services	-	-	-	4	-	0%

Data source: ID Consulting Pty Ltd (2025). Economic and Demographic Analysis of the Iyarrka Region. Unpublished report prepared for Desert Knowledge Australia, 2025⁷⁰

This regional data includes all communities in the Iyarrka region including Yulara. The Demographic data is sourced from ABS Census of Population and Housing, 2021, and ABS Regional Population Growth. Economic data is sourced from NIEIR, 2024; and .id modelling of NIEIR and ABS Census data.

This data shows that the regional economy is primarily driven by the Accommodation and Food Service sector:

- Accommodation and Food Services: \$50.1 million (45% of Resident GRP)
- Public Administration and Safety \$9.2 million (8%)
- Transport, Postal and Warehousing: \$8.3 million (7.4%)
- Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing: \$7.3 million (6.5%)

⁶⁹ Ibid

⁷⁰ ID Consulting Pty Ltd (2025). Economic and Demographic Analysis of the Tanami Region. Unpublished report prepared for Desert Knowledge Australia, 2025. Demographic data is sourced from ABS Census of Population and Housing, 2021, and ABS Regional Population Growth. Economic data is sourced from NIEIR, 2024; and .id modelling of NIEIR and ABS Census data.

- Administrative and Support Services: \$7.2 million (6.4%)

According to the above data the three service sectors which employs more than half 61% (696) of the 1136 employed residents is:

- Accommodation and Food Services: 479 residents (42%)
- Arts and Recreation Services: 118 residents (10%)
- Public Administration and Safety: 99 residents (9%)

This is followed by:

- Health Care and Social Assistance: 76 residents (7%)
- Administrative and Support Services: 72 residents (6%)

The above Gross Regional Product (GRP) data encompasses data from the entire region including Yulara, which is a resort town driven by the Accommodation and Food Service sector.

The GRP data does not reflect the 2023 remote jobs profiles local employment data for Imanpa, Mutitjulu and Docker River, which had zero employment in the Accommodation and Food Service sector, even though the data shows \$14.5 million (29%) of the total resident GRP is generated through Indigenous resident employment.⁷¹ This suggests that there are no Anangu from Imanpa, Mutitjulu and Docker River hired in the industry.

Instead, according to the Imanpa, Mutitjulu and Docker River 2023 remote jobs profiles, the three industries which had the total highest employment across the three communities⁷² and which also employed the most Indigenous people across the three communities were⁷³:

- Public Administration and Safety (total employed ⁷⁴ 53 - 68% (36) Indigenous employed)
- Professional, Scientific and Technical Services (total 46 – 35% (16) Indigenous employed)
- Arts and Recreation Services (total 28 – 46% (13) Indigenous employed).

Several key insights have emerged from the regional economic profile:

1. The largest economic value and employment comes from a service industry rather than primary (e.g. agriculture, mining) or secondary (e.g. manufacturing, construction) sectors.
2. The main source of regional resident income is employment (63%), compared to 34% from government benefits⁷⁵
3. Remote Jobs Profile data for 2023 indicate there are no Anangu from Imanpa, Mutitjulu and Docker River hired in the Accommodation and Food Services sector which is the largest sector contributor to the GRP – which suggests the need for targeted training and employment pathways from these communities to the sector.

⁷¹ Ibid

⁷² Department of Trade, Business and Asian Relations (2023) Remote Towns Jobs Profiles: Imanpa, Mutitjulu, and Kaltukatjara Northern Territory Government, January 2025, Darwin. Pg 17

⁷³ See page 32, Figure 7: 2023 Aboriginal Employment by Industry.

⁷⁴ Total employed – Indigenous and non-indigenous

⁷⁵ ID Consulting Pty Ltd (2025). Economic and Demographic Analysis of the Tanami Region. Unpublished report prepared for Desert Knowledge Australia, 2025. Demographic data is sourced from ABS Census of Population and Housing, 2021, and ABS Regional Population Growth. Economic data is sourced from NIEIR, 2024; and .id modelling of NIEIR and ABS Census data.

4. Transport, Construction, Education, and Health Care are economically significant but have low Indigenous participation - prime areas for targeted skills development.
5. There is high Indigenous participation in Administrative and Support Services, Retail trade, Public Administration and Safety- all service-oriented, but minimal employment in Primary Industry, Electricity, Gas, Water and Waste Services (Utilities), Transport, Postal and Warehousing, and Construction.

These factors highlight the need for workforce planning strategies that strengthen Anangu aspirations for employment and pathways from the communities to the most GRP value adding sectors.

Cost of Living in Remote Communities

Remote communities in the Northern Territory face substantial cost of living pressures that directly impact workforce participation and economic wellbeing.

Food Security and Affordability

The 2023 Market Basket Survey highlights the financial burden of basic nutrition in remote communities.

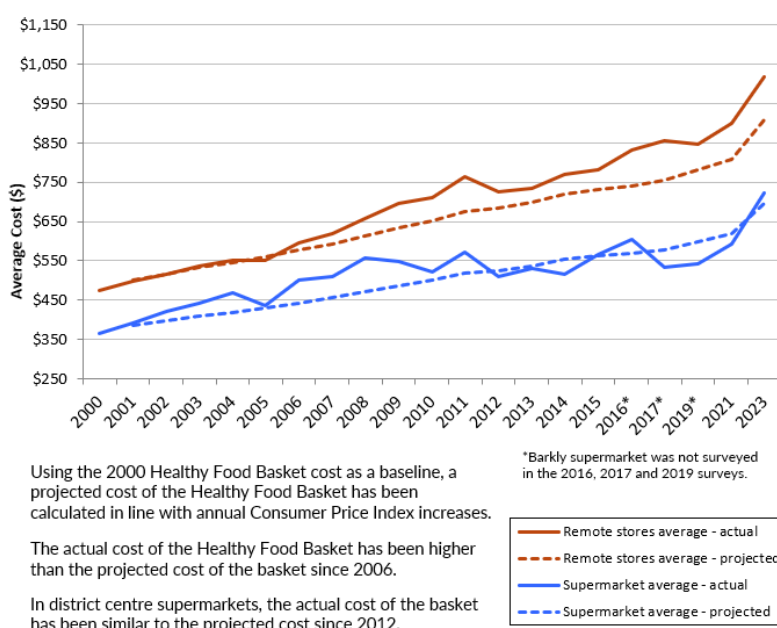


Figure 11: Market Basket Survey - Cost of a Food Basket from 2000-2023

Source: Northern Territory Government, NT Market Basket Survey 2023

- The "Healthy Food Basket" (represents the cost of a diet that aligns with national dietary guidelines designed to feed a family of six for two weeks) costs an average of \$978 in Central Australian remote stores, 40% more expensive than the \$698 cost in Alice Springs supermarkets.⁷⁶

⁷⁶ NT Health (2023). Attachment A - 2023 NT Market Basket Survey Summary Report. Darwin. <https://data.nt.gov.au/dataset/04db1f7b-e1d4-4da4-80bf-f8c87c01511b/resource/d15a796f-6a8d-4fd0-abfd-45674e65c8be/download/attachment-b-2023-nt-market-basket-survey-data-sheet.xlsx>

- The "Current Diet Basket" sometimes called the 'unhealthy' diet basket reflects the actual purchasing and consumption patterns of the population, based on national dietary intake surveys. It costs \$1,072 in remote stores compared to \$890 in Alice Springs.⁷⁷
- From 2021 to 2023, the cost of the Healthy Food Basket rose by 13% in remote stores,⁷⁸ highlighting increasing cost pressures.

These costs create immediate financial challenges for job seekers. A single parent with dependent children receiving the maximum JobSeeker Payment of \$836.50 per fortnight⁷⁹ falls \$141.50 short of affording the "Healthy Food Basket" and \$235.50 short of the "Current Diet Basket," before accounting for other essential living expenses. This financial gap illustrates how income support payments cannot meet basic needs and emphasises the importance of local employment opportunities.

Transportation Costs

Transportation costs are another significant challenge impacting workforce planning for Imanpa, Mutitjulu and Docker River, which are geographically isolated with distances ranging from 673km (Docker River) to 273 km (Imanpa) to Alice Springs, and 237km (Docker River) to 186 km (Imanpa) to Yulara.

The 2024 NTCOSS Transport Factsheet notes unleaded petrol reaching 268.7 cents per litre (a 16.7-cent rise over the past year).⁸⁰ These prices are well above the national average, intensifying financial pressures for regional residents.⁸¹

The Centre Bush Bus offers weekly services connecting these communities to Alice Springs, however one-way fares range from \$140 to \$200. A return bus trip for one person from Imanpa would cost \$280⁸². If they lived in Docker River, the return trip per person would cost \$400,⁸³ making travel to and from Alice Springs very expensive and financially unviable for larger households.

High transportation costs create barriers to accessing training, employment, and services outside the immediate community. The region's geographic isolation presents structural challenges for workforce planning, particularly by limiting mobility and access to employment and training opportunities in larger centres. This underscores the need to develop locally based training and employment pathways that reduce reliance on travel.

⁷⁷ Ibid

⁷⁸ NT Health (2023). Attachment A - 2023 NT Market Basket Survey Summary Report. Darwin.

⁷⁹ Servies Australia (2025) Jobseeker Payment. <https://www.serviesaustralia.gov.au/how-much-jobseeker-payment-you-can-get?context=51411>

⁸⁰ Harding, M. and Pilbrow, J (2024). Cost of Transport in the Northern Territory Fact Sheet. Darwin: NTCOSS and Just Change.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Centre Bush Bus (n.d.) Bus Timetables. www.centrebushbus.com.au/bus-timetables/

⁸³ Ibid

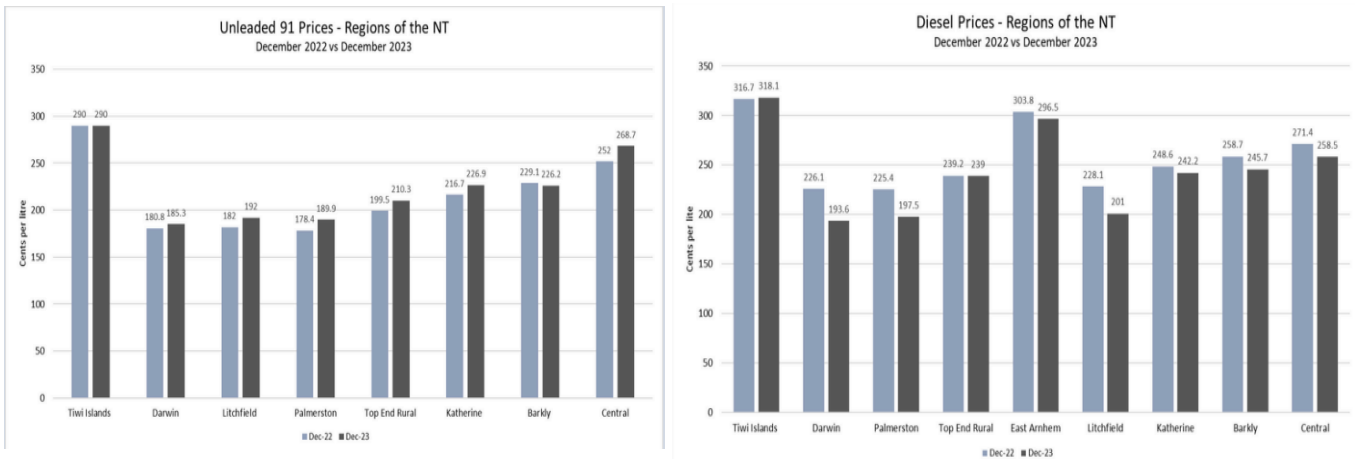


Figure 12: Unleaded 91 and Diesel Prices 2022-23 - Regions of the NT

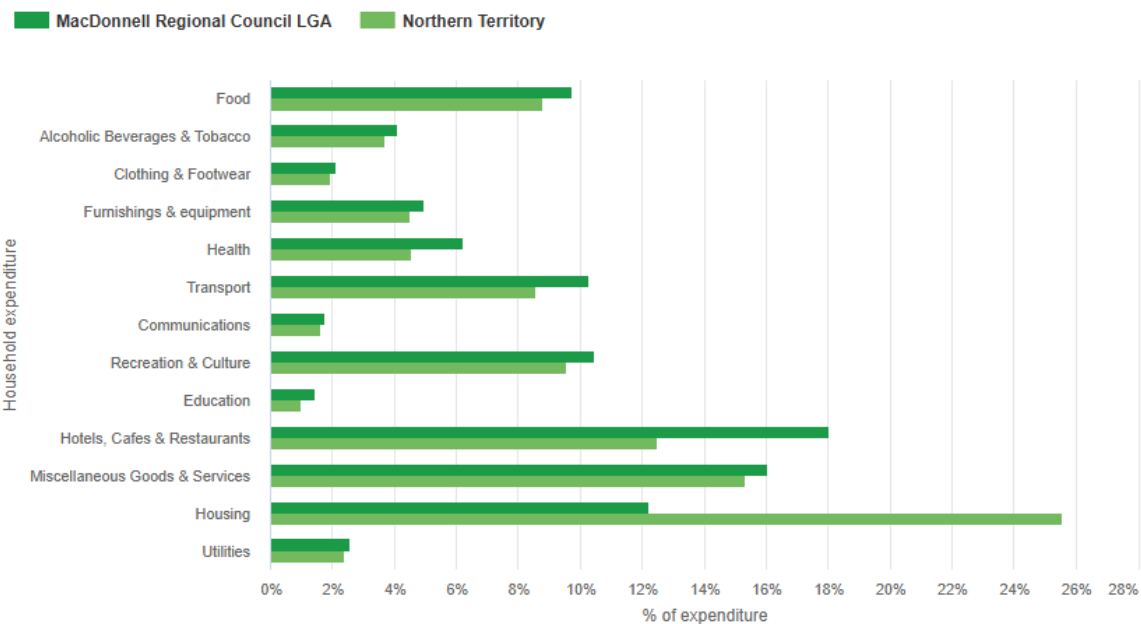
Source: Harding, M. and Pilbrow, J (2024). Cost of Transport in the Northern Territory Fact Sheet. Darwin: NTCOSS and Just Change.

Regional Household Expenditure

While community-specific data is not available, expenditure patterns for the broader MacDonnell Regional Council area provide important insights:

Household expenditure 2022/23

export



Source: National Institute of Economic and Industry Research (NIEIR) ©2024. ©2023 Compiled and presented in economy.id by .id (informed decisions).

Figure 13: Household Expenditure 2022-23 MacDonnell Regional Council LGA and Northern Territory

Source: National Institute of Economic and Industry Research (NIEIR) 2024. Compiled and presented in economy.id by .id (informed decisions)

- Households in this region allocate significantly more of their budget to hotels, cafes and restaurants (18.02%) compared to the Northern Territory average (12.51%),⁸⁴ likely reflecting travel costs required

⁸⁴.id (Informed Decisions) (2024). Household Expenditure. <https://economy.id.com.au/rda-northern-territory/household-00000e0xpenditure?IndkeyNieir=23402&WebID=130>.

for accessing essential services outside their communities.

- Transportation costs consume 10.29% of household budgets compared to 8.55% for the Territory average, highlighting the financial impact of geographic isolation.⁸⁵
- Health expenditure is higher at 6.21% versus the Territory average of 4.56%,⁸⁶ suggesting increased healthcare costs or increased healthcare needs in these remote areas.
- The above graph illustrates that household expenditure in all categories apart from housing is higher in the MacDonnell region than the Northern Territory.

These expenditure patterns indicate that residents in these remote communities face additional financial pressures related to their geographic location, which directly impacts household economic stability.

Household Income

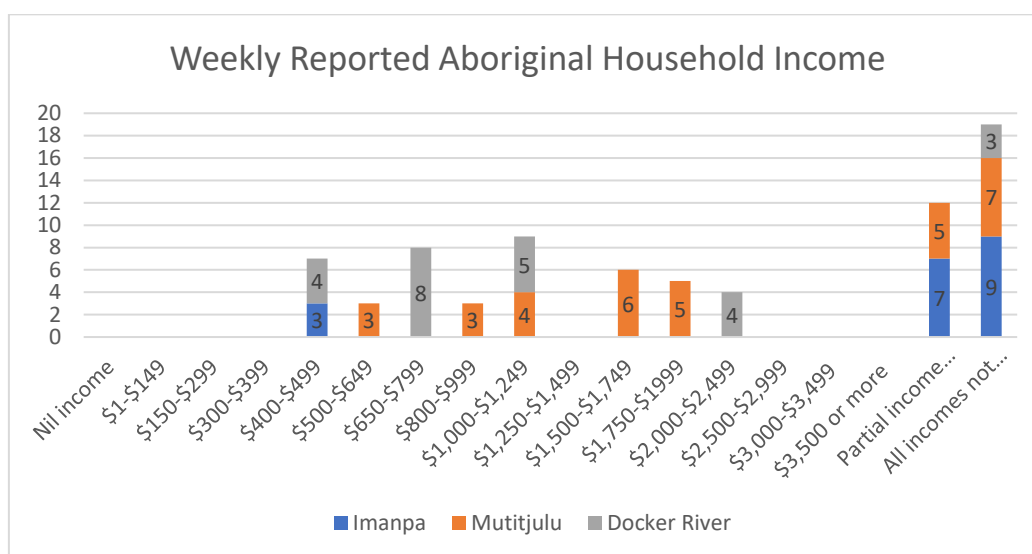


Figure 14: Weekly Reported Aboriginal Household Income

Source: data compiled from Australian Bureau of Statistics (2021), 2021 Census: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples Profile

Household income data from the 2021 Census in Imanpa, Mutitjulu and Docker River⁸⁷ reveals:

- 6.5% of responding households (7 out of 107) report weekly income under \$499
- 10% of responding households (11 out of 107; with 8 of the 11 from Docker River) report earning between \$500-\$799 per week
- 11% of responding households (12 out of 107; 5 from Docker River, and 7 from Mutitjulu) reported a weekly income of between \$800-\$1499.
- 14% of responding households (15 out of 107; 4 from Docker River and 11 from Mutitjulu) reported a weekly income of between \$1499-\$2999.

*29% of household respondents had either partially stated incomes or not stated all income

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Data compiled from Australian Bureau of Statistics (2021), 2021 Census: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples Profile, Imanpa, I17 total household income (weekly) by Indigenous status of household (Canberra: ABS, 2021); Australian Bureau of Statistics (2021), 2021 Census: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples Profile, Mutitjulu, I17 total household income (weekly) by Indigenous status of household (Canberra: ABS, 2021); Australian Bureau of Statistics (2021), 2021 Census: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples Profile, Kaltukatjara, I17 total household income (weekly) by Indigenous status of household (Canberra: ABS, 2021).

The median weekly household income in Docker River according to the 2021 census data was \$762 with an average household of 4.5 people.⁸⁸ In Mutitjulu, Uluru and Imanpa it was \$1153 with an average household of 2.6 people.

⁸⁹

Most reported household incomes fell between \$800-\$2999 a week, a total of 27 households out of 107. Based on this data these three communities together have a small high-income segment, a substantial middle-income group, and a minor but notable low-income base, especially in Docker River. The income spread is relatively narrow, with few households earning in extreme brackets. Mutitjulu appears more economically diverse, showing both the highest and lowest income brackets

However, a significant proportion 29% (31) of households partially stated or did not state their income, limiting the completeness and accuracy of this income analysis.

Socio-Economic Disadvantage

The Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA) ranks locations according to their relative socio-economic advantage and disadvantage using Census data. The MacDonnell LGA which includes the Iyarrka ward is in the bottom 10% of all LGAs for all SEIFA indexes. Decile 1 is the most disadvantaged group.⁹⁰ These results indicate MacDonnell is a highly socio-economically disadvantaged area compared to other parts of Australia. This can mean:

- Lower average incomes
- Higher unemployment
- Lower levels of education
- More reliance on public housing or assistance

These factors influence quality of life, access to services, and long-term opportunities for people living in the area.

Table 27: SEIFA Indexes for the MacDonnell LGA

Index	Score	Decile	Percentile
Index of Relative Socio-economic Disadvantage (IRSD)	566	1	4
Index of Relative Socio-economic Advantage and Disadvantage (IRSAD)	727	1	4
Index of Economic Resources (IER)	590	1	5
Index of Education and Occupation (IEO)	861	1	6

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics (2021) Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA). <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/people/people-and-communities/socio-economic-indexes-areas-seifa-australia/latest-release>

⁸⁸Australian Bureau of Statistics (2021). Kaltukatjara (Docker River) 2021 Census Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people QuickStats (<https://abs.gov.au/census/find-census-data/quickstats/2021/ILOC70900801>) accessed June 2025

⁸⁹Australian Bureau of Statistics (2021). Mutitjulu - Uluru – Imanpa 2021 Census Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people QuickStats (<https://abs.gov.au/census/find-census-data/quickstats/2021/IARE709009>) accessed June 2025

⁹⁰ Australian Bureau of Statistics (2021) Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA). <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/people/people-and-communities/socio-economic-indexes-areas-seifa-australia/latest-release>

Note: The SEIFA 2021 data presented here is aggregated for the MacDonnell LGA which includes the Iyarrka ward. This means that the scores reflect the combined socio-economic conditions across the entire MacDonnell region, including the communities of Imanpa, Mutitjulu and Docker River. While this data provides valuable insights into the overall socio-economic landscape, it is important to interpret it with an understanding that variations may exist between the individual communities within the region.

Investment and Opportunity: Current Funding Allocations

Government investments in the region present significant opportunities for workforce planning and economic participation. An analysis of projects and grants published by BushTel for Imanpa, Mutitjulu, and Docker River reveals approximately \$267 million in total grants investment in the region. This investment is distributed across two main categories: **Regional Investments** and **Community-Specific Allocations**. Regional investments are typically administered by recipient organisations and may be distributed across 4 to 25 communities, making it difficult to determine the exact value allocated to each individual community.

It is important to note that this report recognises the existence of additional investment beyond those included in this analysis.

Regional Investments (\$267 million)

Most of the funding (\$267M⁹¹) is allocated to regional programs that benefit multiple communities, rather than being directed to individual communities. This makes it challenging to determine the exact amount received by any single community. For example, a single organisational program may support initiatives across as many as 25 communities. Regional funding primarily supports employment and community development, with substantial investment also directed toward family support, education, and health services.

Table 28: Regional Investments in Iyarrka

Program Category	Amount* (\$M)	No: of communities shared across	% of Total Regional Funding	Primary Initiatives	Timeframes*
Health	118.94	9	44.55	Improve health of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people	2022-2028
Indigenous Employment and Economic Development	70.6	17	26.44	Focuses on getting Indigenous Australians into work and fostering business	2021-2028
Family Support and intervention	19.2	25	7.19	Reduce the rate of over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care	2021-2027
Law and Wellbeing	17.58	15	6.58	Strategic activities that ensure ordinary law of the land applies in Indigenous communities and supports physical, emotional and social wellbeing	2020-2026
Aged Care and Health	15.44	7	5.78	Support eligible older people to live	2018-2025

⁹¹ BushTel (n.d.) *Community Profiles for Imanpa, Mutitjulu and Docker River*. www.bushtel.nt.gov.au/profile

				independently at home and in community	
Education (Children, Youth)	8.11	5	3.04	Getting children and youth to school and improving education outcomes	2023-2026
Disability Services	3.63	5	1.36	Supporting disability services for eligible community members	2020-2026
Suicide Prevention	3.34	5	1.25	Reduce suicide and suicidal behaviour among at risk groups	2022-2025
Family, Domestic and Sexual Violence Services	3.19	5	1.19	Support existing or emerging family domestic and sexual violence programs	2022-2027
Culture and Economic Participation	1.7	5	0.64	Family Intensive Support	2021-2026
Arts	1.65	5	0.62	Support Indigenous art workers	2020-2026
Infrastructure	1.51	13	0.57	Deliver benefits to communities, such as improved road safety, accessibility and visual amenity	2023-2026
Early Childhood Education	1.29	9	0.48	Support early childhood education and care	2023-2025
Community Accessibility	1.04	13	0.39	To make outdoor activities more accessible year-round.	2024-2026

Source: Data compiled from BushTel (n.d.) Community Profiles for Imanpa, Mutitjulu and Docker River. www.bushtel.nt.gov.au/profile

*Each program category received multiple grants that have been totalled up and the total entered above. The timeframes listed is the earliest start date and the latest finish date of the ongoing grants within the category.

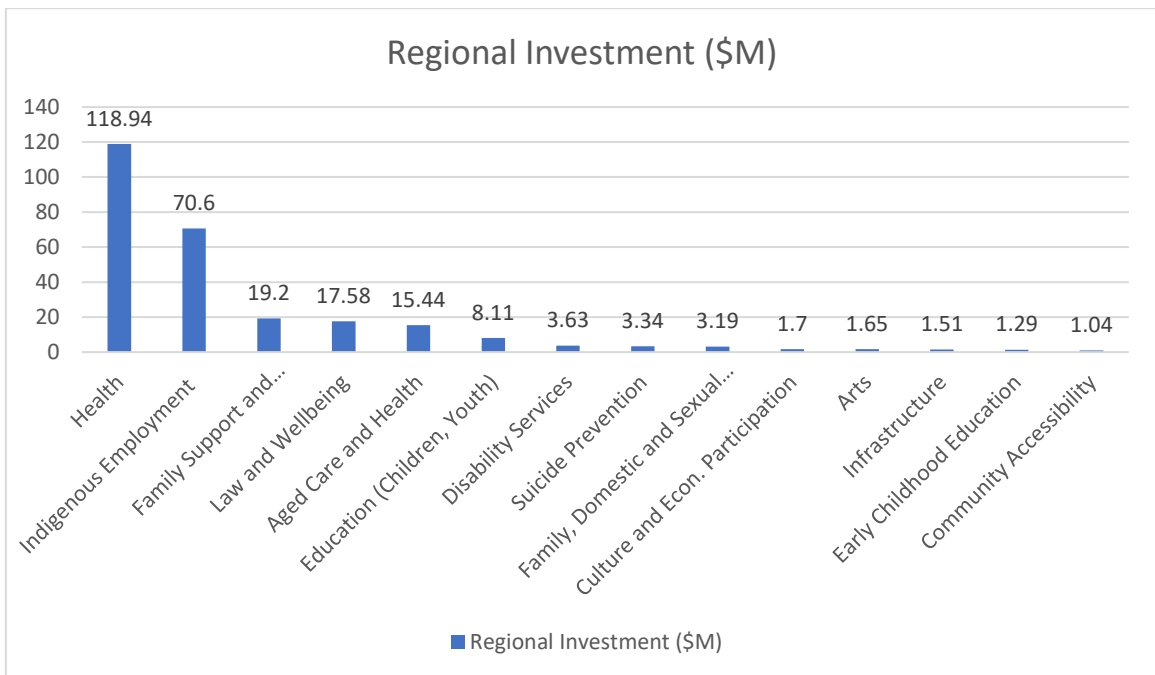
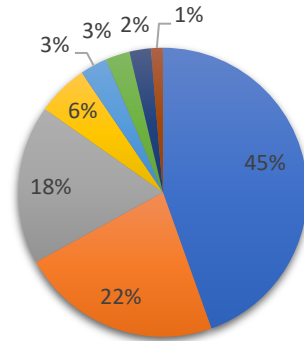


Figure 15: Regional Investments (\$M) in Iyarrka

Source: Data compiled from BushTel (n.d.) Community Profiles for Imanpa, Mutitjulu and Docker River. www.bushtel.nt.gov.au/profile

From the data it can be seen the category that received the highest funding was Health - \$118.94 million, followed by Indigenous Employment and Economic Development - \$70.6 million, Family Support and intervention - \$19.2 million, Law and Wellbeing - \$17.58 million, and Aged Care and Health at \$15.44 million.

Regional Funding Recipients



- Central Australian Aboriginal Congress
- Central Land Council
- NPY Women's Council (Aboriginal Corporation)
- MacDonnell Regional Council
- Australian Regional and Remote Community Services Limited
- Waltja Tjutangku Palyapayi (Aboriginal Corporation)
- Mutitjulu Community Aboriginal Corporation
- Rise-Ngurratjuta Pty Ltd

Figure 16: Regional Funding Recipients in Iyarrka

Source: Data compiled from BushTel (n.d.) Community Profiles for Imanpa, Mutitjulu and Docker River. www.bushtel.nt.gov.au/profile

Community-Specific Investment (\$6.39 million⁹²)

Mutitjulu was the only community of the three to receive community specific funding:

Table 29: Community Specific Investment

Program Category	Project Funding (\$M)	No. of Grants	Organisation	Key Investment Areas	Timeframe
Indigenous Employment and Economic Development	3.28	1	Mutitjulu Community Aboriginal Corporation	Focuses on getting Indigenous Australians into work and fostering business	16/05/2023 - 30/06/2025
Law and Wellbeing	2.65	3: \$1.87M, \$0.67M, \$0.11M	Mutitjulu Community Aboriginal Corporation	Ensures ordinary law applies in Indigenous communities and supports wellbeing	01/07/2022 - 30/06/2026 09/08/2024 - 09/08/2025 08/01/2025 - 30/06/2026
Arts	0.45	1	Mutitjulu Community Aboriginal Corporation	Supports Walkatjara Community Aboriginal Corporation to deliver services to visual artists	13/09/2023 - 30/11/2026
TOTAL	6.39	5			

Source: Data compiled from BushTel (n.d.) Community Profiles for Imanpa, Mutitjulu and Docker River. www.bushtel.nt.gov.au/profile

⁹² BushTel (n.d.) Community Profiles for Mutitjulu. www.bushtel.nt.gov.au/profile

Indigenous Employment and Economic Development – \$70.6 million was provided as grants to support strategic initiatives aimed at increasing employment opportunities for Indigenous Australians, fostering Indigenous businesses, and enabling economic and social benefits through effective land use, particularly in remote areas. Funding recipients included the Central Land Council (\$57.07M and \$2.94M), Rise-Ngurratjuta Pty Ltd (\$3.56M), Mutitjulu Community Aboriginal Corporation (\$3.28M), MacDonnell Regional Council (\$3.04M), and NPY Women’s Council (\$0.70M).

This analysis draws on funding data published on BushTel, acknowledging that additional funding sources lie beyond the scope of this report. The regional-level focus of BushTel’s funding data presents some limitations when seeking to identify investment at the individual community level.

The government investments offer significant opportunities to address the workforce challenges identified in this report. Several strategic considerations arise from the funding data:

1. **Sector-Specific Opportunities:** Substantial investments—such as \$119 million in healthcare services to Central Australian Aboriginal Congress split across 9 communities, \$60 million in the Central Land Council’s programs, and \$47.5 million to NPY Women’s Council in human services – align with sectors that hold potential for sustainable employment pathways for Aboriginal community members. Aligning vocational education and training with these funded sectors could enhance job readiness and long-term employment outcomes.
2. **Integrated Employment Models:** The Indigenous Employment Initiative Program is a government initiative that embeds Indigenous workforce planning within aged care service delivery funding. Expanding this model across other funded programs could generate dual outcomes, maximising both service quality and local employment impact.
3. **Local Economic Benefits:** Without intentional strategies, these investments may not automatically translate into improved economic outcomes for local communities. Prioritising local recruitment, implementing tailored procurement frameworks, and investing in community capacity-building are critical. Grant conditions could explicitly support these outcomes by allocating resources for training and capability development, ensuring roles are accessible and creating long term sustainability through local workforce planning.

By aligning existing investments with targeted training support and community-led implementation strategies, current funding allocations could more effectively address both the immediate economic challenges and long-term employment goals for Imanpa, Mutitjulu and Docker River.

Step 3: Identifying Future Needs – Community Aspirations and Workforce Planning Opportunities

The workforce planning landscape is strengthened when aligned with the aspirations and priorities of local communities. Across the three communities, community-requested initiatives have been identified that address essential local needs and, if built upon, could create employment pathways for residents.

Office of the Central Australian Regional Controller (OCARC) Community Meetings: Expressing Local Priorities

In 2023, during a series of OCARC meetings, community members articulated key issues and aspirations, identifying opportunities for economic development and initiatives with the potential to support workforce planning and improve the economic wellbeing of community members. These community-driven priorities span a range of sectors:

Table 30: Imanpa Initiatives Identified via the OCARC Consultation

Issue Category:	Issue Sub-category:	Details:
Finance	Funding	Reduce the high store prices at station stores
Infrastructure	Training	Re-establish a resource center including a mechanic shop for fixing cars in a workshop and access to tools. Training programs can be run in the center.
	Town planning	Construct a new basketball and recreation hall, football club and playground.
	Lighting	Establish better public lighting.
	Other	Build footpaths from the school to the shop.
	Parks	Create a shaded area for young people to have fun outdoors.
	Shade Area	Create a shade area for the petrol bowser.
Enterprise	Regulation	Establish a social club that the community can access to have a few drinks and an evening out.
	Arts	Create an art center in the community to promote tourism
Housing	Overcrowding	Build single men's and women's quarters.
	Repairs and Maintenance	Housing maintenance is an ongoing issue and can take months to be fixed. Create a local workforce of community members who can fix minor maintenance issues. Potential to create training pathways to upskill.
Employment	Regulation	Create easier pathways for people to access white card training and acquire ochre cards to secure jobs.
	Training	Create more training programs in community to learn new skills.
	Training	Create an employment pathway from school to employment.
Access	Centrelink	Improve services for new mothers to register birth of children with Centrelink
Health	Access	Open the clinic more than once a week and create an ambulance service.
	Other	Create more mental health services and suicide prevention programs.
	Renal Service	Build community dialysis facility
Community Support	Youth programs	More services to engage young people who are easily bored in community.
Planning	Communication	Communities want to be kept informed of actions following on from

		community meetings – to close the loop.
--	--	---

Data source: NIAA (2025). *Iyarrka OCARC Actions. Unpublished data for Desert Knowledge Australia. Not for wider circulation.*

Table 31: Mutitjulu Initiatives Identified via the OCARC Consultation

Issue Category:	Issue Sub-category:	Details:
Community Support	Service Coordination	Better service coordination to identify service providers entering and leaving community.
Outstation Managements	Repairs and Maintenance	Repairs and maintenance to improve homelands
Housing	Overcrowding	Build new houses.
	Repairs and Maintenance	Housing maintenance is an ongoing issue and can take months to be fixed. Create a local workforce of community members who can fix minor maintenance issues. Potential to create training pathways to upskill.
Employment	Assets and Machinery	Need access to tools to clean yards.
	CDP	Create more training pathways to learn new skills and to upskill. Create job opportunities.
	CDP	Build an adult education center.
Education	Attendance	Introduce education in local language as well as English. Create training for Anangu teachers and opportunities for employment.
	Training	Create an employment pathway from Yulara College to employment.
Access	Centrelink	Improve services for new mothers to register birth of children with Centrelink
Enterprise	Funding	Build a tourism business hub where Anangu can get together with tourism operators and get business support. It could also offer training and employment opportunities.
Community support	Youth program	More youth programs for 5–18-year-olds.
Planning	Communication	Communities want to be kept informed of actions following on from community meetings – to close the loop.

Data source: NIAA (2025). *Iyarrka OCARC Actions. Unpublished data for Desert Knowledge Australia. Not for wider circulation.*

Table 32: Docker River Initiatives Identified via the OCARC Consultation

Issue Category:	Issue Sub-category:	Details:
Finance	Funding	Reduce the high store prices at station stores
Housing	Repairs and Maintenance	Introducing a pest control program in community to control cockroaches and mice plague in houses.
	Repairs and Maintenance	Housing maintenance is an ongoing issue and can take months to be fixed. Create a local workforce of community members who can fix minor maintenance issues. Potential to create training pathways to upskill.
Employment	Training	Create easier pathways for people to access white card training.
	CDP	Create more training programs in community to learn new skills and acquire more local jobs.
	Training	Create more training programs in literacy and numeracy for community members.
	Training	Establish a mechanical workshop to fix cars.
	Training	Developing a camp site

Access	Centrelink	Improve services for new mothers to register birth of children with Centrelink
Infrastructure	ICT/ Telecommunications	Improve digital connectivity in remote communities especially outstations.
	Parks	Grow grass on the football oval
	Play	Install benches in the recreation hall
	Play	Fix the leaks in the recreation hall
Community Support	Youth programs	More services to engage young people. Require an additional Sports and Recreation Officer.
	Youth program	Program to teach young people music
	Communication	Establish a male cultural site with water and home infrastructure
	Communication	Want more camps on country for men and women
	Communication	Establish a parcel of land as a yard for horses
	Security	Establish a safe house on community
	Communication	Increased support for ages care work
Enterprise	Arts	Establish an art center that is managed by the community
Planning	Communication	Communities want to be kept informed of actions following on from community meetings – to close the loop.
Education	Training	Young people need access to secondary schooling in community.
	Training	Create training pathways to VET programs and more employment pathways from secondary schooling to jobs.
	Training	Easier access pathways for Abstudy.

Data source: NIAA (2025). *Iyarrka OCARC Actions. Unpublished data for Desert Knowledge Australia. Not for wider circulation.*

By prioritising these initiatives and employing local workers in their implementation, these communities have identified a pathway to stimulate economic growth while building a more skilled workforce. In communities with limited economic activity, these projects represent not just service improvements but crucial employment opportunities that can enhance the capacity of residents while ensuring development benefits remain within the community.

School Action Plans: Education-Based Employment Opportunities

The On Country Learning Measure, a \$40 million initiative supported by both Northern Territory and Australian Governments, offers significant workforce planning potential across all three communities.

School action plans are developed collaboratively with community members, cultural authorities, school staff, and students, and create potential local employment pathways.⁹³

Mutitjulu School community members prioritised:⁹⁴

- Growing school attendance
- Grow and increase learning on country
- Increase Anangu involvement and employment in the school
- Tjitji Tjuta (All children) achieving in the school through increased literacy, support and learning in Pitjantjatjara.

⁹³ Northern Territory Government, Department of Education. (n.d.). On-Country Learning Measure: Central Australian Schools Action Plans. <https://education.nt.gov.au/statistics-research-and-strategies/on-country-learning-measure-central-australian-schools-action-plans>

⁹⁴ Education NT (2024) Mutitjulu School Action Plan. https://education.nt.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0005/1369499/mutitjulu-school-action-plan.PDF

Nyangatjatjara College is a member of the Association of Independent Schools of the Northern Territory. A school action plan for the College was not available and the most recent online annual report published was from 2019, hence there is a data gap regarding school action plans for the Imanpa, Docker River and Mutitjulu campuses. Supported by \$5.45 million⁹⁵ in combined funding across the Mutitjulu school and Nyangatjatjara College these education-focused initiatives have the potential to both improve learning outcomes and create sustainable, meaningful employment for local community members. By implementing the school priorities identified above, schools can leverage their existing funding to benefit the entire community.

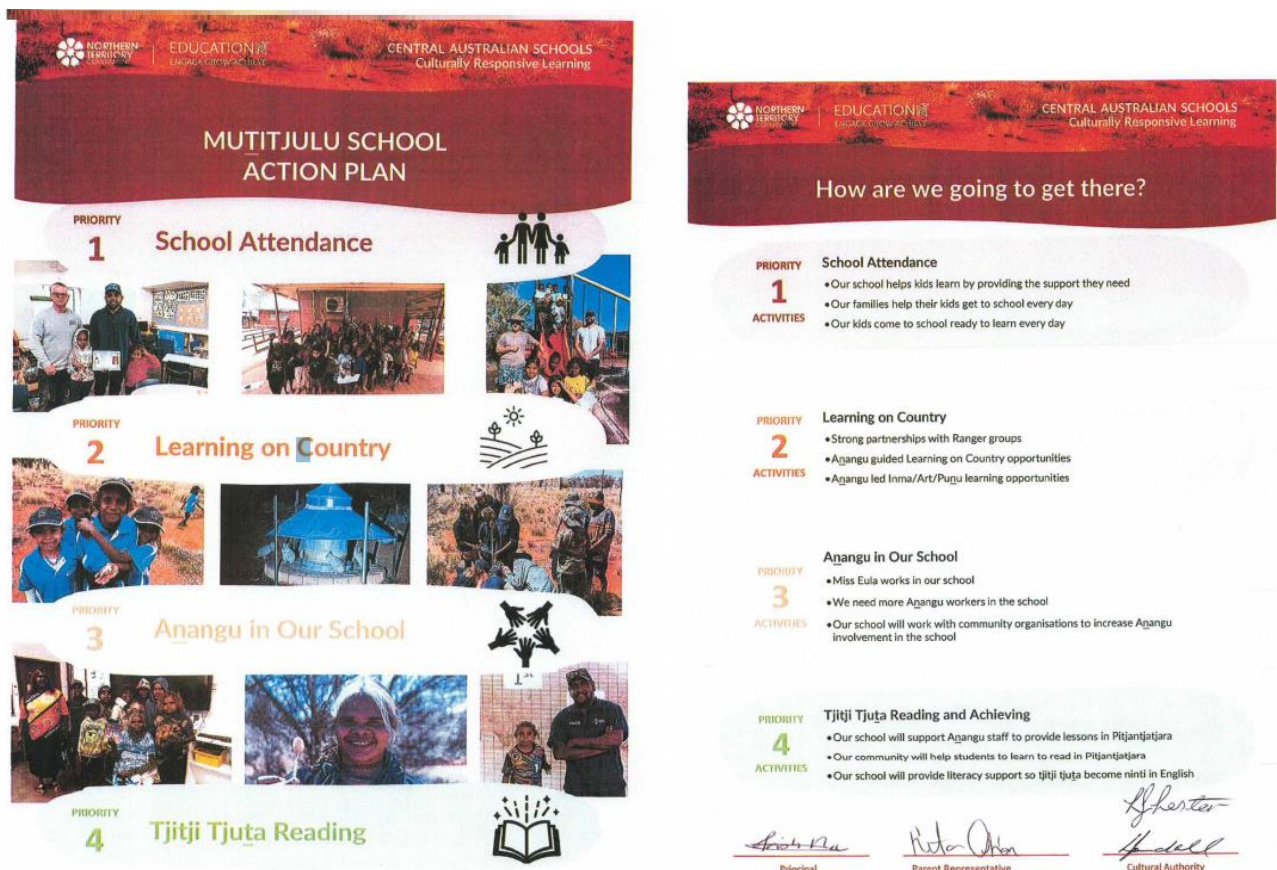


Figure 17: Mutitjulu School Action Plan

Source: Northern Territory Government. Department of Education and Training. On Country Learning Measure: Central Australian Schools Action Plans

⁹⁵ Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (2024) School Finances: Mutitjulu School, Nyangatjatjara College <https://www.myschool.edu.au/school/50107/finances>; <https://www.myschool.edu.au/school/50160/finances>

MacDonnell Regional Council - Regional Plan

The MacDonnell Regional Council (MRC) 2025-26 Regional Plan outlines significant opportunities for remote workforce planning across its communities, including Imanpa and Docker River. The plan has 4 key goals:

Goal 1: Developing Communities, Goal 2: Healthy Communities, Goal 3: Empowered Communities and Goal 4: A supportive organisation.

Goal 1 of the regional plan focuses on employment and support for local enterprises and has been outlined below.

Table 33: Goal 1 of MacDonnell Regional Council (MRC) 2025-26 Regional Plan

Goal #1 Objectives	Strategy and KPI ⁹⁶	Target Date
Ensure Community Infrastructure needs are met	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a 10-year MRC Community Infrastructure Plans for each community. Develop a long-term maintenance plan for council-controlled roads and stormwater drainage. Install solar panels in Council buildings 	June 2025/ June 2027
Create Employment Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collaborate with CDEP providers and funding partners to build a job-ready workforce. 	June 2028
Increase Aboriginal Employment Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure 90% of MRC's community-based core service Team Leader roles and above are held by Aboriginal staff. Achieve 50% Aboriginal employment in commercial contracts undertaken by MRC. Achieve 10% Aboriginal labour participation in tendered contracts. 	June 2026/June 2028
Support Local Aboriginal Enterprise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Host one business enterprise workshop per ward annually to connect community members with business knowledge experts. Support one business enterprise project in each community each year. 	June 2028

Source: MacDonnell Regional Council. (2024). MacDonnell Regional Council 2025-26 Regional Plan. MacDonnell Regional Council. [https://www.macdonnell.nt.gov.au/documents/201/2024-25-regional-plan-of-macdonnell-regional-council-\(downloadable-85mb-file\)](https://www.macdonnell.nt.gov.au/documents/201/2024-25-regional-plan-of-macdonnell-regional-council-(downloadable-85mb-file))

Achieving the MRC's Aboriginal employment targets for commercial and tendered contracts by embedding local Aboriginal workforce planning goals into infrastructure projects, contributes to the broader regional strategies focused on sustainability and inclusion. These initiatives will build local capacity by equipping individuals with transferable skills that enhance employability and foster economic resilience.

To ensure these benefits are realised, establishing clear Aboriginal employment targets, supporting local business involvement, and providing relevant training are all critical to creating long-term employment opportunities that can strengthen local economies. Realising this potential will require deliberate, coordinated actions that place

⁹⁶ MacDonnell Regional Council. (2024). MacDonnell Regional Council 2024-25 Regional Plan. MacDonnell Regional Council. [https://www.macdonnell.nt.gov.au/documents/201/2024-25-regional-plan-of-macdonnell-regional-council-\(downloadable-85mb-file\)](https://www.macdonnell.nt.gov.au/documents/201/2024-25-regional-plan-of-macdonnell-regional-council-(downloadable-85mb-file))

Aboriginal employment at the centre of implementation, aligning workforce strategies with community identified priorities.

Workforce Planning Opportunities

The analysis of community demographics, education and training, the local employment landscape, economic context and local and regional community plans in Imanpa, Docker River and Mutitjulu, presents the following opportunities for workforce planning:

Table 34: Workforce planning Opportunities

1. Align Training with Local Employment Sectors	
Gap/ Barrier Identified:	While sectors like Accommodation and Food Services, Health, Education, and Construction drive the region’s economy, Anangu employment in these sectors remains low.
Opportunity:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The Government has invested \$4 billion over the next 10 years for housing development: both for the construction of new houses and the upgrading of current houses – creating jobs in the remote housing construction sector. Investing in a local workforce for construction will help ensure a local job-ready workforce over the next few years reducing economic dependency and reliance on interstate and external contractors. ○ 74% of housing dysfunction⁹⁷ is due to lack of regular repairs and maintenance (R&M). Investing in a local workforce for repairs and maintenance will also ensure the long-term value of the \$4 billion housing investment and extend the life of the asset. The lack of and need for housing repairs and maintenance was also identified in the OCARC action plans for each community.
Action:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Leverage existing investments (e.g. \$119M to CAAC, \$47.5M to NPYWC) to embed training and local employment targets into funded programs. ○ Create training pathways and align training with growing sectors and local government investment by developing culturally appropriate VET delivery and accessible training pathways. Working with local training bodies, CDU, Batchelor, CFAT, and NITA to develop VET courses and clear training pathways from each community in Construction, Specialist Trade skills (plumbing and electricals) and Primary Industry to capitalise on these growing industries and create sustainable local workforces while economically empowering Aboriginal communities. (Where Training courses require people to leave community and travel to town or interstate, institutes could provide students with accommodation and support options.) ○ Develop employment pathways for community members to gain the necessary skills to take up jobs in these key sectors, supported by:

⁹⁷ Grealy, L., Su, J.-Y., & Thomas, D. (2023). Healthy Homes Monitoring and Evaluation Project -Final Report

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Paid traineeships and internships - Employer partnerships (e.g. hotels, health providers, education services)
2. Support Entry into Training by Simplifying Costs and Processes	
Gap/ Barrier Identified:	<p>Remote community members face administrative and financial barriers to accessing training and employment pathways due to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o The upfront costs for essential identity documents to meet the 100-point identity requirements (e.g., birth certificates are \$54, and evidence of age cards are \$28 in the Northern Territory). For individuals on Jobseeker, particularly in remote communities facing high living costs, these fees can be unaffordable. Money is often immediately spent on essentials like food or shared with family. o The complexity and time-consuming process of obtaining mandatory certifications (e.g., White Cards, Ochre Cards), especially the 100-point ID requirement, can be a barrier for remote community members. Delays, sometimes stretching over several months, often lead to candidates losing interest and disengaging from the process. o Limited application support structures, particularly for those with low literacy and where English is a second or third language.
Opportunity:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Improve participation and retention in training and employment programs by removing or reducing financial barriers for essential documentation costs, simplifying administrative processes and establishing culturally safe Indigenous support pathways to guide applicants through these processes.
Action:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Establish clear training pathways from local communities to training programs, supported by dedicated staff based in each community to assist prospective candidates in navigating the often-complex application process; particularly for those with low literacy or numeracy skills, for whom English may be a second or third language. o Explore the potential for prospective students to borrow against future allowances for identity documents (Job seeker or youth allowance) or defer application fees and identity documents costs and repay the cost once employed. This could improve access to training and employment pathways. However, it would need to be assessed on a case-by-case basis to avoid creating further financial hardship. o Simplify administrative processes and establish dedicated Indigenous support pathways to help streamline processes to reduce wait times for required documentation and reduce the likelihood of prospective candidates disengaging from the process. Potential to reduce the 100

	points ID requirements for remote Aboriginal community members.
3. Expand On-Country and Language Responsive Learning Models	
Gap/ Barrier Identified:	Low VET completion, declining engagement, and significant literacy/numeracy challenges are exacerbated by English being a second language for 96% of residents.
Opportunity:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Scale on-Country training, integrate bilingual and culturally grounded pedagogy, and offer wraparound support (e.g., mentors, interpreter, transport, family care). The language context impacts learning outcomes. Most Aboriginal community members come from a language background other than English and education and training initiatives are likely to be more effective when delivered in the community's first language.
Action:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Introduce bilingual curriculums for literacy and numeracy in schools from a young age through to secondary and VET training. English is taught as a second language, but primary learning takes place in the language that the student is well established in, ensuring engagement with and comprehension of syllabus. ○ Partner with Batchelor Institute and Nyangatjatjara College to co-design and deliver bilingual VET education qualifications to build the capacity of existing Aboriginal community educators to become qualified teachers. ○ Train teachers in Pitjantjatjara while concurrently developing employment pathways for community members to gain the necessary skills to take up teaching roles.
4. Strengthen Entry-Level, and Transitional Employment Pathways	
Gap/ Barrier Identified:	Only 3% of job vacancies are entry-level; CDP participants have limited pathways into sustained work.
Opportunity:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Create more entry level roles with on-the-job training, job readiness programs and transitional work experiences.
Action:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Introduce local incentives for employers to create more entry level roles with on-the-job training and support regional job brokerage services to match job seekers with roles. ○ Encourage employers to create stepping-stone roles and offer job readiness programs. These could be built into grant funding requirements. ○ Develop transitional work experiences which are short-term, structured

	job opportunities designed to help individuals move from unemployment, training, or welfare into regular employment. They serve as a bridge— "transitioning" people into the workforce—by building skills, confidence, and work habits.
5. Translate VET Skills into Jobs	
Gap/ Barrier Identified:	High VET activity in areas like Primary Industry without matching employment outcomes.
Opportunity:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ To develop clear employment pathways and practical work placements aligned with VET streams. ○ This opportunity also aligns with community initiatives that were identified through the OCARC consultations where communities requested tourism business hubs, where Anangu can get together with tourism operators and get business support. It could also offer training and employment opportunities. (MCAC has established an operational business hub.)
Action:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Engage regional employers to co-design job pathways from VET courses and offer "train-and-place" programs in areas like land management, bush foods, tourism, and construction.
6. Develop Leadership Pathways	
Gap/ Barrier Identified:	There were zero Aboriginal people employed in Managerial roles across the three communities.
Opportunity:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Develop and promote Aboriginal leadership within local services by creating culturally relevant pathways into managerial roles. Building local leadership increases community ownership, improves service delivery, and fosters long-term employment sustainability.
Action:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Establish structured leadership development programs tailored for Aboriginal staff, including mentoring, on-the-job training, and formal qualifications (e.g. Cert IV in Leadership or Management). ○ Identify and support high-potential local staff through succession planning and targeted professional development. ○ Partner with training providers to deliver flexible, community-based management training. ○ Create entry-level supervisory roles as stepping stones into management, with clear progression plans. ○ Ensure cultural safety and address systemic barriers that may limit

	advancement.
6. Localise Economic Benefits from Major Investments	
Gap/ Barrier Identified:	Significant funding flows into the region but without mechanisms to guarantee local workforce participation.
Opportunity:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Ensure that major government and NGO-funded programs: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Prioritise local hiring - Include targets and support for Aboriginal employment - Procure locally and build community capacity
Action:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Embed workforce planning KPIs into grant agreements and support local governance bodies to monitor and influence investment outcomes.

These opportunities can be implemented through a phased approach guided by community leadership and governance. By implementing these strategies with community consultation and cross-sector collaboration, a strong local workforce could be grown in Imanpa, Mutitjulu and Docker River, creating sustainable employment that support both community well-being and local economic growth.

References:

- Australian Bureau of Statistics (2021). *Census of Population and Housing: Imanpa*. Canberra: ABS, 2021.
- Australian Bureau of Statistics (2021). *Census of Population and Housing: Mutitjulu*. Canberra: ABS, 2021.
- Australian Bureau of Statistics (2021). *Census of Population and Housing: Docker River (Kaltukatjara)*. Canberra: ABS, 2021.
- Australian Bureau of Statistics (2021). *Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA)*. <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/people/people-and-communities/socio-economic-indexes-areas-seifa-australia/latest-release>
- Australian Children’s Education and Care Quality Authority (2021). *Shaping Our Future: Children’s Education and Care National Workforce Strategy*. <https://www.acecqa.gov.au/sites/default/files/2021-10/ShapingOurFutureChildrensEducationandCareNationalWorkforceStrategy-September2021.pdf>
- Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (2024). *Mutitjulu School Profile, My School 2024*. <https://www.myschool.edu.au/school/50107>
- Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (2024). *Nyangatjatjara College Profile, My School 2024*. <https://www.myschool.edu.au/school/50160>
- Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (2023). *Indigenous income and finance*. <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/australias-welfare/indigenous-income-and-finance>
- Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership. (2020). *Indigenous cultural competency in the Australian teaching workforce: Discussion paper*. https://www.aitsl.edu.au/docs/default-source/comms/cultural-competency/aitsl_indigenous-cultural-competency_discussion-paper_2020.pdf
- BushTel (n.d.). *Community Profile – Imanpa*. <https://bushtel.nt.gov.au/profile/51>
- BushTel (n.d.). *Community Profile – Mutitjulu*. <https://bushtel.nt.gov.au/profile/120>
- BushTel (n.d.). *Community Profile – Docker River (Kaltukatjara)*. <https://bushtel.nt.gov.au/profile/66>
- BushTel (n.d.). *Imanpa – Projects and Grants*. <https://bushtel.nt.gov.au/profile/51?tab=projects>
- BushTel (2025). *Mutitjulu – Projects and Grants*. <https://bushtel.nt.gov.au/profile/120?tab=projects>
- BushTel (2025). *Docker River (Kaltukatjara)– Projects and Grants*. <https://bushtel.nt.gov.au/profile/66?tab=projects>
- Centre Bush Bus (n.d.). *Bus Timetables*. <https://centrebushbus.com.au/bus-timetables/>
- Department of Trade, Business and Asian Relations (2023). *Remote Towns Jobs Profiles – Imanpa*. Northern Territory Government, January 2025, Darwin. https://nt.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0005/1481576/imanpa-remote-towns-jobs-profile-2023.pdf
- Department of Trade, Business and Asian Relations (2023). *Remote Towns Jobs Profiles – Mutitjulu*. Northern Territory Government, January 2025, Darwin. https://nt.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0011/1481744/mutitjulu-remote-towns-jobs-profile-2023.pdf
- Department of Trade, Business and Asian Relations (2023). *Remote Towns Jobs Profiles – Docker River (Kaltukatjara)*. Northern Territory Government, January 2025, Darwin. https://nt.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0008/1481570/docker-river-remote-towns-jobs-profile-2023.pdf
- Economy.id. (2024) *RDA Northern Territory. Household Expenditure*. <https://economy.id.com.au/rda-northern-territory/household-expenditure?WebID=190>.
- Education NT (2024). *Mutitjulu School Action Plan*. https://education.nt.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0005/1369499/mutitjulu-school-action-plan.PDF
- Grealy, L., Su, J.-Y., & Thomas, D. (2023). *Healthy Homes Monitoring and Evaluation Project -Final Report*
- Harding, M., & Pilbrow, J. (2024). *Cost of Transport in the Northern Territory Fact Sheet*. Darwin: NTCOSS and Just Change.
- ID Consulting Pty Ltd (2025). *Economic and Demographic Analysis of the Tanami Region*. Unpublished report prepared for Desert Knowledge Australia, 2025.
- Jobs and Skills Australia. *Small Area Labour Markets September Quarter 2024*. https://www.jobsandskills.gov.au/sites/default/files/2024-12/small_area_labour_markets_-_september_quarter_2024.pdf
- MacDonnell Regional Council (n.d.). *Services*. <https://www.macdonnell.nt.gov.au/services>

- **MacDonnell Regional Council** (2024). *MacDonnell Regional Council 2025-26 Regional Plan*. <https://www.macdonnell.nt.gov.au/uploads/misc/2024-25-MRC-REGIONAL-PLAN-FINAL-DIGITAL-SPREADS.pdf>
- **NIAA** (2024). *Community Development Program Regional Data Report 2023-2024*. www.niaa.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/2024-12/Community-Development-Program-Regional-Data-Report-2023-2024.pdf
- **NIAA** (2025). *Jobs, Economic Development Data 2024-25. Remote Employment and Community Development Services Information Request*. *Unpublished, not for wider circulation*.
- **Northern Territory Government, Department of Education** (n.d.). *On-Country Learning Measure: Central Australian Schools Action Plans*. Retrieved March 5, 2025, from <https://education.nt.gov.au/statistics-research-and-strategies/on-country-learning-measure-central-australian-schools-action-plans>
- **NT Health** (2023). *Attachment A - 2023 NT Market Basket Survey Summary Report*. Darwin: NT Health
- **OCARC Community Meeting Notes** (2023). *Unpublished, not for wider circulation*.
- **Play AFL** (n.d.). *TIO CAFL*. <https://play.afl/northern-territory/competitions/tio-cafl>
- **Profile.id** (2024). *JobSeeker and Youth Allowance recipients in the RDA Northern Territory*. <https://profile.id.com.au/rda-northern-territory/job-seeker?Geocode=70620>
- **Services Australia** (2025) *Jobseeker Payment*. <https://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/how-much-jobseeker-payment-you-can-get?context=51411>
- **SNAICC** (2024). *2024 NAPLAN results reveal need for early years and transition to school support – SNAICC in the News*. <https://www.snaicc.org.au/2024-naplan-results-reveal-need-for-early-years-and-transition-to-school-support-snaicc-in-the-news/>
- **Stanes Transport** (n.d.). *Delivery Areas*. www.stanestransport.com.au/delivery-area
- **Whatman, S., & Duncan, P.** (2020). *Culturally responsive pedagogy in the classroom: A review of the literature*. *The Australian Educational Researcher*, 47(5), 803–827. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s13384-019-00315-5>