

COMMUNITY WORKFORCE PLAN
LURITJA PINTUBI -
PAPUNYA, HAASTS BLUFF, KINTORE
AND MOUNT LIEBIG



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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). The community consultation and engagement undertaken by Penangke Cultural Consultants in Ntaria and Ti-tree informed the rest of the plans as the community priorities and aspirations that had been identified as part of the 2023/24 OCARC community consultations were comparable to the priorities and aspirations raised in the consultations by Penangke.

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 issue 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 instances 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.

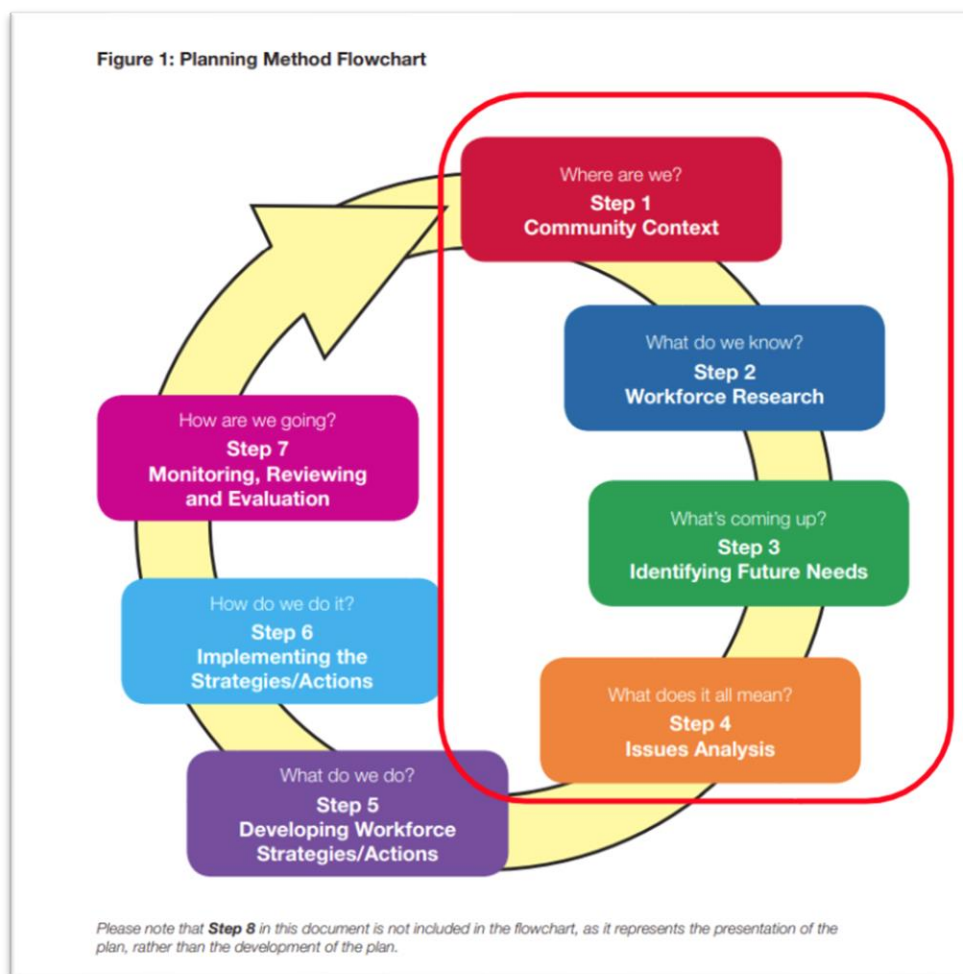


Figure 1: Planning Method Flowchart

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 (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., ABS demographics, DSS data)
2. Review of internal NTG reports (e.g., Remote Towns Jobs Profiles, Remote School Action Plans and 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 should be 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. Detailed employment data, including the 32.5% vacancy rate and sector-specific vacancies, is primarily available for Papunya, with more limited data for Haasts Bluff, Kintore, and Mount Liebig, potentially obscuring important community-specific variations.

2. 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 as a result of the information from this report would be stress tested in communities prior to large scale implementation.

3. Data Perturbation

The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) uses data perturbation to protect individual privacy, especially in small communities. This process involves making small random adjustments to all counts, including totals, which results in small discrepancies between disaggregated data and published totals. These adjustments generally do not affect broader analyses however, totals in this report may differ slightly from the sum of their components.

4. Data Gaps

Several important data points are unavailable, including:

- Upcoming VET training schedules
- Comprehensive qualification levels of current job holders
- Titles / roles of job holders in industries
- Industry-specific employment data that aligns with VET training categories

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. These limitations highlight the importance of viewing this report as a foundation for further 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 Papunya, Haasts Bluff, Kintore, and Mount Liebig communities in the Northern Territory, providing a foundation for Community Workforce Plans that support improved economic participation.

Key Challenges

Across these communities, there is significant unrealised workforce potential, with 22% of the Aboriginal working-age population participating in the labour force compared to 164 Community Development Program (CDP) participants in Papunya alone. This exists alongside a 32.5% job vacancy rate, with 27 unfilled positions out of 83 total jobs, primarily in education, healthcare, and community services. This gap could stem from qualification barriers, geographic isolation, cultural sensitives and relationships and disconnect between current VET training opportunities and actual employment opportunities.

Education and Training Landscape

The education and training landscape presents significant barriers to workforce planning. School attendance rates are low, ranging from 33% to 65%, with minimal student attendance of 90% or more¹. NAPLAN results fall below national averages, highlighting substantial literacy and numeracy challenges. VET participation has declined by 40% since 2016, with a notable reduction in business, construction, and food processing training, while community services and primary industry training remain key focus areas.

Opportunities for Growth

Despite these challenges, substantial investments totalling \$123.9 million across the four communities create significant potential for local job creation. Community-identified projects and initiatives highlight opportunities for workforce planning through infrastructure projects, service improvements, and cultural initiatives that could simultaneously address community needs and create meaningful local employment opportunities.

Workforce planning Opportunities

To address these challenges, the report considers the following strategies for workforce planning:

1. **Align VET Training with Local Job Opportunities:** Tailor vocational training programs to meet the needs of local employers, focusing on sectors with highest job vacancies such as education and healthcare and that training aligns to strengthen students/ job seekers skill capability.
2. **In-Community Training:** Provide training programs within the communities to reduce geographic barriers and improve accessibility, particularly for sectors with entry-level and Indigenous-specific roles.
3. **"Earning While Learning" Models:** Implement paid traineeships and on-the-job training that allow individuals to gain practical experience while completing their training, improving their chances of future employment.
4. **Culturally Responsive Pathways:** Create employment pathways that are culturally appropriate, supporting local traditions and values in the workplace.²³
5. **Leverage Existing Investments for Employment Growth:** Connect existing investments with community goals by adopting targeted recruitment and procurement approaches that prioritise local Aboriginal employment and local Aboriginal owned businesses and organisations.

¹ Source: © Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) 2009 to present, unless otherwise indicated.

² Evans, O (2021). *Gari Yala (Speak the Truth): Gendered Insights*. Sydney, Australia.

³ Australian Public Service Commission (2019). *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Capability Framework*. <https://www.apsc.gov.au/working-aps/diversity-and-inclusion/aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-workforce/cultural-capability-framework>.

Introduction

Step 1: Community Context

Community Profiles and Demographics

Step 1 provides an overview of Papunya, Haasts Bluff, Kintore and Mount Liebig, 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	Papunya, Haasts Bluff, Kintore and Mount Liebig					
Languages	The languages spoken in Papunya, Haasts Bluff, Kintore, and Mount Liebig are primarily Luritja and Pintupi, however other language groups include Warlpiri and Arrernte.					
Traditional owners	The traditional owners of Papunya, Haasts Bluff, Kintore, and Mount Liebig are primarily the Luritja and Pintupi peoples.					
Population	Table 1: Total Community Populations					
		Papunya	Haasts Bluff	Kintore	Mount Liebig	Total
	Population	438 ⁴	82 ⁵	420 ⁶	240 ⁷	1180
	<i>Source: Compiled from Australian Bureau of Statistics (2021). 2021 Census Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community Profiles for Papunya, Haasts Bluff, Kintore and Mt Liebig.</i>					
Indigenous status	Table 2: Community Aboriginal Population					
		Papunya	Haasts Bluff	Kintore	Mount Liebig	
	Aboriginal Population	389 (88.8%) ⁸	70 (85.4%) ⁹	381 (90.7%) ¹⁰	223 (92.9%) ¹¹	
	<i>Source: Compiled from Australian Bureau of Statistics (2021). 2021 Census Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community Profiles for Papunya, Haasts Bluff, Kintore and Mt Liebig.</i>					
Location	Papunya Located on the Haasts Bluff Aboriginal Land Trust west of Alice Springs. ¹²					

⁴ Australian Bureau of Statistics (2021) *Census of Population and Housing, Papunya I01 Selected Person Characteristics by Indigenous Status by Sex*. Canberra: ABS, 2021.

⁵ Australian Bureau of Statistics (2021) *Census of Population and Housing, Haasts Bluff I01 Selected Person Characteristics by Indigenous Status by Sex*. Canberra: ABS, 2021.

⁶ Australian Bureau of Statistics (2021) *Census of Population and Housing, Kintore I01 Selected Person Characteristics by Indigenous Status by Sex*. Canberra: ABS, 2021.

⁷ Australian Bureau of Statistics (2021) *Census of Population and Housing, Mount Liebig I01 Selected Person Characteristics by Indigenous Status by Sex*. Canberra: ABS, 2021.

⁸ Australian Bureau of Statistics (2021) *Census of Population and Housing, Papunya I01 Selected Person Characteristics by Indigenous Status by Sex*. Canberra: ABS, 2021.

⁹ Australian Bureau of Statistics (2021) *Census of Population and Housing, Haasts Bluff I01 Selected Person Characteristics by Indigenous Status by Sex*. Canberra: ABS, 2021.

¹⁰ Australian Bureau of Statistics (2021) *Census of Population and Housing, Kintore I01 Selected Person Characteristics by Indigenous Status by Sex*. Canberra: ABS, 2021.

¹¹ Australian Bureau of Statistics (2021) *Census of Population and Housing, Mount Liebig I01 Selected Person Characteristics by Indigenous Status by Sex*. Canberra: ABS, 2021.

¹² BushTel (n.d.) *Community Profile – Papunya*. <https://bushtel.nt.gov.au/profile/131>

	<p>Haasts Bluff Located west of Alice Springs on the Haasts Bluff Aboriginal Land Trust amongst the West MacDonnell Ranges.¹³</p> <p>Kintore Located west of Alice Springs, at the base of culturally important hills known as Pulikatjara ('two hills') near the Western Australia Border and is part of the Haasts Bluff Aboriginal Land Trust.¹⁴</p> <p>Mount Liebig Located west of Alice Springs on the Haasts Bluff Aboriginal Land Trust at the western end of the Western McDonnell Ranges.¹⁵</p>															
Access	<p>Papunya 240 km west of Alice Springs via the Tanami Highway and Kintore Road.¹⁶</p> <p>Haasts Bluff 227 km west of Alice Springs via Larapinta Drive and Namatjira Kintore Link Road or via Tanami Highway, then Papunya/Kintore Road.¹⁷</p> <p>Kintore 530 km west of Alice Springs via the Tanami Highway which is a sealed bitumen road (137km), the remaining distance is via dirt roads of varying quality.¹⁸</p> <p>Mount Liebig 325 km west of Alice Springs via Tanami Highway and Kintore Roads.¹⁹</p> <p>The Centre Bush Bus provides a weekly transport service between Papunya, Haasts Bluff, Kintore, Mount Liebig and Alice Springs. This service operates on Tuesdays and Saturdays. Residents of these communities use this service to access essential services in Alice Springs.</p> <p>Table 3: Bus Timetable and Costs²⁰</p> <table border="1"> <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>Papunya</td> <td>Twice weekly (Tues & Sat)</td> <td>\$130</td> <td>\$100</td> <td>\$260</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Haasts Bluff</td> <td>On-demand (Tues & Sat)</td> <td>\$130</td> <td>\$100</td> <td>\$260</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Destination	Frequency	One-way Fare (Adult)	One-way Fare (Child)	Return Fare (Adult)	Papunya	Twice weekly (Tues & Sat)	\$130	\$100	\$260	Haasts Bluff	On-demand (Tues & Sat)	\$130	\$100	\$260
Destination	Frequency	One-way Fare (Adult)	One-way Fare (Child)	Return Fare (Adult)												
Papunya	Twice weekly (Tues & Sat)	\$130	\$100	\$260												
Haasts Bluff	On-demand (Tues & Sat)	\$130	\$100	\$260												

¹³ BushTel (n.d.) *Community Profile – Haasts Bluff*. <https://bushtel.nt.gov.au/profile/41>

¹⁴ BushTel (n.d.) *Community Profile – Kintore*. <https://bushtel.nt.gov.au/profile/72>

¹⁵ BushTel (n.d.) *Community Profile – Mount Liebig*. <https://bushtel.nt.gov.au/profile/112>

¹⁶ BushTel (n.d.) *Community Profile – Papunya*. <https://bushtel.nt.gov.au/profile/131>

¹⁷ BushTel (n.d.) *Community Profile – Haasts Bluff*. <https://bushtel.nt.gov.au/profile/41>

¹⁸ BushTel (n.d.) *Community Profile – Kintore*. <https://bushtel.nt.gov.au/profile/72>

¹⁹ BushTel (n.d.) *Community Profile – Mount Liebig*. <https://bushtel.nt.gov.au/profile/112>

²⁰ Centre Bush Bus (n.d.) *Bus Timetables*. <https://centrebushbus.com.au/bus-timetables/>

	Mt Liebig	Twice weekly (Tues & Sat)	\$155	\$120	\$310
	Kintore	Twice weekly (Tues & Sat)	\$190	\$150	\$380

Source: Centre Bush Bus (n.d.) Bus Timetables. <https://centrebushbus.com.au/bus-timetables/>

Infrastructure and Services

Internet Access	Table 4: Community Internet Access				
	Community	Mobile Coverage	Broadband Access	WiFi Hotspot Availability	
	Papunya	Telstra	Telstra	Maku Shed	
	Haasts Bluff	Not available	Not available	Rec Hall (private WiFi provided and serviced by Activ8me)	
	Kintore	Telstra	Not available	Youth Centre (private WiFi provided and serviced by Activ8me)	
	Mount Liebig	Telstra	Not available	Youth Centre (9am- 12am)	
Source: Data compiled from BushTel (n.d.) Community Profiles for Papunya, Haasts Bluff, Kintore and Mount Liebig. www.bushtel.nt.gov.au/profile					
Freight Services	Freight services to the communities of Papunya, Haasts Bluff, Kintore and Mount Liebig are primarily provided by two key operators, Stanes Transport and Centre Bush Bus. ²¹²²				
Local Businesses	Table 5: Local Community Businesses				
	No	Papunya²³	Haasts Bluff²⁴	Kintore²⁵	Mount Liebig²⁶
	1	MacDonnell Regional Council	Haasts Bluff Health Centre	Kintore Dialysis Unit	Animparrinpi Yututju Women's Aboriginal Corporation
2	National Indigenous Australians Agency	Haasts Bluff Police Station - Unstaffed	Kintore Health Centre	MacDonnell Regional Council	

²¹ Centre Bush Bus (n.d.) *Bus Timetables*. www.centrebushbus.com.au/bus-timetables/

²² Stanes Transport (n.d.) *Delivery Areas*. www.stanestransport.com.au/delivery-area

²³ BushTel (n.d.) *Community Profile – Papunya*. www.bushtel.nt.gov.au/profile/131

²⁴ BushTel (n.d.) *Community Profile – Haasts Bluff*. www.bushtel.nt.gov.au/profile/41

²⁵ BushTel (n.d.) *Community Profile – Kintore*. www.bushtel.nt.gov.au/profile/72

²⁶ BushTel (n.d.) *Community Profile – Mount Liebig*. www.bushtel.nt.gov.au/profile/112

	3	Ngurratjuta Pmara Ntjarra Aboriginal Corporation	Haasts Bluff School	Kintore Police Station	Mount Liebig Health Centre
	4	Papunya Aged Care	Ikuntji Artists	MacDonnell Regional Council	Mt Liebig Aged Care (Purple House)
	5	Papunya Community Store	Kanparrka Store	National Indigenous Australians Agency	Mt Liebig Community Store
	6	Papunya Dialysis Unit	MacDonnell Regional Council	Ngurratjuta Pmara Ntjarra Aboriginal Corporation	National Indigenous Australians Agency
	7	Papunya Early Childhood Centre	National Indigenous Australians Agency	Papunya Tula Artists	Ngurratjuta Pmara Ntjarra Aboriginal Corporation
	8	Papunya Health Centre	Ngurratjuta Pmara Ntjarra Aboriginal Corporation	Pulikutjarra Community Store	Purple House Dialysis Unit
	9	Papunya Police Station	Waltja Tjutangku Palyapayi Corp	Waltja Tjutangku Palyapayi Corp	Waltja Tjutangku Palyapayi Corp
	10	Papunya School		Walungurru School	Watiyawanu School
	11	Papunya Tjupi Arts Centre			
	12	Waltja Tjutangku Palyapayi Corp			

Source: Data compiled from BushTel (n.d.) Community Profiles for Papunya, Haasts Bluff, Kintore and Mount Liebig. www.bushtel.nt.gov.au/profile

Regional Businesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arafura Nolans Bore Mine • Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education • Cattle Stations within 200km of Papunya: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mount Doreen Station is approximately 142 km northeast of Papunya. - Amburla Station is approximately 140km northeast of Papunya. • Central Desert Regional Council
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Central Land Council • Department of Children and Families • Department of Education • Department of Health • Department of Human Services (Centrelink) • Newmont Tanami Gold Mine • Newhaven Wildlife Sanctuary • Northern Territory Police, Fire Emergency Services 												
Health Services	<p>Table 6: Community Health Services</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Papunya</th> <th>Haasts Bluff</th> <th>Kintore</th> <th>Mount Liebig</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Papunya Health Centre</td> <td>Haasts Bluff Health Centre</td> <td>Kintore Health Centre</td> <td>Mount Liebig Health Centre</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Papunya Dialysis Unit</td> <td></td> <td>Kintore Dialysis Unit</td> <td>Purple House Dialysis Unit</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>Source: Data compiled from BushTel (n.d.) Community Profiles for Papunya, Haasts Bluff, Kintore and Mount Liebig. www.bushtel.nt.gov.au/profile</p>	Papunya	Haasts Bluff	Kintore	Mount Liebig	Papunya Health Centre	Haasts Bluff Health Centre	Kintore Health Centre	Mount Liebig Health Centre	Papunya Dialysis Unit		Kintore Dialysis Unit	Purple House Dialysis Unit
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Papunya Health Centre	Haasts Bluff Health Centre	Kintore Health Centre	Mount Liebig Health Centre										
Papunya Dialysis Unit		Kintore Dialysis Unit	Purple House Dialysis Unit										
Education and Training	<p>Education in Papunya, Haasts Bluff, Kintore and Mount Liebig is provided through government-run schools that integrate bilingual and culturally responsive learning approaches. These schools serve predominantly Aboriginal student populations, with almost all students speaking a language other than English at home.</p> <p>Table 7: Community Education and Training Facilities</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Papunya</th> <th>Haasts Bluff</th> <th>Kintore</th> <th>Mount Liebig</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Papunya School</td> <td>Haasts Bluff School</td> <td>Walungurru School</td> <td>Watiyawanu School</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>Source: Data compiled from BushTel (n.d.) Community Profiles for Papunya, Haasts Bluff, Kintore and Mount Liebig. www.bushtel.nt.gov.au/profile</p>	Papunya	Haasts Bluff	Kintore	Mount Liebig	Papunya School	Haasts Bluff School	Walungurru School	Watiyawanu School				
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Papunya	Haasts Bluff	Kintore	Mount Liebig										
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	Papunya Aged Care	Waltja Tjutangku Palyapayi Corp	Waltja Tjutangku Palyapayi Corp	Mt Liebig Aged Care (Purple House)
	Waltja Tjutangku Palyapayi Corp			Waltja Tjutangku Palyapayi Corporation
	Source: Data compiled from BushTel (n.d.) Community Profiles for Papunya, Haasts Bluff, Kintore and Mount Liebig. www.bushtel.nt.gov.au/profile			
Aboriginal Organisations	Table 10: Aboriginal Organisations Operating in Communities			
	Papunya	Haasts Bluff	Kintore	Mount Liebig
	Ngurratjuta Pmara Ntjarra Aboriginal Corporation	Ikuntji Artists Aboriginal Corporation	Ngurratjuta Pmara Ntjarra Aboriginal Corporation	Animparrinpi Yututju Women's Aboriginal Corporation
	Papunya Community Store Aboriginal Corporation	Kanparrka Store Aboriginal Corporation	Papunya Tula Artists	Ngurratjuta Pmara Ntjarra Aboriginal Corporation
	Papunya Dialysis Unit - Western Desert Nganampa Walytja Palyantjaku Tjutaku Aboriginal Corporation	Ngurratjuta Pmara Ntjarra Aboriginal Corporation	Pulikutjarra Community Store	Waltja Tjutangku Palyapayi Aboriginal Corporation
	Papunya Health Centre	Waltja Tjutangku Palyapayi Corp	Waltja Tjutangku Palyapayi Corp	
	Papunya Tjupi Art Centre Aboriginal Corporation			
	Waltja Tjutangku Palyapayi Aboriginal Corporation			
		Source: Data compiled from BushTel (n.d.) Community Profiles for Papunya, Haasts Bluff, Kintore and Mount Liebig. www.bushtel.nt.gov.au/profile		
Government Agencies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MacDonnell Regional Council • National Indigenous Australians Agency • Centrelink (Services Australia) • Central Australia Health Service / Department of Health • Northern Territory Police, Fire and Emergency Services • NT Department of Education and Training 			

Regional Council	MacDonnell Regional Council is responsible for delivering municipal services, community development, and essential infrastructure. Their services include waste management, road maintenance, youth and community programs, aged care and early childhood services. ²⁷
Visitor Accommodation	Papunya Store offers limited commercial accommodation, while Haasts Bluff has no commercial accommodation available. MacDonnell Regional Council provides visitor accommodation in Kintore and Mount Liebig. ²⁸
Power/Water	Electricity in Papunya, Haasts Bluff, Kintore, and Mount Liebig is supplied at the Northern Territory standard tariff with standard connection charges. All four communities rely on groundwater of marginal quality, disinfected and monitored monthly for microbes, with Kintore having an advanced water treatment plant to remove excess minerals. Sewerage systems vary, with Kintore having a fully reticulated system, Papunya using a septic tank effluent pumping system, and Haasts Bluff and Mount Liebig relying on private septic systems. ²⁹
Community Events	Papunya plays in the Central Australian Football League (CAFL), with the 2025 season commencing in April ³⁰

²⁷ MacDonnell Regional Council (n.d.) *Services*. <https://www.macdonnell.nt.gov.au/services>

²⁸ Data Compiled from BushTel (n.d.) *Community Profile – Papunya, Haasts Bluff, Kintore and Mount Liebig*. www.bushtel.nt.gov.au/profile/

²⁹ Ibid

³⁰ Play AFL (n.d.) *TIO CAFL*. <https://play.afl/northern-territory/competitions/tio-cafl>

Step 2: Workforce Research

Step 2 presents workforce data for Papunya, Haasts Bluff, Kintore and Mount Liebig 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 workforce participation rate, the number of individuals in the labour force, and those classified as not in the labour force.

Target Group Definition

The target group includes:

- The total labour force
- Individuals eligible to work but not actively seeking employment
- Excludes those who are currently employed

For the purpose of this report, the target group comprises individuals who are either currently registered under the CDP caseload or are unemployed and actively seeking work. This includes individuals who are eligible to work but not actively seeking employment.³¹³²

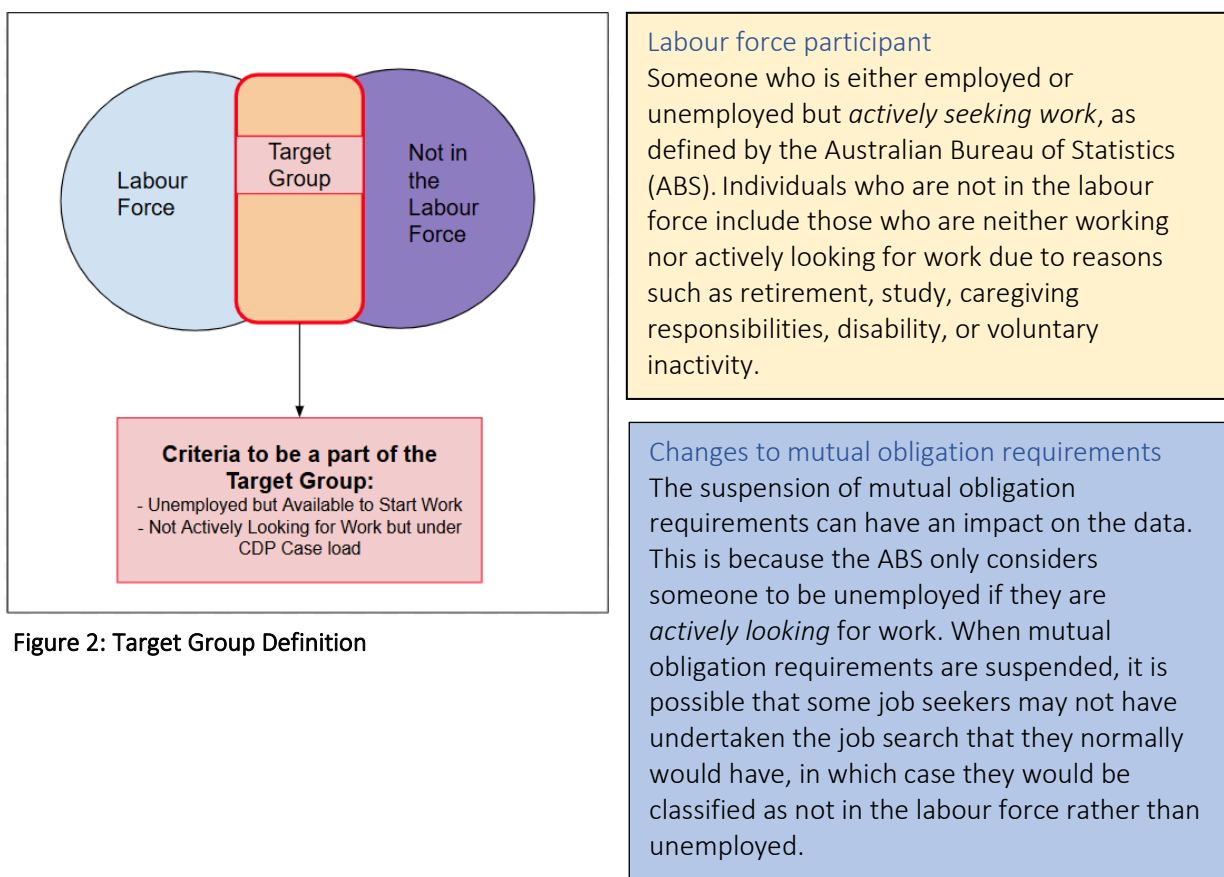


Figure 2: Target Group Definition

³¹ Australian Bureau of Statistics (2023). *Labour Force Explained*. <https://www.abs.gov.au/websitedbs/d3310114.nsf/home/labour+force+explained>

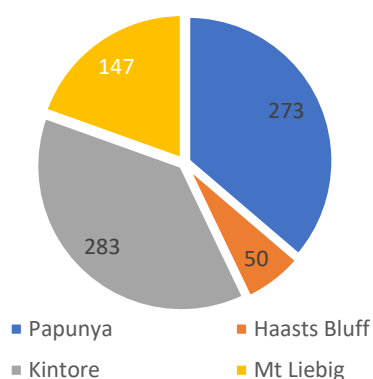
³² Jobs and Skills Australia (2024) *Small Area Labour Markets, September Quarter 2024*. https://www.jobsandskills.gov.au/sites/default/files/2024-12/small_area_labour_markets_-_september_quarter_2024.pdf

2.1 Workforce Demographics

Working Age Population

Across Papunya, Haasts Bluff, Kintore, and Mt Liebig, the working age population (15+) consists of 852 people, with 753 individuals (88.36%) identifying Aboriginal. The distribution varies by community:

- Papunya: 273 Aboriginal working-age residents³³
- Haasts Bluff: 50 Aboriginal working-age residents³⁴
- Kintore: 283 Aboriginal working-age residents³⁵
- Mt Liebig: 147 Aboriginal working-age residents³⁶



This report aims to identify the barriers, successes and complexities faced by the 753 working aged Aboriginal residents of the Luritja Pintubi region with residential addresses in Papunya, Haasts Bluff, Kintore and Mount Liebig.

Figure 3: Aboriginal Working Age Population

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

Labour Force Participation

22% of Aboriginal working-age residents (165 of 753) are actively participating in the labour force, while 60% (454) are not engaged in the workforce:

- Papunya: 62 in labour force; 197 not participating³⁷
- Haasts Bluff: 17 in labour force; 33 not participating³⁸
- Kintore: 60 in labour force; 186 not participating³⁹

³³ Australian Bureau of Statistics (2021), 2021 Census: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples Profile, Papunya. I19 Selected Labour Force, Education and Migration Characteristics by Indigenous Status by Sex. *Canberra: ABS, 2021*

³⁴ Australian Bureau of Statistics (2021), 2021 Census: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples Profile, Haasts Bluff. I19 Selected Labour Force, Education and Migration Characteristics by Indigenous Status by Sex. *Canberra: ABS, 2021*

³⁵ Australian Bureau of Statistics (2021), 2021 Census: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples Profile, Kintore. I19 Selected Labour Force, Education and Migration Characteristics by Indigenous Status by Sex. *Canberra: ABS, 2021*

³⁶ Australian Bureau of Statistics (2021), 2021 Census: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples Profile, Mount Liebig. I19 Selected Labour Force, Education and Migration Characteristics by Indigenous Status by Sex. *Canberra: ABS, 2021*

³⁷ Australian Bureau of Statistics (2021), 2021 Census: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples Profile, Papunya. I19 Selected Labour Force, Education and Migration Characteristics by Indigenous Status by Sex. *Canberra: ABS, 2021*

³⁸ Australian Bureau of Statistics (2021), 2021 Census: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples Profile, Haasts Bluff. I19 Selected Labour Force, Education and Migration Characteristics by Indigenous Status by Sex. *Canberra: ABS, 2021*

³⁹ Australian Bureau of Statistics (2021), 2021 Census: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples Profile, Kintore. I19 Selected Labour Force, Education and Migration Characteristics by Indigenous Status by Sex. *Canberra: ABS, 2021*

- Mount Liebig: 26 in labour force; 111 not participating⁴⁰

The non-participation rates are similar across all four communities ranging from 62% to 77%.

Labour force participation rates have been calculated based on 2021 Census respondents who indicated that they were either 'in the labour force' or 'not in the labour force.' Individuals who did not state their labour force status have been excluded from the analysis.

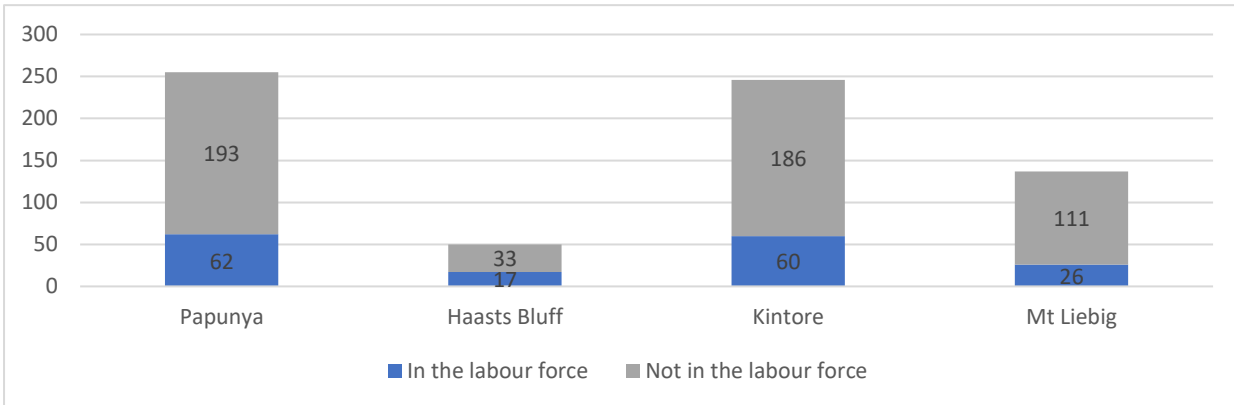


Figure 4: Aboriginal Labour Force Numbers

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

Employment Status

2021 census data show 130 Aboriginal residents employed across the three communities, 49 full-time and 71 part-time. 12 residents responded that they were away from work at the time of the census.⁴¹

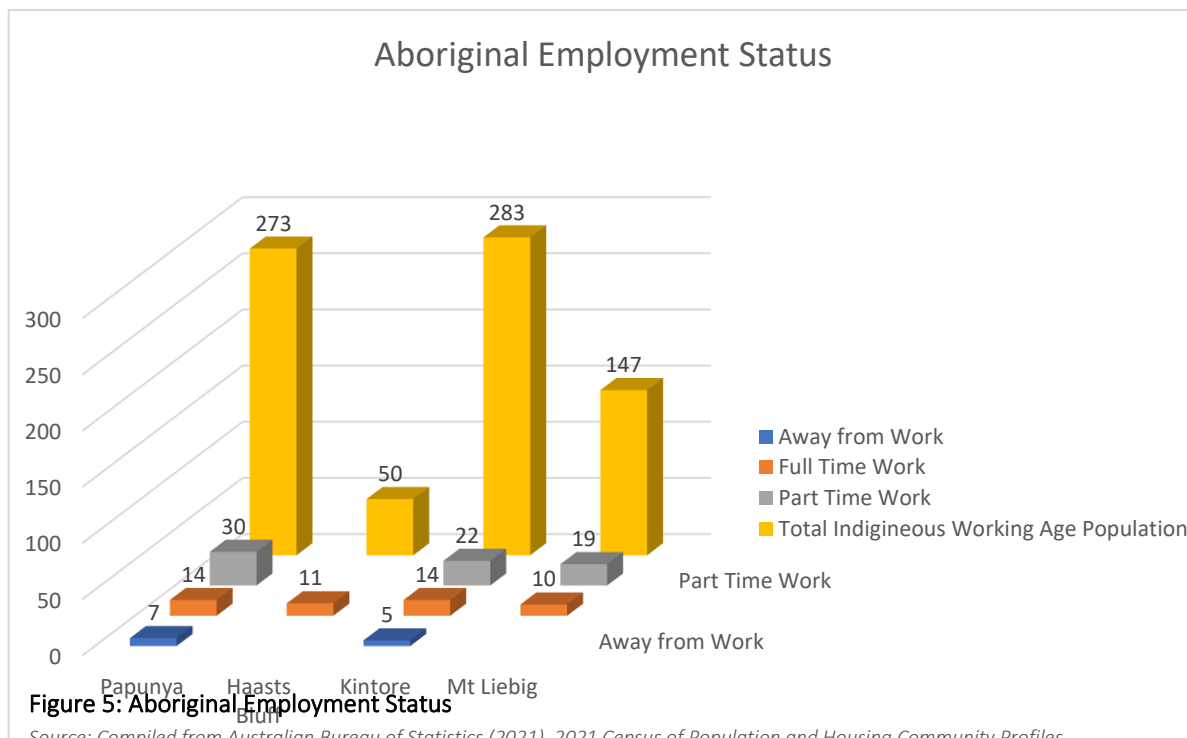


Figure 5: Aboriginal Employment Status

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

⁴⁰ Australian Bureau of Statistics (2021), 2021 Census: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples Profile, Mount Liebig. I19 Selected Labour Force, Education and Migration Characteristics by Indigenous Status by Sex. Canberra: ABS, 2021

⁴¹ Compiled from Australian Bureau of Statistics (2021). 2021 Census Community Profiles for Papunya, Haasts Bluff, Kintore and Mt Liebig. I21 labour force status by age by sex for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander persons. 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. Current data shows that there are 164 CDP participants in Papunya alone.⁴²

The disparity between formal employment and CDP participation reflects the scarcity of formal job opportunities within these communities. In Papunya, detailed CDP data is available through the 2023 Remote Towns Jobs Profile and provides the following insights into the CDP and its effectiveness:

- Nearly half (47%) of CDP participants are aged 25-44,⁴³ a prime working-age group with employment rates of 80-85% nationally⁴⁴
- CDP Employment outcomes for Papunya were <20 individuals securing work for 13 weeks and 26 weeks as at 31 December 2023⁴⁵

This contrast to national employment trends, where the 25-44 age group has workforce participation rates of 85-90%,⁴⁶ highlights the lack of access to employment opportunities.

The Luritja Pintubi Community Cluster shows 519-582 participants per quarter from July 2023 to March 2025, with participant numbers declining 7.4% over the reporting period from a peak of 582 to 539 participants. Employment placement data remains consistently suppressed across all quarters (<20 placements), indicating persistently limited success in moving participants from CDP into employment. Broader programme outcomes show identical suppression patterns across all quarters (<20 participants), suggesting systemic challenges in achieving measurable outcomes. Given the universal data suppression patterns, estimated quarterly placement rates against the average caseload of ~545 participants can be modelled at different levels to assess performance relative to the national CDP average of 6.7% annual placement rate into sustained employment.

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
Luritja Pintubi	582	533	519	545	550	527	539

*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
Luritja Pintubi	<20	<20	<20	<20	<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.

⁴² Department of Trade, Business and Innovation, Northern Territory Government (2025). 2023 Remote Towns Jobs Profiles, Papunya. Northern Territory Government, Darwin. Pg 57.

⁴³ Ibid

⁴⁴ Australian Bureau of Statistics (2023) Labour Force Survey. Australian Bureau of Statistics, Canberra, 2023.

⁴⁵ Department of Trade, Business and Innovation, Northern Territory Government (2025). 2023 Remote Towns Jobs Profiles, Papunya. Northern Territory Government, Darwin. Pg 57.

⁴⁶ Australian Bureau of Statistics (2023). Labour Force, Australia., Cat. No. 6202.0, Australian Bureau of Statistics, Canberra, 2023

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
Luritja Pintubi	<20	<20	<20	<20	<20	<20	<20

Data Source for Table 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.'

Luritja Pintubi has the largest average participant numbers (~545) but shows a positive 7.4% decline over the reporting period.

The broader regional context shows CDP participants increased from 703 in July 2023 to 826 in the North-West Alice Region as of June 2024,⁴⁷ highlighting the scale of the workforce planning challenge regionally

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
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
26-South East Barkly Region NT	416	390	404	392	396	402	392	396	406	402	404	411
27-Far West Alice Region NT	616	614	598	576	576	563	570	576	571	565	578	556
28-North Barkly Region NT	760	760	756	728	749	732	721	733	739	760	746	757

Source: 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

⁴⁷ 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

Jobseeker Recipients

JobSeeker and Youth Allowance recipients in the MacDonnell Regional Council LGA increased from 1,143 (27.6% of population aged 15-64) in March 2020 to 1,523 (36.8%) in December 2024.⁴⁸ This upward trend, alongside increasing CDP participation, indicates growing employment challenges in the region.

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

JobSeeker					
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	28.0	+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: 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 household incomes reveals:

- 78% of Aboriginal residents (553 individuals) earn less than \$500 per week⁴⁹
- The most common income range is \$150-\$299 per week (55%, 388 individuals)⁵⁰
- 14% of Aboriginal residents (100 individuals) report incomes under \$150 per week⁵¹
- 7.1% of Aboriginal residents (51 individuals) report negative or no income⁵²

These patterns reflect widespread financial hardship and strong reliance on government support programs, emphasising the need for accessible local employment opportunities with liveable wages. The table below presents the distribution of individual incomes based on the 2021 Census data.

⁴⁸ 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>

⁴⁹ Data compiled from Australian Bureau of Statistics (2021). 2021 Census: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples Profile for Papunya, Haasts Bluff, Kintore and Mount Liebig. 108 Total Personal Income (Weekly) by Sex for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Persons. Canberra: ABS, 2021.

⁵⁰ Ibid

⁵¹ Ibid

⁵² Ibid

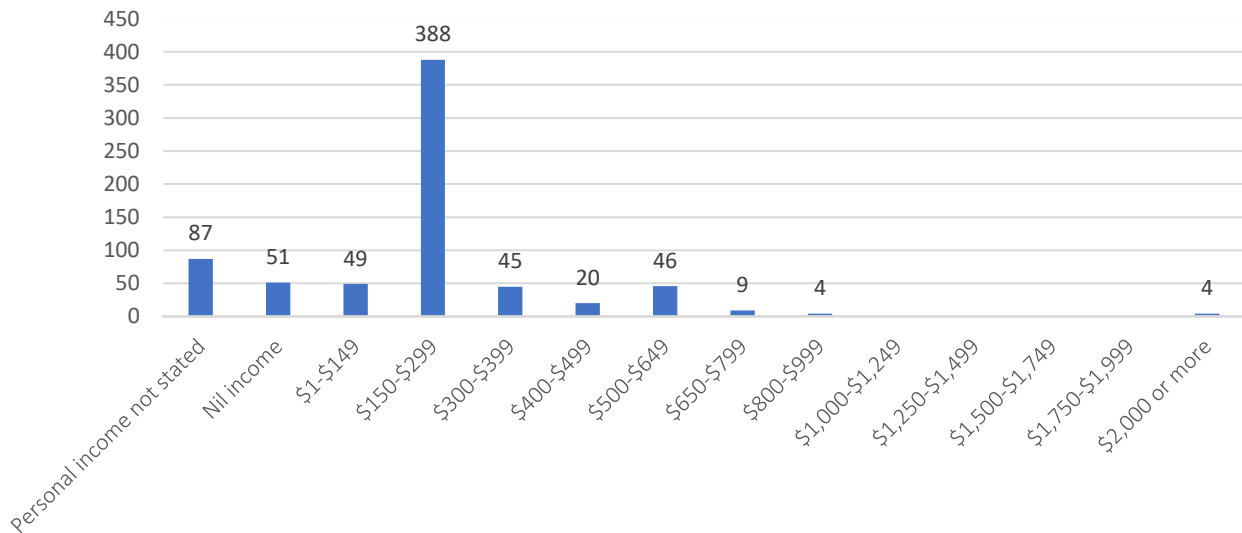


Figure 6: Total Personal Income of Aboriginal Residents

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

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

1. **Significant labour force potential:** With 22% of Aboriginal working-age residents participating 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 demographic and employment profiles requiring customised workforce planning strategies rather than one-size-fits-all solutions.
3. **Economic precarity:** The concentration of residents in lower income brackets indicates widespread financial hardship, reinforcing the importance of creating accessible local employment opportunities.

2.2 Skills in the Community

This section analyses education and training levels across Papunya, Haasts Bluff, Kintore and Mount Liebig 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.⁵³ Core competencies in literacy, numeracy, 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 below 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 opportunities within the communities. These challenges contribute to young people leaving school unprepared to enter the workforce. Strategies to boost attendance, strengthen local access to education and training, and creating pathways for employment within the community are essential in driving long-term remote workforce planning.

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
Papunya ⁵⁴	0-4 years	36	3	8%
	5-14 years	74	69	93%
	15-24 years	83	8	10%
Haasts Bluff ⁵⁵	0-4 years	9	6	67%
	5-14 years	6	5	83%
	15-24 years	16	0	0%
Kintore ⁵⁶	0-4 years	35	5	14%
	5-14 years	66	58	88%
	15-24 years	78	11	14%
Mount Liebig ⁵⁷	0-4 years	19	3	16%
	5-14 years	57	57	100%
	15-24 years	36	5	14%

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

⁵³ 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>

⁵⁴ Australian Bureau of Statistics (2021). 2021 Census: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples Profile, Papunya. I01 Selected Person Characteristics by Indigenous Status by Sex. Canberra: ABS, 2021

⁵⁵ Australian Bureau of Statistics (2021). 2021 Census: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples Profile, Haasts Bluff. I01 Selected Person Characteristics by Indigenous Status by Sex. Canberra: ABS, 2021

⁵⁶ Australian Bureau of Statistics (2021). 2021 Census: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples Profile, Kintore. I01 Selected Person Characteristics by Indigenous Status by Sex. Canberra: ABS, 2021

⁵⁷ Australian Bureau of Statistics (2021). 2021 Census: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples Profile, Mount Liebig. I01 Selected Person Characteristics by Indigenous Status by Sex. Canberra: ABS, 2021

Table 17: School Profile Data

Metric	Papunya School ⁵⁸	Haasts Bluff School ⁵⁹	Walungurru School ⁶⁰	Watiyawanu School ⁶¹
Location	Papunya	Haasts Bluff	Kintore	Mount Liebig
Year Range	T-12	T-7	T-6	T-8
Enrolment Numbers	99	26	61	37
Aboriginal Students	100%	96%	100%	100%
Non-English Language Background	100%	100%	100%	100%
Student-to-Teacher Ratio	11:1	4.8:1	5.3:1	5:1
Attendance Rate (Semester 1, 2024)	33%	64%	58%	65%
Students Attending 90%+ of the Time	0%	13%	6%	9%
VET in School	Data not available	-	-	-
Senior Secondary Outcomes	Data not available	-	-	-
2023 School Funding (Per Student)	\$2,778,692 (\$30,203)	\$958,578 (\$33,158)	\$1,796,157 (\$38,216)	\$1,493,950 (\$43,417)
ICSEA Value (National Average)	610 (1000)	643 (1000)	643 (1000)	502 (1000)

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All four schools share several educational characteristics that shape their workforce planning potential:

- **Cultural Context:** All four schools serve predominantly Aboriginal students with non-English language backgrounds, Vocational Education and Training (VET) courses and further education options should incorporate culturally responsive teaching practices, including facilitating classes in Indigenous languages, to improve engagement and learning outcomes.
- **Low Socio-Educational Advantage:** The extremely low ICSEA values (0th percentile nationally) reflect systemic socio-economic challenges such as poverty, limited access to resources, and geographic isolation. These factors hinder academic achievement and reduce opportunities for students to transition into further education or employment.
- **Attendance Challenges:** With Papunya’s attendance rate at 33% and no students attending 90% or more of the time, educational continuity is severely impacted. This contributes to lower literacy and

⁵⁸ Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (2024). *Papunya School Profile, My School*. <https://www.myschool.edu.au/school/50113>

⁵⁹ Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (2024). *Haasts Bluff School Profile, My School*. <https://www.myschool.edu.au/school/50092>

⁶⁰ Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (2024). *Walungurru School Profile, My School*. <https://www.myschool.edu.au/school/50128>

⁶¹ Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (2024). *Watiyawanu School Profile, My School*. <https://www.myschool.edu.au/school/50130>

numeracy outcomes, as evidenced by correlations between attendance rates and NAPLAN scores, which in turn affect workforce readiness.

- **Access to Secondary Schooling and VET in Schools:** Only Papunya School offers secondary education for students. The lack of secondary schooling limits access to VET in Schools which form a bridge between schooling and future employment for school leavers.

Literacy, Numeracy and Language Context

NAPLAN Performance data for 2024 highlights significant challenges with scores consistently below national averages and low participation rates across all schools. National averages have been provided in brackets next to the 2024 NAPLAN scores in the table below.

2024 NAPLAN results show:

- **A significant performance gap:** All reported scores are significantly below national averages across all subjects and year levels.
- **Low participation rates:** Three out of four schools have participation rates significantly below the national average of 95%, with Papunya and Walungurru Schools having particularly low participation rates of 45% and 44% respectively.
- **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 Indigenous and remote students highlighted in 2024's National NAPLAN results.⁶²

Table 18: NAPLAN Scores

Subject	Year Level	Papunya School ⁶³	Haasts Bluff School ⁶⁴	Walungurru School ⁶⁵	Watiyawanu School ⁶⁶
Reading	3	228 (404)	No scores provided	291 (405)	No scores provided
	5	219 (492)	No scores provided	No scores provided	296 (496)
	7	317 (535)	388 (543)	N/A	320 (536)
	9	No scores provided	No scores provided	N/A	N/A
Writing	3	No scores provided	No scores provided	No scores provided	232 (483)
	5	257 (485)	No scores provided	No scores provided	350 (434)
	7	No scores provided	325 (530)	N/A	No scores provided

⁶² 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/>

⁶³ Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (2024). *Papunya School Profile, My School.* <https://www.myschool.edu.au/school/50113>

⁶⁴ Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (2024). *Haasts Bluff School Profile, My School.* <https://www.myschool.edu.au/school/50092>

⁶⁵ Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (2024). *Walungurru School Profile, My School.* <https://www.myschool.edu.au/school/50128>

⁶⁶ Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (2024). *Watiyawanu School Profile, My School.* <https://www.myschool.edu.au/school/50130>

	9	No scores provided	No scores provided	N/A	N/A
Spelling	3	No scores provided	No scores provided	217 (404)	No scores provided
	5	255 (486)	No scores provided	No scores provided	272 (489)
	7	No scores provided	No scores provided	N/A	347 (539)
	9	No scores provided	No scores provided	N/A	N/A
Grammar	3	No scores provided	No scores provided	256 (411)	No scores provided
	5	No scores provided	No scores provided	No scores provided	184 (497)
	7	No scores provided	No scores provided	N/A	339 (539)
	9	No scores provided	No scores provided	N/A	N/A
Numeracy	3	215 (404)	No scores provided	No scores provided	No scores provided
	5	291 (489)	No scores provided	No scores provided	283 (488)
	7	353 (540)	No scores provided	N/A	348 (538)
	9	No scores provided	No scores provided	N/A	N/A
Participation Rate		45% (95%)	100% (95%)	44% (95%)	85% (95%)

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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.

While NAPLAN provides valuable insights into school-based literacy and numeracy development, these assessments are conducted in English and should be considered within the broader linguistic context of these communities.

The 2021 Census indicates that Indigenous languages are the primary languages spoken at home:

- In Papunya, 95% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander residents primarily speak Indigenous languages at home, with Western Desert Languages being predominant (326 speakers, or 84% of the population).⁶⁷
- In Haasts Bluff, 100% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander residents primarily speak Indigenous languages at home, with Western Desert Languages being predominant (65 speakers, or 93% of the population).⁶⁸
- In Kintore, 100% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander residents primarily speak Indigenous languages at home, with Western Desert Languages being predominant (338 speakers, or 89% of the population).⁶⁹

⁶⁷ Australian Bureau of Statistics (2021). *2021 Census: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples Profile, Papunya. 105 Australian Indigenous Languages Used at Home by Proficiency in Spoken English for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Persons*. Canberra: ABS, 2021

⁶⁸ Australian Bureau of Statistics (2021). *2021 Census: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples Profile, Haasts Bluff. 105 Australian Indigenous Languages Used at Home by Proficiency in Spoken English for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Persons*. Canberra: ABS, 2021

⁶⁹ Australian Bureau of Statistics (2021). *2021 Census: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples Profile, Kintore. 105 Australian Indigenous Languages Used at Home by Proficiency in Spoken English for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Persons*. Canberra: ABS, 2021

- In Mount Liebig, 100% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander residents primarily speak Indigenous languages at home, with Western Desert Languages being predominant (213 speakers, or 96% of the population).⁷⁰

English proficiency varies across these communities, with significant proportions of each community reporting they speak English "not well or not at all":

- In Papunya, 23% of respondents reported speaking English "not well or not at all."⁷¹
- In Haasts Bluff, 36% of respondents reported speaking English "not well or not at all."⁷²
- In Kintore, 18% of respondents indicated they spoke English "not well or not at all."⁷³
- In Mount Liebig, 36% of respondents reported speaking English "not well or not at all."⁷⁴

These figures highlight that in some communities, more than one-third of residents have limited English proficiency. This has a direct impact on both learning environments and employment opportunities and helps to inform workforce planning. It highlights the need for diverse employment pathways that recognise that most community members come from a language background other than English and have different learning styles and knowledge systems. It also suggests that education and training could be more effective when delivered in the languages of the community, potentially improving engagement, comprehension, and learning outcomes for residents.

Vocational Education and Training (VET)

Data for Papunya from the 2023 Remote Towns Jobs Profile reveals significant changes in VET participation between 2016 and 2023:

- Overall participation decreased by 40% (104 to 62 students).⁷⁵
- Unit completions declined by 35% (558 to 362).⁷⁶
- Community services, health, and education training remained a key focus area, growing from 31% to 35% of all training activities even as actual student numbers declined.⁷⁷
- Primary industry emerged as a key training area (19% of enrolments, 37% of completions).⁷⁸
- Business and clerical training declined from 33% to 15% of enrolments.⁷⁹
- Uptake of building and construction and food processing training ceased.⁸⁰

⁷⁰ Australian Bureau of Statistics (2021). *2021 Census: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples Profile, Mt Liebig. 105 Australian Indigenous Languages Used at Home by Proficiency in Spoken English for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Persons*. Canberra: ABS, 2021

⁷¹ Australian Bureau of Statistics (2021). *2021 Census: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples Profile, Papunya. 105 Australian Indigenous Languages Used at Home by Proficiency in Spoken English for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Persons*. Canberra: ABS, 2021

⁷² Australian Bureau of Statistics (2021). *2021 Census: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples Profile, Haasts Bluff. 105 Australian Indigenous Languages Used at Home by Proficiency in Spoken English for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Persons*. Canberra: ABS, 2021

⁷³ Australian Bureau of Statistics (2021). *2021 Census: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples Profile, Kintore. 105 Australian Indigenous Languages Used at Home by Proficiency in Spoken English for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Persons*. Canberra: ABS, 2021

⁷⁴ Australian Bureau of Statistics (2021). *2021 Census: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples Profile, Mt Liebig. 105 Australian Indigenous Languages Used at Home by Proficiency in Spoken English for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Persons*. Canberra: ABS, 2021

⁷⁵ Department of Trade, Business and Asian Relations (2025). *2023 Remote Towns Jobs Profiles, Papunya*. Northern Territory Government, Darwin 2025. Pg 50 - 54

⁷⁶ Ibid

⁷⁷ Ibid

⁷⁸ Ibid

⁷⁹ Ibid

⁸⁰ Ibid

Table19: VET Student Data 2023 compared to 2016

VET Student Data - Papunya										
Industry by NT VET Funding	2016 VET Student Enrolments		2016 Unit Completions		2023 VET Student Enrolments		2023 Unit Completions		Student Enrolment Change	Unit Completion Change
	Number	% of totals	Number	% of totals	Number	% of totals	Number	% of totals	Number	Number
Arts, entertainment, sports and recreation	0	0%	0	0%	6	10%	0	0%	6	6
Building and construction	16	15%	16	3%	0	0%	26	7%	-16	-16
Business and clerical	34	33%	192	34%	9	15%	86	24%	-25	-25
Community services, health and education	32	31%	114	20%	22	35%	52	14%	-10	-10
Food Processing	9	9%	171	31%	0	0%	0	0%	-9	-9
General education and training	13	13%	65	12%	7	11%	10	3%	-6	-6
Primary industry	0	0%	0	0%	12	19%	135	37%	12	12
Sales and personal services	0	0%	0	0%	6	10%	53	15%	6	6
Total	104	100%	558	100%	62	100%	362	100%	-42	-42

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

Table 20: Student count for DET Funded VET Programs in Luritja Pintubi

Program:	2022	2023	2024
Certificate I in Conservation and Ecosystem Management			14
Certificate II in Local Government		19	19
Certificate II in Conservation and Ecosystem Management		12	7
Certificate II in Retail Services	5	5	5
Certificate III in Civil Construction Plant Operations	5	14	
Certificate III in Conservation and Ecosystem Management		5	
Certificate III in Individual Support	5	6	5
Certificate III in Local Government			6
Certificate III in Retail			5
Certificate IV in Conservation & Ecosystem Management	5		
Certificate IV in Conservation & Land Management	5		
Certificate IV in Leadership and Management		5	5
Certificate IV in Local Government			5
Certificate IV in Retail Management		5	5
Food Safety Supervision Skill Set		5	
Learner Support		5	
Welding		5	

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

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

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

Program:	2022	2023	2024	2025
Certificate III in Local Government				6
Certificate II in Retail Services	5	5	5	5
Certificate III in Business		5		
Certificate III in Retail				5
Certificate IV in Local Government				5
Certificate IV in Retail Management		5	5	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].

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Engagement in Tertiary Education

The 2021 Census data shows limited and uneven tertiary education participation across the four communities:

- Papunya: 10 Aboriginal residents attending university; 3 in vocational education
- Haasts Bluff: No Aboriginal residents attending tertiary education
- Kintore: No Aboriginal residents attending tertiary education
- Mount Liebig: 4 Aboriginal residents attending university; 3 in vocational education

Table 22: Tertiary Educational Institute Attended

Educational Institution Type	Papunya ⁸¹	Haasts Bluff ⁸²	Kintore ⁸³	Mount Liebig ⁸⁴
University or other higher education	10	0	0	4
Vocational education (including TAFE and private training providers)	3	0	0	3
Other types of educational institution	0	0	0	0
Type of educational institution not stated	25	4	46	13

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

These findings highlight the need for improved tertiary education access in these remote communities, particularly in Haasts Bluff and Kintore.

⁸¹ Australian Bureau of Statistics (2021) Census of Population and Housing: Papunya. I06, Type of Educational Institution Attending (Full-Time/Part-Time Student Status by Age) by Indigenous Status by Sex. Canberra: ABS, 2021.

⁸² Australian Bureau of Statistics (2021) Census of Population and Housing: Haasts Bluff. Type of Educational Institution Attending (Full-Time/Part-Time Student Status by Age) by Indigenous Status by Sex. Canberra: ABS, 2021.

⁸³ Australian Bureau of Statistics (2021) Census of Population and Housing: Kintore. Type of Educational Institution Attending (Full-Time/Part-Time Student Status by Age) by Indigenous Status by Sex. Canberra: ABS, 2021.

⁸⁴ Australian Bureau of Statistics (2021) Census of Population and Housing: Mount Liebig. Type of Educational Institution Attending (Full-Time/Part-Time Student Status by Age) by Indigenous Status by Sex. Canberra: ABS, 2021.

Qualifications

The 2021 Census reveals few formal qualifications held by Aboriginal residents across the four communities which limits workforce opportunities:

- No residents hold bachelor's degrees or higher
- 13 residents have Certificate III & IV or Diploma qualifications
- 10 residents hold Certificate I & II qualifications
- Mount Liebig reported no residents with post-school qualifications

When considered alongside current job vacancies, this data highlights the challenges posed by qualification requirements for many of the available roles, which are already limited in number. Addressing these barriers to workforce participation could involve expanding on-Country educational opportunities, fostering on-the-job training and traineeships, or reassessing qualification requirements for certain positions.

Table 23: Highest Qualification (Non-School)

Non-School Qualification	Papunya ⁸⁵	Haasts Bluff ⁸⁶	Kintore ⁸⁷	Mount Liebig ⁸⁸
Postgraduate Degree, Postgraduate Diploma or Postgraduate Certificate	0	0	0	0
Bachelor's degree	0	0	0	0
Advanced Diploma or Diploma	3	0	0	0
Certificate III & IV	7	0	0	0
Certificate I & II	3	4	3	0

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

The skills profile across Papunya, Haasts Bluff, Kintore, and Mount Liebig presents a complex picture for workforce planning. These communities possess valuable multilingual capabilities and cultural knowledge, with continued interest in community services and health training alongside emerging VET engagement in primary industry. However, workforce planning is constrained by limited formal qualifications (23 residents with post-school qualifications across all communities), English literacy and numeracy gaps, and declining VET participation. Geographic isolation further restricts access to education pathways, particularly in Haasts Bluff and Kintore where tertiary education participation is non-existent.

These challenges are balanced against opportunities to align training with existing employment sectors, expand culturally appropriate on-Country education, and implement paid traineeships that address socioeconomic barriers by allowing individuals to earn an income while learning on-the-job. The gap between qualification requirements for available jobs and community qualifications remains an important consideration for workforce planning.

⁸⁵ Australian Bureau of Statistics (2021) Census of Population and Housing: Papunya. Table I20c, Highest Non-School Qualification: Level of Education (A) By Indigenous Status by Age by Sex. Canberra: ABS, 2021.

⁸⁶ Australian Bureau of Statistics (2021) Census of Population and Housing: Haasts Bluff. Table I20c, Highest Non-School Qualification: Level of Education (A) By Indigenous Status by Age by Sex. Canberra: ABS, 2021.

⁸⁷ Australian Bureau of Statistics (2021) Census of Population and Housing: Kintore. Table I20c, Highest Non-School Qualification: Level of Education (A) By Indigenous Status by Age by Sex. Canberra: ABS, 2021.

⁸⁸ Australian Bureau of Statistics (2021) Census of Population and Housing: Mount Liebig. Table I20c, Highest Non-School Qualification: Level of Education (A) By Indigenous Status by Age by Sex. Canberra: ABS, 2021.

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 Papunya, Haasts Bluff, Kintore and Mount Liebig reveals both trends and opportunities to inform workforce planning strategies. Understanding where jobs currently exist and where demand is growing provides context for aligning training opportunities with employment pathways.

Key Employment Industries

2021 Census data show public sector employment dominates across the four communities, with three sectors accounting for 151 out of 222 jobs (67.7% of total employment):⁸⁹

- **Public Administration and Safety:** Employs 63 people and serves as the largest employer, with particularly strong representation in Papunya and Kintore.⁹⁰
- **Health Care and Social Assistance:** Is the second largest employer, employing 45 people, primarily in Kintore and Papunya, though notably absent in Haasts Bluff.⁹¹
- **Education and Training:** Employs 43 people across the communities, with limited presence in Haasts Bluff (4 positions).⁹²

This concentration in government and service provision roles reflects limited private sector development.

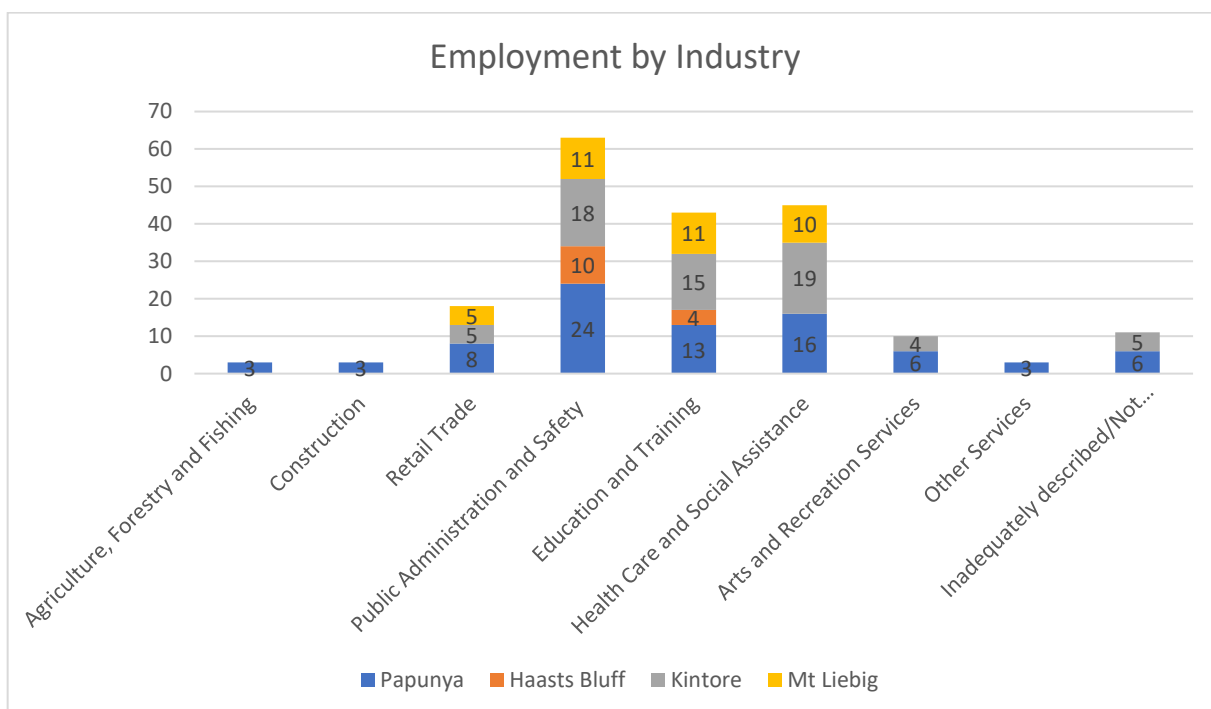


Figure 7: Total Employment by Industry (2021)

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

⁸⁹ Data compiled from Australian Bureau of Statistics (2021). *Census of Population and Housing: Papunya, Haasts Bluff, Kintore and Mount Liebig. G54 Industry of Employment by Age by Sex*. Canberra: ABS, 2021.

⁹⁰ Ibid

⁹¹ Ibid

⁹² Ibid

Occupational Distribution

Occupational data across these communities shows concentration in three main categories:

- **Community and Personal Service Workers:** Form the largest occupational group with 75 positions,⁹³ 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 community members.
- **Professionals:** Form the second-largest occupational group with 46 positions,⁹⁴ this category includes teachers, health professionals, and other specialised roles requiring formal qualifications. This category is completely absent in Haasts Bluff.
- **Managers:** Constitute the third largest occupational group with 24 positions,⁹⁵ but with no representation in Mount Liebig.

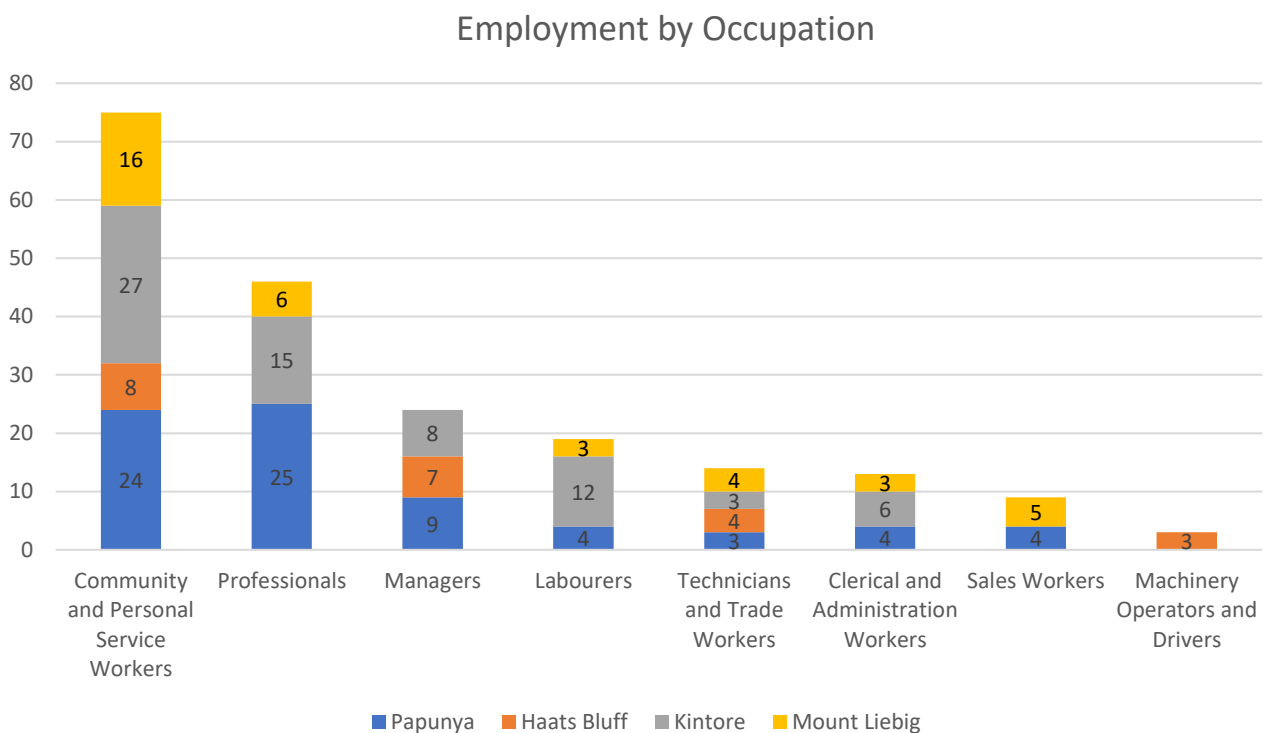


Figure 8: Employment by Occupation (2021)

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

The 2023 Remote Towns Jobs Profile for Papunya provides additional insight into Aboriginal employment patterns. Of the 56 filled positions, 35 (62.5%) are held by Aboriginal community members,⁹⁶ with significant variation by occupation:

⁹³ Data compiled from Australian Bureau of Statistics (2021) *Census of Population and Housing for Papunya, Haasts Bluff, Kintore and Mount Liebig. G60, Occupation by Age by Sex*. Canberra: ABS, 2021

⁹⁴ Ibid

⁹⁵ Ibid

⁹⁶ Department of Trade, Business and Innovation, Northern Territory Government (2025). *2023 Remote Towns Jobs Profiles, Papunya*. Northern Territory Government, Darwin. Pg 32.

- **Community and Personal Service Workers:** Strong Aboriginal representation at 83.3% (20 of 24 positions)⁹⁷
- **Professionals:** Lower Aboriginal representation at 38.9% (7 of 18 positions)⁹⁸
- **Managers:** No Aboriginal representation (0 of 4 positions)⁹⁹

This distribution highlights both a strength in community service roles and opportunities for increasing Aboriginal representation in professional and management positions through targeted workforce planning strategies.

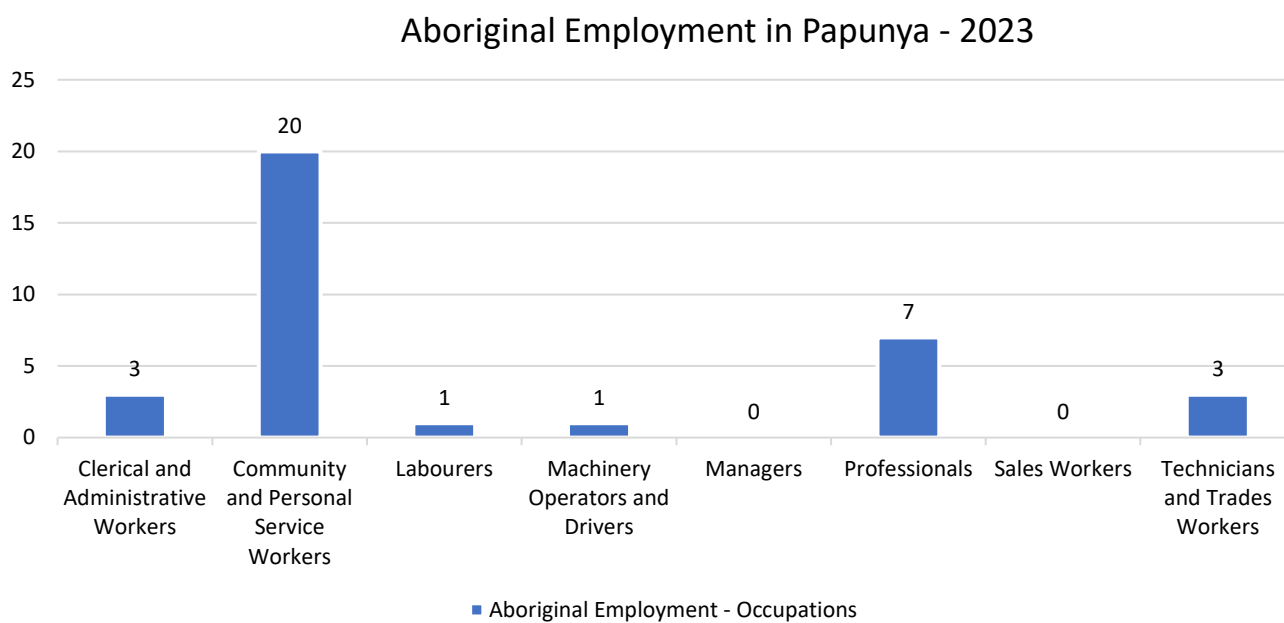


Figure 9: 2023 Total Aboriginal Employment by Occupation in Papunya

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

Workforce Demand

According to the 2023 Remote Town Job Profiles, Papunya has 27 vacant positions out of 83 total jobs,¹⁰⁰ representing a 32.5% vacancy rate. These vacancies show clear patterns of demand:

- **Education and Training:** Accounts for 9 positions (33.3% of vacancies), including 6 teaching roles and 3 Aboriginal Education Worker positions.¹⁰¹
- **Healthcare and Social Assistance:** Has 5 vacancies (18.5%), including Aboriginal Health Worker roles, a Family Support Worker, and a Registered Nurse.¹⁰²
- **Indigenous-specific roles:** Make up 8 positions (29.6% of vacancies)¹⁰³

⁹⁷ Ibid

⁹⁸ Ibid

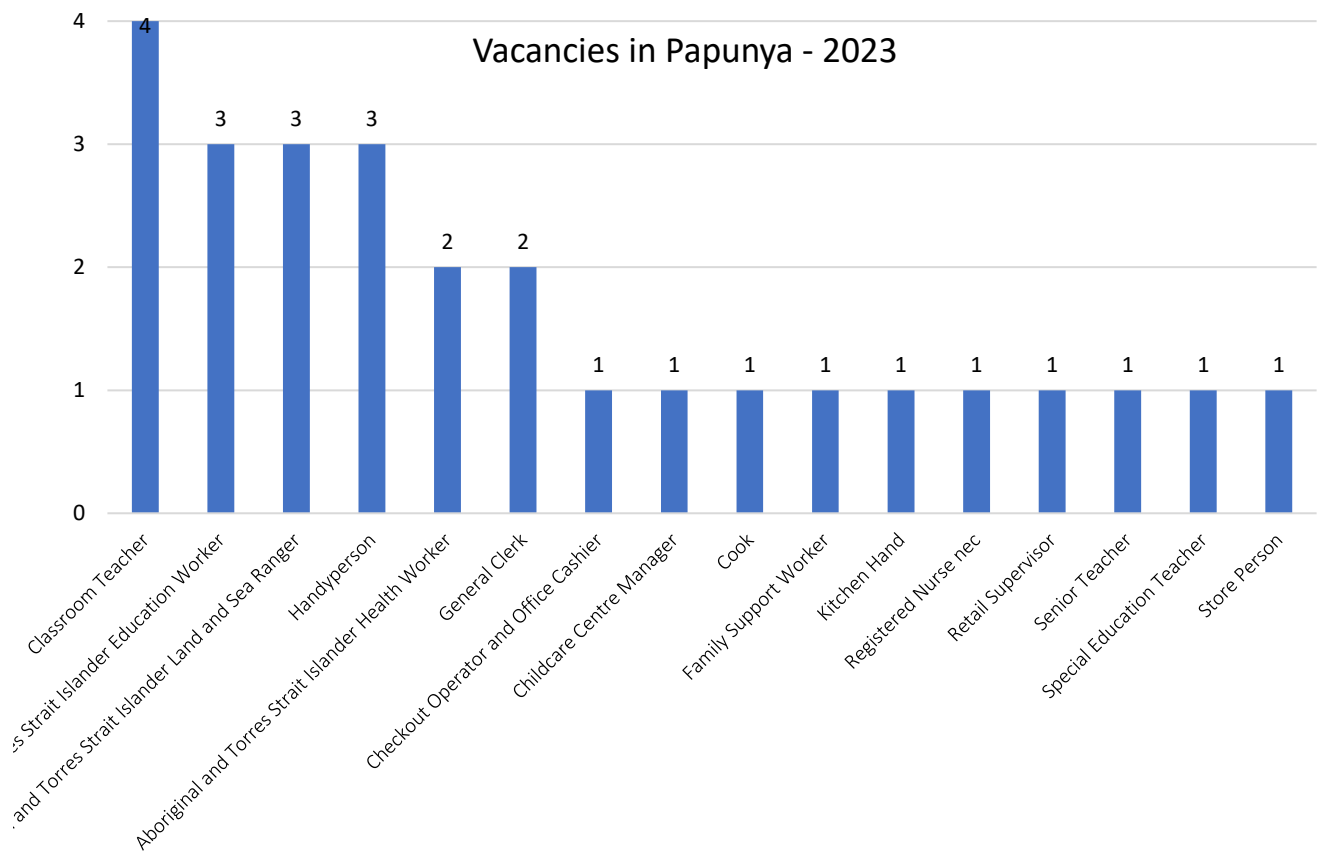
⁹⁹ Ibid

¹⁰⁰ Department of Trade, Business and Innovation, Northern Territory Government (2025). 2023 Remote Towns Jobs Profiles, Papunya. Northern Territory Government, Darwin. Pg 22.

¹⁰¹ Ibid

¹⁰² Ibid

¹⁰³ Ibid



The gap between job availability and job seekers in Papunya is significant, with 164¹⁰⁴ Aboriginal individuals participating in the Community Development Program (CDP) in Papunya - more than six times the number of current job vacancies.

Figure 10: Vacancies by Occupation in Papunya (2023)

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

Analysis of vacancy requirements reveals several employment pathways for community members that align with existing skills and qualifications:

- **Entry-level positions requiring minimal formal qualifications:** 8 positions (29.6% of vacancies)
 - Handyperson (3)¹⁰⁵
 - General Clerk (2)¹⁰⁶
 - Store Person (1)¹⁰⁷
 - Kitchen Hand (1)¹⁰⁸
 - Checkout Operator (1)¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁴ Department of Trade, Business and Innovation, Northern Territory Government (2025). 2023 Remote Towns Jobs Profiles, Papunya. Northern Territory Government, Darwin. Pg 5.

¹⁰⁵ Department of Trade, Business and Innovation, Northern Territory Government (2025). 2023 Remote Towns Jobs Profiles, Papunya. Northern Territory Government, Darwin. Pg 22.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid

¹⁰⁷ Ibid





¹⁰⁸ Ibid

¹⁰⁹ Ibid






- **Roles with accessible qualification pathways:** Account for 8 positions (29.6% of vacancies) with culturally appropriate training available through Batchelor Institute or on-Country programs, including Aboriginal Education Workers (3), Aboriginal Health Workers (2), and Aboriginal Rangers (3).¹¹⁰








These opportunities offer immediate employment options while establishing pathways for further skills development that connect to the current educational context of these communities.

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

Occupation	Employer	# of Roles	Qualification	Details	Education / Training Provider	Cultural Framework
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Worker	Dept Education and Training	3	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 Health Worker	NT Health	2	Certificate IV in Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Primary Health Care Practice	2 years, 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	Central Land Council	3	Certificate II in Conservation and Ecosystem Management On the Job Training	6 months, fee free	Charles Darwin University (Alice Springs Campus)	Working on Country 
Checkout Operator and Office Cashier	-	1	On the job training	-	-	Servicing the Community 

¹¹⁰ Ibid

Childcare Centre Manager	Central Desert Regional Council	1	Diploma of Early Childhood Education and Care (or similar) + Relevant Experience	1 year, fee free for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students	Batchelor Institute	Caring for Family and Community 
Classroom Teacher	Dept Education and Training	4	Bachelor of Education (Primary or Secondary)	4 years, Commonwealth Supported places available	Charles Darwin University (Darwin Campus)	Caring for Family and Community 
Cook	-	1	Certificate III in Commercial Cookery / On the job training	1 Years, fee free	Charles Darwin University (Alice Springs Campus)	Servicing the Community 
Family Support Worker	-	1	Certificate II in Community Services	6 months, fee free for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students	Batchelor Institute	Caring for Family and Community 
General Clerk	-	2	Certificate III/IV in Business / On the job training	6 months, fee free for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students / 1 year fee free for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students	Batchelor Institute	Servicing the Community 

Handyperson	-	3	On the job training	-	-	Building the Community 
Kitchen Hand	-	1	On the job training	-	-	Servicing the Community 
Registered Nurse	NT Health	1	Bachelor of Nursing	3 years, (Commonwealth supported places available)	Charles Darwin University (Darwin Campus)	Caring for Family and Community 
Retail Supervisor	-	1	On the job training + Relevant Experience	-	-	Servicing the Community 
Senior Teacher	Dept Education and Training	1	Bachelor of Education + Relevant Experience	4 years, Commonwealth Supported places available	Charles Darwin University (Darwin Campus)	Caring for Family and Community 
Special Education Teacher	Dept Education and Training	1	Bachelor of Education + Postgraduate Degree in Education	4 years, (Commonwealth Supported places available)	Charles Darwin University (Darwin Campus)	Caring for Family and Community 
Store Person	-	1	On the job training	-	-	Servicing the Community 

Source: Department of Trade, Business and Asian Relations (2023) Remote Towns Jobs Profiles, Northern Territory Government, January 2025, Darwin¹¹¹

¹¹¹ Department of Trade, Business and Asian Relations (2023). Remote Towns Jobs Profile, Papunya. Northern Territory Government, January 2025, Darwin. Pg 22

A request to the Department of Education and Training for school position vacancy data as of May 2025 revealed the following non-teaching vacancies across the four schools:

Table 25: May 2025 Education Vacancies (excluding teaching vacancies)

School	Papunya School	Haasts Bluff School	Walungurru School	Watiyawanu School
Location:	Papunya	Haasts Bluff	Kintore	Mount Liebig
Total Vacant Positions:	9	1	1	1
Position Title:				
Administrative Support Officer	1			
Administrative Assistant	2			
Literacy Worker	1			
Maintenance Officer	2	1	1	1
FAFT Family Liaison Officer	1			
Engagement Officer	2			

Source: Department of Education and Training. (2025). Data provided to Desert Knowledge Australia for report purposes only. [Unpublished raw data].

The employment landscape across Papunya, Haasts Bluff, Kintore, and Mount Liebig presents both challenges and opportunities for workforce planning. There is strong Aboriginal representation in service-oriented roles (83.3% of Community and Personal Service positions in Papunya). However, significant barriers exist in professional and management roles where Aboriginal representation is low (38.9% and 0% respectively in Papunya). The concentration of employment in public sector roles (68.1% across three industries) indicates limited economic diversification, while the substantial gap between job seekers (164) and available positions (27) in Papunya highlights the need for job creation.

These challenges are balanced against opportunities in identified Indigenous-specific roles (29.6% of vacancies) and positions requiring minimal formal qualifications (29.6% of vacancies) that are more accessible.

This employment analysis highlights five key workforce planning priorities:

1. **Target High-Demand Sectors:** Focus training pathways on education and healthcare, which account for 52% of current vacancies and represent stable employment opportunities across all communities.
2. **Expand Entry-Level Pathways:** Create a targeted initiative that connect jobseekers to the 29.6% of vacancies requiring minimal qualifications, providing immediate employment opportunities while building skills for future advancement.
3. **Develop Leadership Pathways:** Create targeted strategies to increase Aboriginal representation in management positions, where current representation is 0% despite constituting the third-largest occupational category.

By focusing on these priorities, workforce planning initiatives could create accessible employment pathways that address immediate needs while building long-term capacity.

2.4 Economic Context

Economic factors significantly shape workforce participation in Papunya, Haasts Bluff, Kintore and Mount Liebig. 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.

Gross Regional Product

The economic profile of Luritja Pintubi, which includes Papunya, Haasts Bluff, Kintore, and Mount Liebig, 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) GRP:** \$45.7 million¹¹² - which represents all economic value produced within the geographic boundaries of the region, regardless of who performs the work.
- **Employed Resident GRP:** \$31.0 million¹¹³ – which measures the economic value generated by local residents working within the region.

The relatively small gap between these figures (with resident GRP at 67.8% of total GRP) indicates that the local economy is largely driven by residents rather than external workers or companies. This contrasts sharply with regions dominated by mining or other industries that rely heavily on non-resident workers.

This cluster's economy is driven primarily by its own residents, with Indigenous people constituting the majority of both the population and workforce. There is parity in economic output per employed resident between Indigenous and all populations, but persistent socioeconomic challenges remain, especially for Indigenous households. The public sector, health, and community services feature prominently in both employment and economic value added.

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.

¹¹² ID Consulting Pty Ltd (2025). *Economic and Demographic Analysis of the Tanami Region*. Unpublished report prepared for Desert Knowledge Australia, 2025.

¹¹³ Ibid

Table 26: Total Regional versus Indigenous GRP Data

Category	POW Workforce	Employed Resident Workforce	POW GRP (\$)	Employed Resident GRP (\$)	POW GRP Per Capita (\$)	Employed Resident GRP Per Capita (\$)
Total	401	309	45,652,908	31,015,476	113,848	100,374
Indigenous	238	203	26,114,303	18,495,416	109,724	91,110

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

- The region’s POW GRP per capita indicates a moderate economic output, reflecting a modest-sized workforce without significant external or FIFO presence.
- Indigenous residents make up 59% of the total workforce (238 out of 401), generate 57% of the region’s POW GRP, and nearly 60% of the Employed Resident GRP.
- Employed Resident GRP per capita is comparable for Indigenous and all residents, highlighting similar economic value per employed person across the two populations.
- The ratio of Employed Resident GRP to POW GRP again highlights that most regionally produced value is retained by or attributable to residents.

Table 27: GRP Value added -Employed Regional Residents

Sector	Total Employed Residents Value Added	Indigenous Employed Residents Value Added	Indigenous Employed Residents % of Total Value Added	Total Employed Residents	Indigenous Employed Residents	Indigenous % of Total Employed Residents (in industry)
Public Administration and Safety	10190530	6840219	67%	86	58	67%
Health Care and Social Assistance	5854126	3805182	65%	93	60	65%
Education and Training	4075852	1732237	43%	43	18	43%
Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing	2594237	1441243	56%	10	6	60%
Retail Trade	2119977	1615221	76%	40	31	77%
Construction	1341568	0	0%	4	-	0%
Arts and Recreation Services	951708	805291	85%	17	14	85%
Administrative and Support Services	689520	0	0%	7	-	0%
Other Services	495247	792396	160%	10	17	160%

Data source: ID Consulting Pty Ltd (2025). *Economic and Demographic Analysis of the Tanami Region*. Unpublished report prepared for Desert Knowledge Australia, 2025¹¹⁴

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.

Papunya, Haasts Bluff, Kintore, and Mount Liebig have no major mining operations contributing to their economic output. Instead, the regional economy is primarily driven by public and community service sectors:

- Public Administration and Safety: \$10.2 million (32.9% of resident GRP)¹¹⁵
- Health Care and Social Assistance: \$5.9 million (18.9%)¹¹⁶
- Education and Training: \$4.1 million (13.1%)¹¹⁷
- Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing: \$2.6 million (8.4%)¹¹⁸
- Retail Trade: \$2.1 million (6.8%)¹¹⁹

These economic activities align closely with local employment patterns, with the three dominant service sectors employing 151 out of 223 employed residents (67.7%):

- Public Administration and Safety: 63 residents (28.25%)
- Health Care and Social Assistance: 45 residents (20.17%)
- Education and Training: 43 residents (19.28%)

When including both the communities and their outstations, these same three service sectors remain dominant, employing 222 out of 309 total regional residents (71.8% of the broader regional workforce):

- Health Care and Social Assistance: 93 residents (30.1%)
- Public Administration and Safety: 86 residents (27.8%)
- Education and Training: 43 residents (13.9%)

Several key insights emerge from this regional economic profile:

1. The region has a service-based economy highly dependent on public sector employment, with limited private sector development (zero GST-registered businesses as of June 2024).¹²⁰
2. Government benefits serve as the primary income source for 79% of regional residents, compared to 21% deriving their main income from employment.¹²¹
3. The employment-to-value ratio in Health Care and Social Assistance (30.1% of employment generating 18.9% of GRP)¹²² suggests potential for increasing productivity and value in this sector.
4. Youth disengagement is particularly high at 71%,¹²³ indicating significant barriers to workforce participation for young people.

¹¹⁴ 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.

¹¹⁵ ID Consulting Pty Ltd (2025). *Economic and Demographic Analysis of the Tanami Region*. Unpublished report prepared for Desert Knowledge Australia, 2025.

¹¹⁶ Ibid

¹¹⁷ Ibid

¹¹⁸ Ibid

¹¹⁹ Ibid

¹²⁰ Ibid

¹²¹ Ibid

¹²² Ibid

¹²³ Ibid

These factors highlight the need for workforce planning strategies that strengthen existing service sectors while exploring opportunities to diversify the local economy, particularly in areas like agriculture that show economic potential but currently employ relatively few residents.

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:

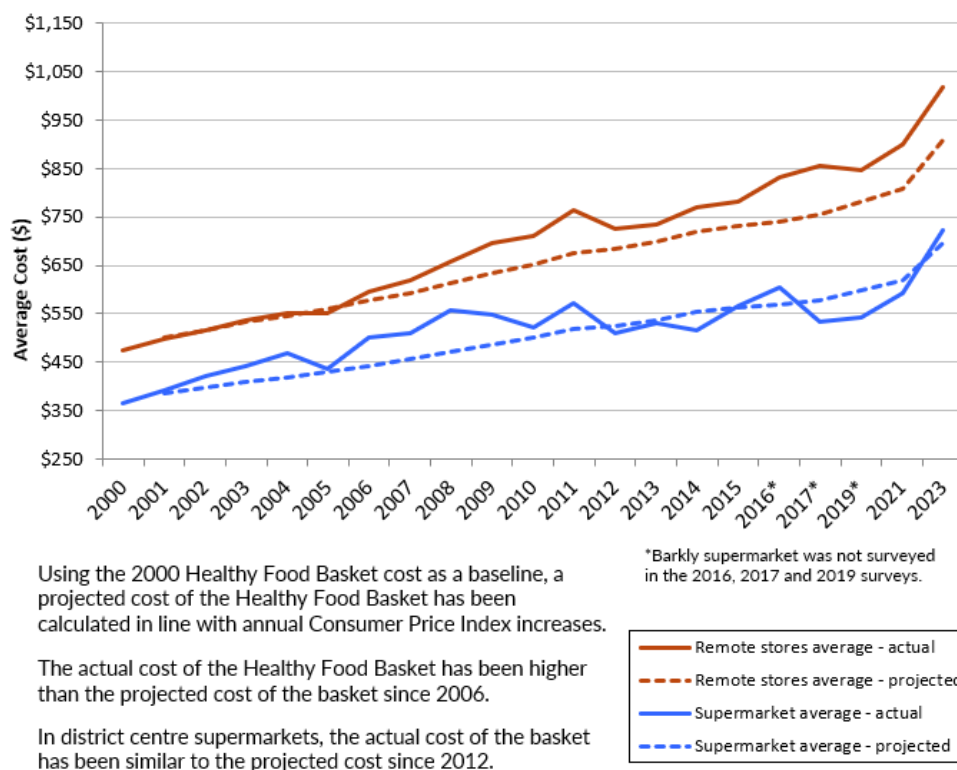


Figure 11: Market Basket Survey - Cost of a Food Basket from 2000-2023

Source: Northern Territory Government, NT Market Basket Survey 2023

- The "Healthy Food Basket" (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.¹²⁴
- The "Current Diet Basket" costs \$1,072 in remote stores compared to \$890 in Alice Springs.¹²⁵
- From 2021 to 2023, the cost of the Healthy Food Basket rose by 13% in remote stores,¹²⁶ highlighting increasing cost pressures.

¹²⁴ NT Health (2023). Attachment A - 2023 NT Market Basket Survey Summary Report. Darwin. <https://data.nt.gov.au/dataset/nt-market-basket-survey-2023>

¹²⁵ Ibid

¹²⁶ Ibid

These costs create immediate financial challenges for job seekers. A single parent with dependent children receiving the maximum JobSeeker Payment of \$836.50 per fortnight¹²⁷ 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 alone cannot meet basic needs and emphasises the importance of creating accessible local employment opportunities.

Transportation Costs

Transportation costs are another significant challenge impacting workforce planning for Papunya, Haasts Bluff, Kintore, and Mount Liebig, which are geographically isolated with distances ranging from 227 km (Haasts Bluff) to 530 km (Kintore) from Alice Springs. The 2024 NTCOSS Transport Factsheet notes unleaded petrol reaching 268.7 cents per litre (a 16.7-cent rise over the past year).¹²⁸ These prices are well above the national average, intensifying financial pressures for regional residents.¹²⁹

While the Centre Bush Bus offers weekly services connecting these communities to Alice Springs, one-way fares range from \$130 to \$190. With 20% of households reporting combined weekly incomes of less than \$500¹³⁰ a return bus trip for one family member from Papunya or Haasts Bluff would cost \$260,¹³¹ over half of that family’s combined weekly income. If they lived in Mount Liebig, the return trip would cost \$310,¹³² 62% of that family’s combined weekly income, and \$380¹³³ or 76% of that family’s combined weekly income if they were from Kintore, making travel to and from Alice Springs virtually financially impossible for 1 in 5 households.

High transportation costs create barriers to accessing training, employment, and services outside the immediate community. This geographic isolation has direct implications for workforce planning, limiting mobility and access to opportunities in larger centres further emphasising the importance of developing in-Community employment and training options that minimise the need for costly travel.

¹²⁷ Services Australia (2025) *Jobseeker Payment*. <https://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/how-much-jobseeker-payment-you-can-get?context=51411>

¹²⁸ Harding, M. and Pilbrow, J (2024). Cost of Transport in the Northern Territory Fact Sheet. Darwin: NTCOSS and Just Change. <https://ntcoss.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/2024-CoL-Transport-FINAL-030524.pdf>

¹²⁹ Ibid

¹³⁰ Data compiled from Australian Bureau of Statistics (2021). 2021 Census: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples Profile for Papunya, Haasts Bluff, Kintore and Mount Liebig. I17 total household income (weekly) by Indigenous status of household. Canberra: ABS, 2021.

¹³¹ Centre Bush Bus (n.d.) Bus Timetables. www.centrebushbus.com.au/bus-timetables/

¹³² Ibid

¹³³ Ibid

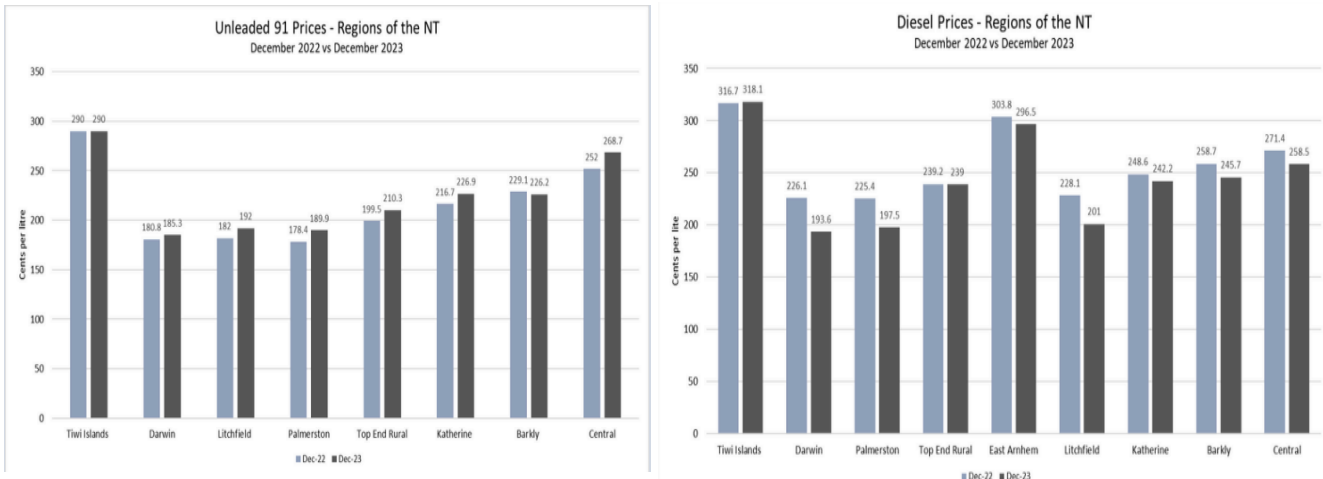


Figure 12: Unleaded 91 and Diesel Prices 2022-23 - Regions of the NT

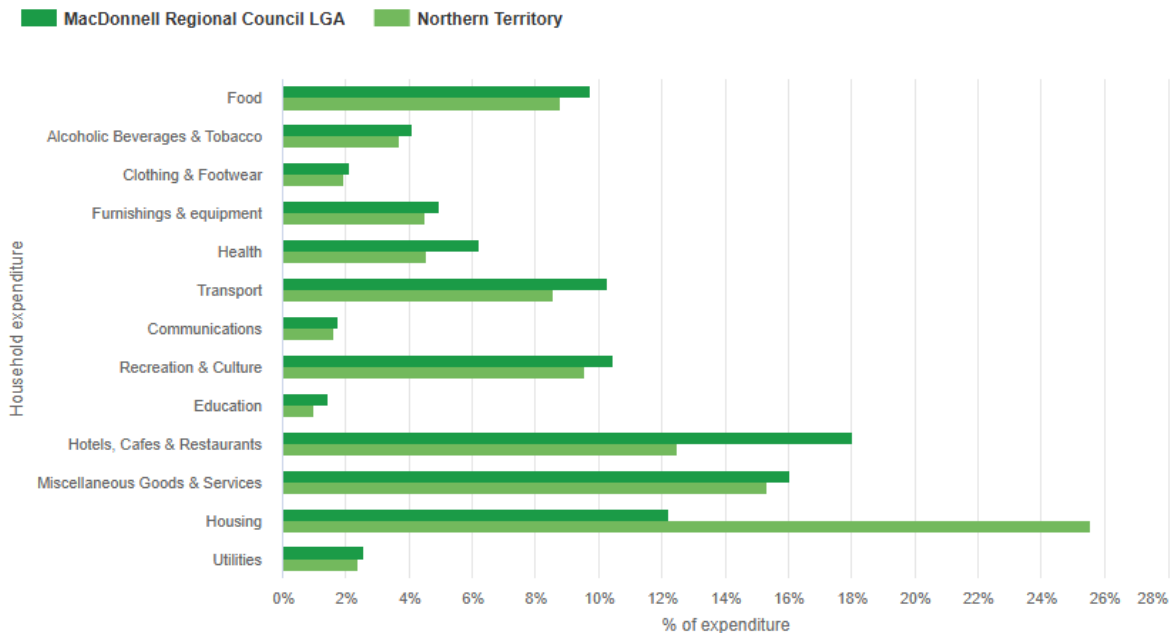
Source: Harding, M. and Pilbrow, J (2024). Cost of Transport in the Northern Territory Fact Sheet. Darwin: NTCOSS and Just Change.

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%),¹³⁴ likely reflecting travel costs required for accessing essential services outside their communities.

- Health expenditure is higher at 6.21% versus the Territory average of 4.56%,¹³⁵ suggesting increased healthcare costs or increased healthcare needs in these remote areas.
- Transportation costs consume 10.29% of household budgets compared to 8.55% for the Territory average, highlighting the financial impact of geographic isolation.¹³⁶

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

Household Income

Household income data from the 2021 Census reveals varied financial circumstances across Papunya, Haasts Bluff, Kintore, and Mount Liebig:

- 10.5% of households (16 out of 151 households) report weekly income under \$499¹³⁷
- 25% of households (38 out of 151) earn less than \$800 per week¹³⁸
- 42% of households (64 of 151) earn between \$1000 and \$2499 per week¹³⁹
- No households report income in the highest brackets (\$3,000+)¹⁴⁰
- Haasts Bluff shows no data responses for this census question, only 3 partial incomes states¹⁴¹

This income distribution, when viewed alongside elevated food costs (40% higher than Alice Springs),¹⁴² increased transportation expenses (10.29% of household budgets),¹⁴³ and higher health expenditure (6.21%),¹⁴⁴ creates a challenging economic environment. With almost half of households earning less than \$800 weekly and a Healthy Food Basket costing \$978 fortnightly in remote stores,¹⁴⁵ many families face difficult financial decisions that affect will their ability to pursue education, training, or employment opportunities requiring initial investment.

With 164 Aboriginal individuals participating in the Community Development Program in Papunya alone seeking employment, transitioning even a portion to sustainable employment would significantly improve community economic wellbeing while reducing reliance on income support payments that fall short of meeting basic needs.

¹³⁴ .id (Informed Decisions) (2024). *RDA Northern Territory, Household Expenditure*. <https://economy.id.com.au/rda-northern-territory/household-expenditure?IndkeyNieir=23402&WebID=130>.

¹³⁵ Ibid

¹³⁶ Ibid

¹³⁷ Data compiled from Australian Bureau of Statistics (2021). *2021 Census: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples Profile for Papunya, Haasts Bluff, Kintore and Mount Liebig*. I17 total household income (weekly) by Indigenous status of household. Canberra: ABS, 2021

¹³⁸ Ibid

¹³⁹ Ibid

¹⁴⁰ Ibid

¹⁴¹ Ibid

¹⁴² NT Health (2023). *Attachment A - 2023 NT Market Basket Survey Summary Report*. Darwin. <https://data.nt.gov.au/dataset/nt-market-basket-survey-2023>

¹⁴³ .id (Informed Decisions) (2024). *RDA Northern Territory, Household Expenditure*. <https://economy.id.com.au/rda-northern-territory/household-expenditure?IndkeyNieir=23402&WebID=130>.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid

¹⁴⁵ NT Health (2023). *Attachment A - 2023 NT Market Basket Survey Summary Report*. Darwin. <https://data.nt.gov.au/dataset/nt-market-basket-survey-2023>

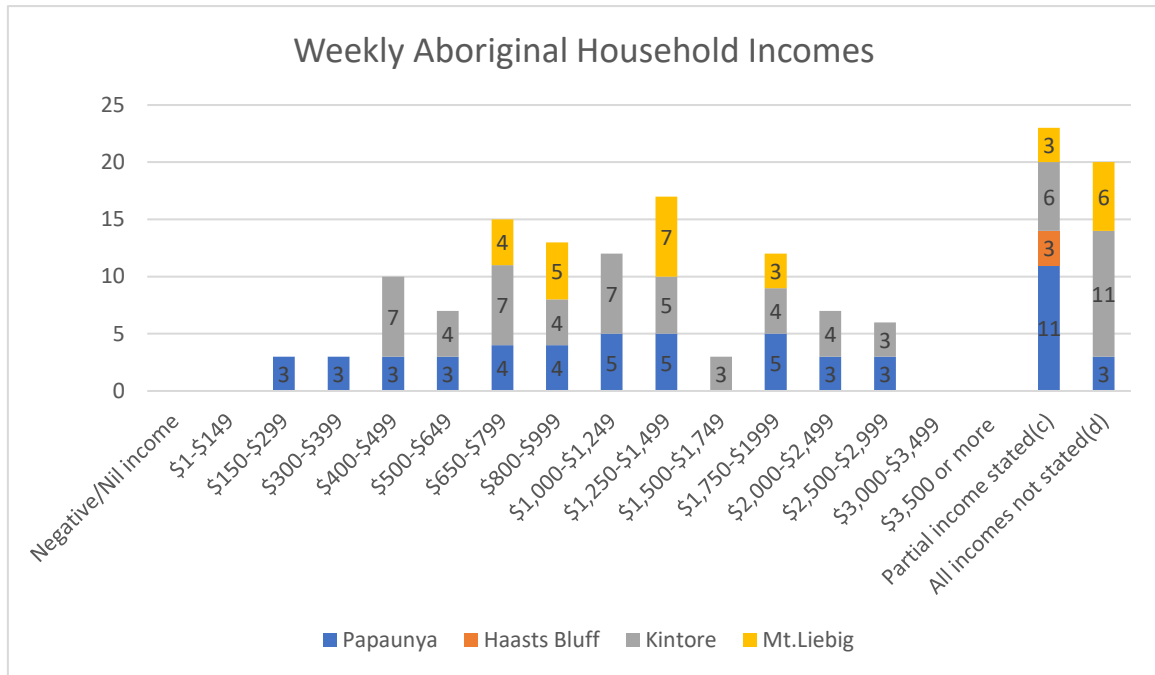


Figure 14: Weekly Reported Aboriginal Household Income

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

Socio-Economic Disadvantage

The Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA) further illustrates the profound challenges faced by these communities. The Tanami SA2, which includes Papunya, Haasts Bluff, Kintore and Mount Liebig, scores exceptionally low across all SEIFA indexes, placing it within the lowest decile nationally.¹⁴⁶ These results indicate that these communities are among the most socio-economically disadvantaged areas in Australia, with limited economic opportunities, lower income levels, and significant barriers to education and employment.

Table 28: SEIFA Indexes for the Tanami SA2 Region

Index	Score	Decile	Percentile
Index of Relative Socio-economic Disadvantage	524	1	1
Index of Relative Socio-economic Advantage and Disadvantage	704	1	1
Index of Economic Resources	563	1	1
Index of Education and Occupation	858	1	1

¹⁴⁶ 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 Tanami Statistical Area Level 2 (SA2). This means that the scores reflect the combined socio-economic conditions across the Tanami region, including the communities of Papunya, Haasts Bluff, Kintore, and Mount Liebig. While this data provides valuable insights into the overall socio-economic landscape, it should be interpreted with the understanding that variations may exist between these individual communities within the Tanami SA2.

Investment and Opportunity: Current Funding Allocations

Despite the economic challenges outlined in previous sections, government investments into all four communities create potential opportunities for workforce planning and economic participation. Analysis of government funding data published by BushTel and the Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority for Papunya, Haasts Bluff, Kintore, and Mount Liebig reveals approximately \$123.9 million in total investments. However, this funding is structured in two distinct categories, Regional Investments and Community Specific Allocations.

This report acknowledges that additional funding sources exist beyond those included in this analysis.

Regional Investments (\$88 million)¹⁴⁷

Most of the funding (\$88M) consists of regional programs benefiting multiple communities rather than community-specific allocations. This creates a significant data limitation in how the information is presented on BushTel, as identical programs with the same project IDs and funding amounts appear across multiple community profiles, potentially leading to double-counting. Regional funding predominantly supports employment and economic development initiatives, with significant investments also directed toward community safety, family support, and infrastructure programs. The distribution of this funding across program categories is presented below:

Table 29: Regional Investments

Program Category	Amount (\$M)	% of Regional	Primary Initiatives	Timeframe
Indigenous Employment & Business	57.6	65.4%	CLC Ranger Program	2021-2028
Community Safety	7.4	8.4%	MacSafe Community Safety	2024-2026
Community Support	7.3	8.3%	Keeping Places, Healing Camps	2023-2027
Family Services	7.2	8.2%	Family Intensive Support	2021-2026
Aged Care	2.9	3.3%	Indigenous Employment Initiative Program	2024-2026

¹⁴⁷ Data compiled from BushTel (2025). Papunya - Projects and Grants. <https://bushtel.nt.gov.au/profile/131?tab=projects> ; Haasts Bluff - Projects and Grants. <https://bushtel.nt.gov.au/profile/41?tab=projects> ; Kintore – Projects and Grants. <https://bushtel.nt.gov.au/profile/72?tab=projects> ; Mount Liebig – Projects and Grants. <https://bushtel.nt.gov.au/profile/112?tab=projects> .

Education	2.3	2.7%	Junior Ranger Program	2024-2026
Infrastructure	2.6	2.9%	Shade structures, Roads	2023-2026

Source: Data compiled from BushTel (2025). Projects and Grants for Papunya, Haasts Bluff, Kintore and Mount Liebig.

It is noteworthy that the Indigenous Employment Initiative Program, while categorised under Aged Care and administered by the Department of Health and Aged Care, specifically targets employment outcomes for Aboriginal people. This approach represents an integration of employment objectives within service delivery funding, addressing both service provision and workforce planning as complementary priorities.

Community-Specific Investments (\$35.9 million)¹⁴⁸

Community-specific allocations vary significantly across the four communities:

- **Kintore** (\$20.8M): Receives the highest community-specific funding, primarily for Indigenous health programs (\$13.9M) and aged care services (\$4.4M) through Pintupi Homelands Health Service, plus \$1.8M in education funding for Walungurru School.¹⁴⁹
- **Papunya** (\$8.9M): Major investments include a sports precinct grandstand (\$4.1M), education funding for Haasts Bluff School (\$2.8M) and arts funding through Papunya Tjupi Art Centre (\$1.4M).¹⁵⁰
- **Haasts Bluff** (\$4.1M): Funding primarily supports education funding for the local public school (\$2.8M) and the Ikuntji Artists Aboriginal Corporation.¹⁵¹
- **Mount Liebig** (\$2.2M): Smallest funding allocation, including educational funding for Watiyawanu School (\$1.5M), aerodrome upgrades (\$0.5M) and store sustainability projects.¹⁵²

Table 30: Community Specific Investment

Community	Project Funding (\$M)	Education Funding (\$M)	Total (\$M)	Key Investment Areas	Timeframe
Kintore	19.0	1.8	20.8	Healthcare (\$13.9M), Aged Care (\$4.4M), Education (\$1.8M for 47 students)	2018-2028
Papunya	6.1	2.8	8.9	Sports Infrastructure (\$4.1M), Arts (\$1.4M), Education (\$2.8M for 92 students)	2021-2026
Haasts Bluff	1.3	2.8	4.1	Arts & Culture (\$1.3M), Education (\$2.8M for 92 students)	2020-2025
Mount Liebig	0.7	1.5	2.2	Transport (\$0.5M), Store (\$0.2M),	2019-2026

¹⁴⁸ Ibid

¹⁴⁹ BushTel (2025). Kintore – Projects and Grants. <https://bushtel.nt.gov.au/profile/72?tab=projects>

¹⁵⁰ BushTel (2025). Papunya - Projects and Grants. <https://bushtel.nt.gov.au/profile/131?tab=projects>

¹⁵¹ BushTel (2025). Haasts Bluff - Projects and Grants. <https://bushtel.nt.gov.au/profile/41?tab=projects>

¹⁵² BushTel (2025). Mount Liebig – Projects and Grants. <https://bushtel.nt.gov.au/profile/112?tab=projects>

				Education (\$1.5M for 34.4 students)	
TOTAL	27.1	8.8	35.9		

Source: Data compiled from BushTel (2025). Projects and Grants for Papunya, Haasts Bluff, Kintore and Mount Liebig.

These government investments present opportunities for addressing the workforce challenges identified in this report. Several strategic considerations emerge from this funding data:

1. **Sector-Specific Opportunities:** Investments in the CLC’s Ranger programs (\$57.1M regionally), healthcare services (\$13.9M in Kintore), and aged care (\$4.4M Kintore) align with sectors that could provide sustainable employment pathways for Aboriginal community members. Vocational education and training delivered in these communities may benefit if aligned with these funded sectors.
2. **Integrated Employment Models:** The Indigenous Employment Initiative Program demonstrates the potential of embedding workforce objectives within service delivery funding. This approach could be expanded to other funded areas, creating dual outcomes from single investments.
3. **Local Economic Benefits:** Without deliberate strategies to maximize local employment, these investments may not translate into improved economic outcomes for community members. Efforts to prioritise local recruitment, develop appropriate procurement frameworks, and build community capacity could enhance the employment impact of these resources.

By connecting these existing investments with targeted training support and community-led implementation approaches, the current funding allocations could more effectively address both immediate economic challenges and longer-term employment objectives in Papunya, Haasts Bluff, Kintore and Mount Liebig.

This analysis is based on funding data published on BushTel and educational data from the Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority. Additional funding sources exist beyond the scope of this report. The BushTel presentation of funding creates methodological challenges in accurately attributing regional investments to specific communities, necessitating the careful distinction between regional and community-specific allocations presented in this analysis.

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

The workforce planning landscape is significantly enhanced when aligned with community aspirations and priorities. Throughout the four communities, numerous community-driven initiatives have been identified that offer dual benefits: meeting essential community needs while creating meaningful employment pathways for local residents.

OCARC Community Meetings: Expressing Local Priorities

In 2023, a series of community aspirations were raised during OCARC meetings, identifying initiatives that present significant opportunities for workforce planning. These community-identified priorities span multiple sectors.

Papunya community members prioritised:

- Re-establishment of the Resource Centre with a car workshop and tool access
- Construction of new sports facilities including basketball courts, football club, and children's playground
- Extension of night patrol hours to improve community safety
- Road upgrades and resealing
- Improved digital connectivity for outstations
- Support for student re-engagement and school attendance
- Establishment of youth music workshops
- Transition of local security jobs to community members
- Support for obtaining identification and work certifications
- Increased wages to make local jobs more competitive
- Creation of jobs for providing cultural awareness training and on-Country learning programs
- Development of tourism opportunities
- Expansion of community health services, including palliative care
- Recruitment of additional healthcare workers
- Re-opening of childcare and Families as First Teachers programs
- Establishment of a local Centrelink office
- Addressing housing overcrowding by utilising empty houses
- Hiring local workers for housing construction and renovation

Haasts Bluff community members prioritised:

- Improving digital connectivity for remote outstations
- Addressing secondary education access for Year 8 and 9 students
- Providing VET training for healthcare sector
- Establishing childcare services to support workforce participation
- Reintroducing a CDEP-like program for job creation
- Simplifying access to White and Ochre Card certification

- Hiring local workers for housing construction
- Employing more nurses to address community health needs
- Expanding clinic services and operating hours
- Addressing housing overcrowding

Kintore community members prioritised:

- Developing an outstation maintenance program
- Constructing a shaded park, public laundry, and installing water tanks and street lighting
- Upgrading the sports oval with change rooms and lighting
- Re-developing the Green Shed for community use
- Creating a community tool lending system
- Implementing on-Country training programs
- Providing training in housing maintenance
- Offering VET training in Aged Care
- Transitioning CDP back to a CDEP model
- Creating a 'front door' for community services
- Setting up a local Centrelink office
- Establishing an improved Aged Care center
- Increasing dialysis care and support services
- Creating a local Housing office to manage housing maintenance
- Addressing housing quality and overcrowding

Mount Liebig community members prioritised:

- Sealing the slip road used by road trains to improve safety
- Expanding recreational facilities including a music studio, recreation hall, football club, playground, and basketball court
- Improving digital connectivity
- Installing speed humps for community safety
- Repairing the secondary school building
- Repairing the school bus and providing driver training
- Implementing a school nutrition program
- Re-establishing the Resource Centre with a mechanics workshop
- Facilitating access to White Card and Ochre Card certification
- Re-establishing a CDEP-style program
- Re-establishing the childcare centre
- Setting up a regular Centrelink presence
- Implementing cultural awareness training for healthcare staff
- Exploring local renal services
- Offering services for young people returning from boarding school
- Establishing a community-led Youth leadership program
- Addressing housing overcrowding and sewage problems
- Planning construction of new houses

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 only 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 is a two year (2023-25) \$40 million initiative supported by both the Northern Territory and Australian Governments, to improve school attendance and education outcomes and offers significant workforce planning potential across all three communities.

School action plans, developed collaboratively with community members, cultural authorities, school staff, and students, outline several employment pathways.¹⁵³

Papunya School community members prioritised:¹⁵⁴

- Employing Indigenous staff to support student attendance
- Creating flexible pathways for secondary students
- Developing employment pathways for Indigenous staff
- Facilitating community participation in student learning

Haasts Bluff School community members prioritised:¹⁵⁵

- Increasing local employment within the school
- Providing staff professional development and training opportunities

Walungurru School community members prioritised:¹⁵⁶

- Increasing local employment in the school
- Creating pathways to full-time government jobs
- Train and retain teachers
- Expanding community involvement in school education

Watiyawanu School community members prioritised:¹⁵⁷

- Supporting school attendance through hiring local staff
- Establishing a new secondary classroom with local teaching roles
- Partnering with Tangentyere Council for land management training
- Creating opportunities for community-led cultural activities and paid facilitation roles

¹⁵³ Northern Territory Government, Department of Education. (2024). 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>

¹⁵⁴ Education NT (2024) Papunya School Action Plan. https://education.nt.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0008/1369502/papunya-school-action-plan.PDF

¹⁵⁵ Education NT (2024) Haasts Bluff School Action Plan. https://education.nt.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0008/1369493/haasts-bluff-school-action-plan.PDF

¹⁵⁶ Education NT (2024) Walungurru School Action Plan. https://education.nt.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0005/1369508/walungurru-school-action-plan.PDF

¹⁵⁷ Education NT (2024) Watiyawanu School Action Plan. https://education.nt.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0006/1369509/watiyawanu-school-school-action-plan.PDF

Supported by \$7 million in combined funding across these four schools in 2023¹⁵⁸ 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 could leverage their existing funding to benefit the entire community.

Papunya School Action Plan

Papunya Community have asked for:
Strong attendance Meaningful learning Partnership

How are we going to get there?

PRIORITY 1 School attendance

- Families working together with the school
- Employing Indigenous staff to support attendance
- Providing flexible pathways for secondary students

PRIORITY 2 Meaningful learning

- Implementing highly effective teaching in literacy, numeracy and well being
- On-country learning opportunities

PRIORITY 3 Education is a Partnership

- Providing employment pathways for Indigenous staff
- Community participation in student learning
- Increased voice in school, with development of a LEAD committee.

C.M. Munro Principal
Roslyn Dixon School Body/Lead Committee
T. Adlett Cultural Authority

Figure 15: Papunya School Action Plan
 Source: Northern Territory Government. Department of Education and Training. On Country Learning Measure: Central Australian Schools Action Plans

Haasts Bluff School Improvement Plan

show respect – be safe – be an excited learner

Every student will improve:

- strong engagement** - their attendance at school by 10% (if less than 70%) or 5% (if above 70%)
- strong culture** - their own level of knowledge in Luritja Language and Culture
- strong literacy** - their own level in the Read Write Ino program
- strong behaviour** - the number of positive sessions they have at school over the year.

Strong learning for children - staff will work with the community and families to provide all students with more engaging, practical and hands-on learning opportunities including excursions and in-community learning projects.

Strong values - the community will be given opportunities to learn about the School Values and how these are taught and recognised:

- Share Respect
- Be Safe
- Be an Excited Learner.

Strong local support - more local people will be employed by the school to support student learning and looking after the school.

Strong help for families - students with special learning needs will have Student Support Plans informed by expert assessments and co-designed with family members.

Strong learning for staff - all staff will have opportunities each term to improve their professional knowledge in helping children to learn.

Strong help for families - students with special learning needs will have Student Support Plans informed by expert assessments and co-designed with family members.

We will improve safety in the playground and create good outdoor learning spaces for the whole community to be proud of and enjoy.

The LEAD Committee will speak for the long-term provision of a Secondary Program and Early Years Program for the Kunjij Community.

Kunpu Nintirinytjaku

Kawana Lerry School Improvement Plan Committee
J. G. G. School Improvement Plan Committee
K. G. G. School Improvement Plan Committee
 Haasts Bluff School

Figure 16: Haasts Bluff Action Plan
 Source: Northern Territory Government. Department of Education and Training. On Country Learning Measure: Central Australian Schools Action Plans

¹⁵⁸ Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (2024) School Finances: Papunya School, Haasts Bluff School, Walungurru School and Watiyawanu School. <https://www.myschool.edu.au/school/50113/finances>; <https://www.myschool.edu.au/school/50092/finances>; <https://www.myschool.edu.au/school/50128/finances>; <https://www.myschool.edu.au/school/50130/finances>



Figure 17: Walungurru School Action Plan

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



Figure 18: Watiyawanu School Action Plan

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

MacDonnell Regional Council - Regional Plan

The MacDonnell Regional Council (MRC) 2024-25 Regional Plan outlines significant opportunities for remote workforce planning across its communities, including Papunya, Haasts Bluff, Kintore, and Mount Liebig. The plan emphasises employment and support for local enterprises, with key objectives under Goal 1: Developing Communities highlighted below.

Achieving the MRC’s Aboriginal employment targets for commercial and tendered contracts, alongside prioritising local employment in the implementation of its Community Infrastructure, Roads, and Drainage Maintenance Plans, has the potential to significantly advance workforce planning in the region. These measures would facilitate increased economic participation among Aboriginal residents, fostering skill acquisition and enhancing socio-economic outcomes. Prioritising local employment ensures that investments in infrastructure directly benefit the community, strengthening local economies and addressing systemic barriers to workforce inclusion.

These initiatives contribute to capacity-building by equipping individuals with transferable skills, enhancing long-term employability and economic resilience. Integrating workforce planning objectives into council infrastructure projects aligns with broader strategies for sustainable and inclusive regional development, positioning MRC as a pivotal agent in driving positive socio-economic outcomes for its communities.

Table 31: MacDonnell Regional Council (MRC) 2024-25 Regional Plan

Initiative	Description ¹⁵⁹	Target Completion Date
Develop Community Infrastructure Plans	Complete 10-year MRC Community Infrastructure Plans for all communities.	June 2027
Establish a Road and Drainage Maintenance Plan	Develop a long-term maintenance plan for council-controlled roads and stormwater drainage.	June 2025
Create Employment Opportunities	Collaborate with CDEP providers and funding partners to build a job-ready workforce.	June 2028
Promote Aboriginal Leadership	Ensure 90% of MRC’s community-based core service Team Leader roles and above are held by Aboriginal staff.	June 2028

¹⁵⁹ MacDonnell Regional Council. (2024). *MacDonnell Regional Council 2024-25 Regional Plan*. MacDonnell Regional Council. <https://www.macdonnell.nt.gov.au/uploads/misc/2024-25-MRC-REGIONAL-PLAN-FINAL-DIGITAL-SPREADS.pdf>

Initiative	Description ¹⁵⁹	Target Completion Date
Increase Aboriginal Employment in Contracts	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	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 2024-25 Regional Plan. <https://www.macdonnell.nt.gov.au/uploads/misc/2024-25-MRC-REGIONAL-PLAN-FINAL-DIGITAL-SPREADS.pdf>

These aspirations present valuable opportunities that require targeted recruitment and procurement policies to ensure benefits reach Aboriginal community members. By establishing Aboriginal employment targets, creating pathways for local business participation, and providing appropriate training, these initiatives can address community needs while creating sustainable employment that strengthens local economies.

The substantial investments flowing into these communities combined with the clearly articulated community aspirations create a foundation for sustainable workforce planning. Realising this potential requires deliberate approaches that prioritise Aboriginal employment throughout implementation, aligning workforce strategies with community-identified priorities.

Other projects

Memory Mountain in Haasts Bluff, Northern Territory, is an emerging cultural and tourism hub. The 20-metre-high Forgiveness Cross atop the mountain symbolizes faith, hope, and reconciliation for the local Indigenous communities, including the Ikuntji (Haasts Bluff), Papunya, Mt Liebig, Kintore, and Hermannsburg communities. The project aims to create employment opportunities and promote sustainable tourism in the region.

The Memory Mountain project is being developed and funded by the Walk a While Foundation based in Sydney and has potential to create employment for people in the region through Tourism and Hospitality, Cultural education positions, Infrastructure and maintenance roles, and management and administrative support roles.

Workforce Planning Opportunities

The analysis of community demographics, education and training, the local employment landscape, economic context and community aspirations in Papunya, Haasts Bluff, Kintore and Mount Liebig, the following opportunities are proposed to address key workforce planning challenges while building on community strengths and existing investments. These workforce planning opportunities would benefit from implementation through a phased approach with community leadership and governance.

1. Alignment training with employment opportunities

Challenge	Suggested Actions
Ensure that current training offerings reflect existing employment opportunities.	1.1 Establish a Community Workforce Training Priority Framework that aligns VET offerings with sectors experiencing persistent vacancies and significant investment. VET training in education, healthcare, aged care, and conservation and land management could enhance employment outcomes for this cluster.
	1.2 Develop Sector-Specific Training Pathways for high-demand occupations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education Support (Certificate III in Education Support) • Aboriginal Health Workers (Certificate IV in Aboriginal Primary Health Care) • Aged Care (Certificate III in Individual Support - Aging) • Child Care (Certificate III in Early Childhood Education and Care) • Land Management (Certificate II/III in Conservation and Land Management) • Training and Assessment (Certificate IV)
	1.3 Create a Workforce Data Dashboard for each community, tracking job vacancies, qualification requirements, and filled positions to provide real-time information for training providers and job seekers.

2. Implement on-Country training solutions

Challenge	Suggested Actions
Geographic isolation creates significant barriers to	2.1 Establish a Training Hub in each community,

accessing training, prohibitive for many community members.	equipped with digital learning technology, dedicated training spaces, and accommodation for visiting trainers.
	2.2 Develop a Remote Delivery Model in partnership with registered training organisations (RTOs) such as Batchelor Institute and Charles Darwin University, combining: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Block training periods with trainers visiting communities • Online/virtual learning with local support • Workplace-based training and assessment
	2.3 Train and employ local training support officers to provide ongoing assistance between trainer visits, addressing literacy, numeracy, and digital skill barriers.
	2.4 Create a Regional Training Calendar coordinating all planned training delivery across the three communities to maximize resources and participation.

3. Develop a Paid Traineeship Program

Challenge	Suggested Actions
Low household incomes (47% of Aboriginal households in this cluster earn less than \$800 per week) combined with high costs of living may mean many cannot afford to take time away from income-generating activities for training.	3.1 Implement a Paid Traineeship Program in high-demand sectors, providing income while working toward qualifications, targeting: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education Assistant Traineeships • Aboriginal Health Worker Traineeships • Aged Care Traineeships • Child Care Traineeships • Ranger Traineeships
	3.2 Develop a "Step-Up" Certification Model that breaks qualification requirements into smaller, achievable units with associated pay increases as units are completed.

	3.3 Create Position Funding Pools for trainee roles, drawing on allocations for Indigenous Employment and Business across the communities.
	3.4 Establish a Training Wage Subsidy for local employers who provide paid release time for employees to attend training.

4. Create Culturally Responsive Employment Pathways

Challenge	Suggested Actions
Aboriginal employment shows strong representation in community service roles (83.3%), lower representation within professional occupations (38.9%) and no representation in management positions (0%).	4.1 Implement a Community Leadership Pathway specifically designed to increase Aboriginal representation in management roles through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Certificate IV in Leadership and Management • Cultural leadership mentoring program • Job shadowing opportunities with current managers
	4.2 Provide training programs for Aboriginal staff to become qualified mentors, enabling them to support new employees in building workplace confidence and skills, while simultaneously recognising and motivating senior staff through leadership opportunities.
	4.3 Create Culturally Validated Job Descriptions for key roles, developed in partnership with community members to ensure they reflect cultural knowledge and strengths.

5. Leverage Existing Investments for Employment Growth

Challenge	Suggested Actions
Funding allocations across the communities are not yet fully translated into local employment opportunities.	5.1 Develop Employment Plans for Major Funded Programs, working with funding recipients to establish Aboriginal employment targets and pathways, particularly for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Central Land Council Ranger Program (\$57.6M regionally) • Indigenous Health initiatives (\$13.9M Kintore)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aged Care programs (\$2.9M regionally, \$4.4M Kintore) • Education (\$2.3M regionally, \$4.1M Haasts Bluff, \$1.5M for Mt.Liebig, \$1.8M for Kintore)
	5.2 Implement local employment requirements for all government-funded initiatives, with appropriate targets for local Aboriginal employment.
	5.3 Establish procurement policy requirements for all government-funded initiatives that prioritise purchasing from local Aboriginal business enterprises.

These opportunities can be implemented through a phased approach with community leadership and governance. By activating these strategies with community leadership and cross-sector collaboration, the workforce planning challenges identified in Papunya, Haasts Bluff, Kintore and Mount Liebig could be addressed, creating meaningful employment pathways that contribute to community well-being and economic development.

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