

COMMUNITY WORKFORCE PLAN  
**THE PLENTY -  
ATITJERE, ENGAWALA AND  
ORRTIPA-THURRA**



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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 and Ti-Tree (including Pmara Jutunta). In collaboration with the Department of Trade, Business, and Asian Relations (DTBAR), this initiative seeks to identify community priorities to unlock economic growth in remote Aboriginal communities in Central Australia, embracing local leadership and governance and delivery of targeted skills, training, employment and enterprise services and support.

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

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

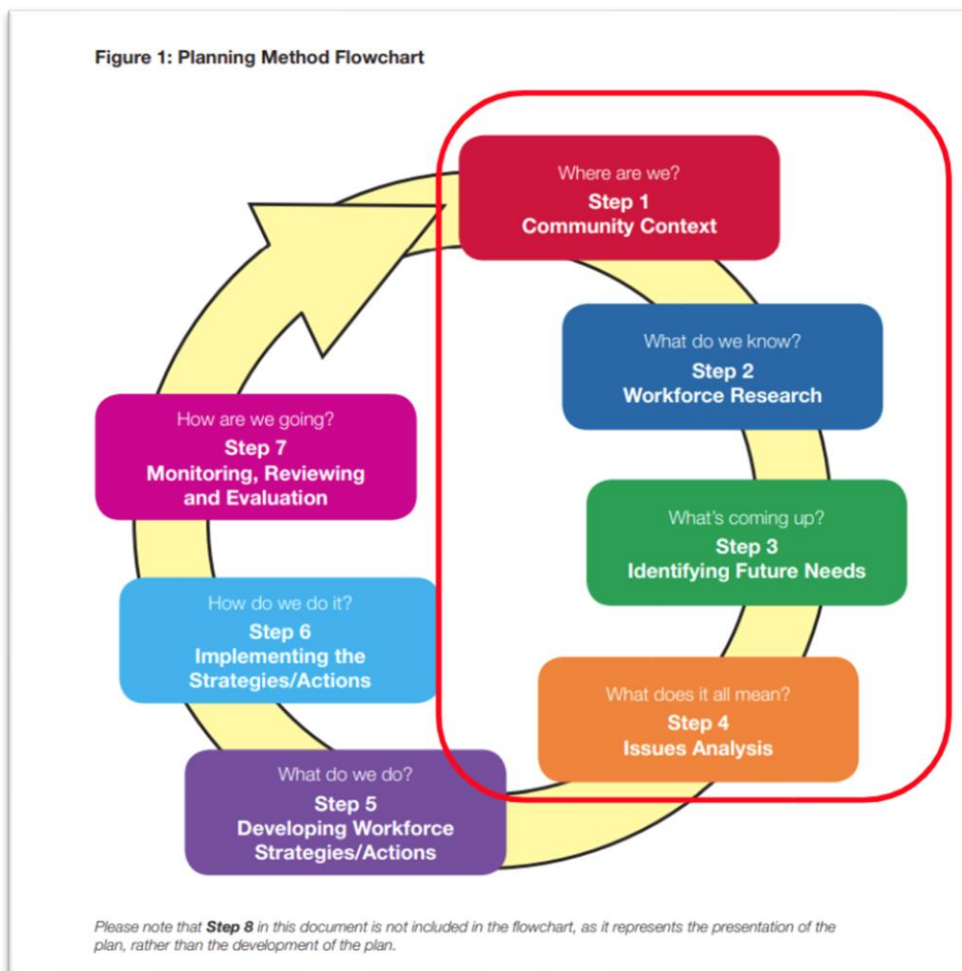
## Report Format

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

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

Steps 3 and 4 are informed by community consultation activities conducted throughout the course of the project, or through secondary sources such as past meeting notes where direct consultation has not yet occurred. These steps aim to identify the future needs of community members, undertake an 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:

### 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

### Organisational Mapping

- a. Active employers and service providers
- b. Current business operations
- c. Employment capacity
- d. Service delivery frameworks.
- e. Organisational growth potential

### Economic Analysis

- a. Gross Regional Product data
- b. Employment statistics
- c. Major industry presence
- d. Economic drivers and barriers
- e. Market opportunities

### Infrastructure and Development

- a. Planned infrastructure projects.
- b. Funded Project timelines and phases
- c. Required workforce capabilities.
- d. Employment pathways
- e. Skills development requirements

## Data Collection and Review

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

1. Collection of publicly available data (e.g., Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) demographics, Department of Social Services (DSS) data)
2. Review of internal NTG reports (e.g., Jobs Audit, Nous Consultation reports, Office of the Central Regional Coordinator (OCARC), and other 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

This analysis relies primarily on 2021 Census data, which does not accurately reflect demographic and employment conditions in 2025.

### 2. Significant Data Gaps

The absence of census data for Orrtipa-Thurra limits the comprehensiveness of this analysis, constraining workforce projections and related insights. Additionally, while comparable Remote Workforce Plans have benefited from the data contained in the 2023 Remote Towns Job Profiles – including CDP figures, specific employment data by Indigenous status and Vocational Education and Training (VET) statistics – profiles were not available on the communities in this report.

### 3. Desktop Research Constraints

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

### 4. Data 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.

### 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 implementation steps to validate findings and collaboratively develop implementation strategies that are responsive to local priorities and capabilities.

## Executive Summary

This report provides a comprehensive analysis of the workforce planning landscape across The Plenty region, specifically the communities of Atitjere, Engawala and Orrtipa-Thurra. Commissioned by the Northern Territory Government, this report establishes a data-driven baseline to inform future Community Workforce Plans and support improved economic participation for Aboriginal job seekers. The analysis draws on the most recent available data, primarily the 2021 Census, with limitations noted due to data gaps and the absence of direct community consultations.

### Key Challenges

The Plenty region faces significant economic disparities, with 100% of Aboriginal respondents' individual income under \$650 per week, compared to non-Indigenous respondents' income of \$1,250 or above per week.

Local employment opportunities are scarce, with Aboriginal labour force participation at 29%. According to the 2021 Census, 30 of 226 working-age Aboriginal residents were employed across Atitjere and Engawala. In June 2025, there were eleven job vacancies across the three communities.

Additionally, the proportion of Central Desert residents receiving JobSeeker and Youth Allowance rose from 37.7% in March 2020 to 51% in April 2025. High living costs, including a 40% premium<sup>1</sup> on food in remote stores and rising transportation expenses, further compound existing income disparities, creating a particularly challenging economic environment.

### Education and Training Landscape

Educational barriers hinder workforce readiness. Attendance rates range from 41% to 69%, with fewer than 14% of students attending 90% or more of the time. Secondary schooling is unavailable locally, and while eleven VET qualifications were delivered in 2024, there is a significant gap between training and local employment opportunities, reflected in community sentiment that "*training doesn't lead to jobs.*"<sup>2</sup>

### Opportunities for Growth

Office of the Central Australian Regional Controller (OCARC) Community consultations highlight opportunities for local job creation aligned with community needs. Community identified initiatives include housing construction and maintenance, expansion of municipal services to outstations, establishing cultural enterprises and local infrastructure projects.

Regional investments totalling \$109.29 million, including funding for ranger programs, youth development, and aged care also offer potential for employment growth. School action plans identify the recruitment and training of Aboriginal staff as a key priority, presenting additional pathways for meaningful local employment.

These opportunities are supported by substantial funding commitments at local, regional, and territory levels. Major infrastructure investments provide significant employment potential, including the \$44 million Plenty Highway<sup>3</sup> upgrades that are anticipated to create 62 jobs (including 15 for Indigenous workers and 14 apprentices) while improving safety, connectivity, and economic access for tourism, mining, and freight. The

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<sup>1</sup> NT Health (2023). Attachment A - 2023 NT Market Basket Survey Summary Report. Darwin.

<sup>2</sup> Atitjere OCARC Community Meeting Notes (2023). Unpublished, not for wider circulation.

<sup>3</sup> Northern Territory Government. (2024, July 18). Plenty highway upgrades to boost Australia's longest adventure drive the outback way. Media Release. <https://createsend.com/t/t-763668D396D94F142540EF23F30FEDED>

\$34.3 million Better Bores for Communities project<sup>4</sup>, upgrading water supply in 10 communities including Atitjere, will further support economic development by improving liveability and creating conditions for sustainable growth.

Regional investments of \$109.29 million<sup>5</sup>, including funding for ranger programs, youth development, and aged care, offer additional potential for employment growth. Local funding allocations provide more immediate employment prospects, including \$1.39 million for Stronger Communities for Children programs in Atitjere and Engawala, \$0.94 million combined for school nutrition projects, \$0.42 million for the Engawala Art Centre's Indigenous Visual Arts Industry Support, and \$0.39 million for the Bonya Community Solar Power Station<sup>6</sup>.

### Workforce Planning Opportunities

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

1. Aligning training with local job opportunities by establishing a Community Workforce Training Priority Framework and clear pathways for in-demand roles.
2. Expanding on-Country training options through local Training Hubs, remote delivery models, and support for digital learning.
3. Creating paid traineeships and supporting wage subsidies to make training accessible and financially viable for community members.
4. Developing culturally responsive employment pathways and leadership programs to increase Aboriginal workforce participation and representation.
5. Leveraging existing investments by setting robust Aboriginal employment targets, supporting local procurement, and investing in community-identified projects with strong employment potential.
6. Improving data collection, community consultation, and flexible planning to ensure workforce initiatives remain relevant and effective.

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<sup>4</sup> Northern Territory Government, Department of Lands, Planning and Environment. (2025, February 27). \$34.3 million for better bores in 10 communities. <https://environment.nt.gov.au/news/2025/better-bores-for-communities>

<sup>5</sup> Data compiled from BushTel (n.d.). Projects and Grants. Northern Territory Government. <https://bushtel.nt.gov.au/profile/42?tab=projects>; <https://bushtel.nt.gov.au/profile/33?tab=projects>; <https://bushtel.nt.gov.au/profile/26?tab=projects>

<sup>6</sup> Data compiled from BushTel (n.d.). Projects and Grants. Northern Territory Government. <https://bushtel.nt.gov.au/profile/42?tab=projects>; <https://bushtel.nt.gov.au/profile/33?tab=projects>; <https://bushtel.nt.gov.au/profile/26?tab=projects>

# Introduction

## Step 1: Community Context

### Community Profiles and Demographics

Step 1 provides an overview of Atitjere, Engawala and Orrtipa-Thurra 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.

### Infrastructure and Services

Communities	Atitjere, Engawala and Orrtipa-Thurra				
Languages	The languages spoken in Atitjere, Engawala and Orrtipa-Thurra are primarily Eastern Arrernte and Alyawarr				
Traditional owners	The traditional owners of Atitjere, Engawala and Orrtipa-Thurra are primarily the Eastern Arrernte and Alyawarr peoples.				
Population	<b>Table 1: Total Community Populations</b>				
		Atitjere	Engawala	Orrtipa-Thurra	Total
	Population	204 <sup>7</sup>	164 <sup>8</sup>	62 <sup>9</sup>	430
	<i>Source: Compiled from Australian Bureau of Statistics (2021). 2021 Census of Population and Housing Community Profiles for Atitjere and Engawala, and Bushtel Community Profile for Orrtipa-Thurra</i>				
Indigenous status	<b>Table 2: Community Aboriginal Population</b>				
		Atitjere	Engawala	Orrtipa-Thurra	Total
	Population	157 <sup>10</sup>	146 <sup>11</sup>	62 <sup>12</sup>	365
	<i>Source: Compiled from Australian Bureau of Statistics (2021). 2021 Census of Population and Housing Community Profiles for Atitjere and Engawala, and Bushtel Community Profile for Orrtipa-Thurra</i>				
Location	<p><b>Atitjere:</b> Atitjere is approximately 215km from Alice Springs, in the Akityarre ward, located within the Mount Riddock Pastoral Property at the base of the Harts Ranges.<sup>13</sup></p> <p><b>Engawala:</b> Engawala is 180 km from Alice Springs in the Akityarre ward, on the Alkwert Aboriginal Land Trust (previously the Alcoota Pastoral Property).<sup>14</sup></p>				

<sup>7</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics (2021) Census of Population and Housing, Atitjere I01 Selected Person Characteristics by Indigenous Status by Sex. Canberra: ABS, 2021.

<sup>8</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics (2021) Census of Population and Housing, Engawala. I01 Selected Person Characteristics by Indigenous Status by Sex. Canberra: ABS, 2021.

<sup>9</sup> BushTel (n.d.) Community Profile - Orrtipa-Thurra. <https://bushtel.nt.gov.au/profile/26>

<sup>10</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics (2021) Census of Population and Housing, Atitjere I01 Selected Person Characteristics by Indigenous Status by Sex. Canberra: ABS, 2021.

<sup>11</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics (2021) Census of Population and Housing, Engawala. I01 Selected Person Characteristics by Indigenous Status by Sex. Canberra: ABS, 2021.

<sup>12</sup> BushTel (n.d.) Community Profile - Orrtipa-Thurra. <https://bushtel.nt.gov.au/profile/26>

<sup>13</sup> BushTel (n.d.) Community Profile - Atitjere. <https://bushtel.nt.gov.au/profile/42>

<sup>14</sup> BushTel (n.d.) Community Profile - Engawala. <https://bushtel.nt.gov.au/profile/33>

	<p><b>Orrtipa-Thurra:</b> is located approximately 367km from Alice Springs along the Plenty Highway.<sup>15</sup></p>																
<p>Access</p>	<p>Atitjere is located approximately 215 km from Alice Springs along the Plenty Highway. The highway is sealed from the Stuart Highway to Atitjere, with ongoing work to extend the sealed section beyond the turn-off.<sup>16</sup></p> <p>Engawala is located 180 km from Alice Springs, it can be accessed by travelling North from Alice Springs on the Stuart Highway, turning off at The Plenty Highway, the first 110 km is sealed, the remainder of the route is unsealed.<sup>17</sup></p> <p>Orrtipa-Thurra is located approximately 367km from Alice Springs along the Plenty Highway.<sup>18</sup></p> <p>The Centre Bush Bus provides a regular transport service between Atitjere, Engawala and Alice Springs. The service operates on Tuesdays and Thursdays. Residents of these communities use this service to access essential services in Alice Springs.</p> <p><b>Table 3: Bus Timetable and Costs<sup>19</sup></b></p> <table border="1" data-bbox="376 1055 1428 1205"> <thead> <tr> <th>Destination</th> <th>Frequency</th> <th>One-way Fare (Adult)</th> <th>One-way Fare (Child)</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Atitjere</td> <td>Twice weekly (Tues &amp; Thurs)</td> <td>\$135</td> <td>\$110</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Engawala</td> <td>Twice weekly (Tues &amp; Thurs)</td> <td>\$135</td> <td>\$110</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>Source: Centre Bush Bus (n.g.) Bus Timetables. <a href="https://centrebushbus.com.au/bus-timetables/">https://centrebushbus.com.au/bus-timetables/</a></p>	Destination	Frequency	One-way Fare (Adult)	One-way Fare (Child)	Atitjere	Twice weekly (Tues & Thurs)	\$135	\$110	Engawala	Twice weekly (Tues & Thurs)	\$135	\$110				
Destination	Frequency	One-way Fare (Adult)	One-way Fare (Child)														
Atitjere	Twice weekly (Tues & Thurs)	\$135	\$110														
Engawala	Twice weekly (Tues & Thurs)	\$135	\$110														
<p>Internet Access</p>	<p><b>Table 4: Community Internet Access:</b></p> <table border="1" data-bbox="376 1332 1428 1706"> <thead> <tr> <th>Community</th> <th>Telstra Mobile Coverage</th> <th>Broadband Access</th> <th>Wi-Fi Hotspot availability</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Atitjere</td> <td>Yes</td> <td>Yes</td> <td>Available 24hours, 7 days.</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Engawala</td> <td>Yes</td> <td>No</td> <td>WiFi hotspot and computer room have been set up in community by <a href="#">CAYLUS</a>. (Private WiFi is provided and serviced by Activ8me)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Orrtipa-Thurra</td> <td>No data available</td> <td>No data available</td> <td>No. (Private WiFi is provided and serviced by Activ8me)</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>Source: Data compiled from BushTel (n.d.) Community Profiles for Atitjere, Engawala and Orrtipa-Thurra. <a href="http://www.bushtel.nt.gov.au/profile">www.bushtel.nt.gov.au/profile</a></p>	Community	Telstra Mobile Coverage	Broadband Access	Wi-Fi Hotspot availability	Atitjere	Yes	Yes	Available 24hours, 7 days.	Engawala	Yes	No	WiFi hotspot and computer room have been set up in community by <a href="#">CAYLUS</a> . (Private WiFi is provided and serviced by Activ8me)	Orrtipa-Thurra	No data available	No data available	No. (Private WiFi is provided and serviced by Activ8me)
Community	Telstra Mobile Coverage	Broadband Access	Wi-Fi Hotspot availability														
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Orrtipa-Thurra	No data available	No data available	No. (Private WiFi is provided and serviced by Activ8me)														

<sup>15</sup> BushTel (n.d.) Community Profile - Orrtipa-Thurra. <https://bushtel.nt.gov.au/profile/26>

<sup>16</sup> BushTel (n.d.) Community Profile – Atitjere. <https://bushtel.nt.gov.au/profile/42>

<sup>17</sup> BushTel (n.d.) Community Profile – Engawala. <https://bushtel.nt.gov.au/profile/33>

<sup>18</sup> BushTel (n.d.) Community Profile - Orrtipa-Thurra. <https://bushtel.nt.gov.au/profile/26>

<sup>19</sup> Centre Bush Bus (n.d.) Bus Timetables. <https://centrebushbus.com.au/bus-timetables/>

Freight Services	Freight services to the communities of Atitjere and Engawala are primarily provided by two key operators, Stanes Transport and Centre Bush Bus.			
Local Businesses	<b>Table 5: Local Community Businesses</b>			
	No	Atitjere <sup>20</sup>	Engawala <sup>21</sup>	Orrtipa-Thurra <sup>22</sup>
	1	Atitjere Health Centre	Alcoota School	Bonya School
	2	Atitjere Police Centre	Alcoota Station	Bonya Store
	3	Atitjere Store	Central Desert Regional Council	Orrtipa-Thurra-Thurra Health Centre
	4	Central Desert Regional Council	Engawala Art Centre Aboriginal Corporation	
	5	Central Land Council	Engawala Community Store	
	6	Harts Range School	Engawala Health Centre	
	7	National Indigenous Australians Agency (NIAA)	Rainbow Gateway Limited	
8	Rainbow Gateway Limited			
<p>Source: Data compiled from BushTel (n.d.) Community Profiles for Atitjere, Engawala and Orrtipa-Thurra. <a href="http://www.bushtel.nt.gov.au/profile">www.bushtel.nt.gov.au/profile</a></p>				
Regional Businesses/ Employers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Alieron Roadhouse</li> <li>• Alcoota Station</li> <li>• Aldebaran Contracting</li> <li>• Central Desert Regional Council</li> <li>• Central Land Council</li> <li>• Department of Children and Families</li> <li>• Department of Education and Training</li> <li>• Department of Health (Central Australia Health Service)</li> <li>• Gemtree Roadhouse and Caravan Park</li> <li>• Jervis Station</li> <li>• Lucy Creek Station</li> <li>• National Indigenous Australians Agency</li> <li>• Northern Territory Parks and Wildlife</li> <li>• Northern Territory Police, Fire and Emergency Services</li> <li>• Rainbow Gateway Pty Ltd</li> <li>• Sandover Pastoral Station</li> <li>• Services Australia</li> <li>• Spotted Tiger Campground</li> </ul>			

<sup>20</sup> BushTel (n.d.) Community Profile – Atitjere. <https://bushtel.nt.gov.au/profile/42>

<sup>21</sup> BushTel (n.d.) Community Profile – Engawala. <https://bushtel.nt.gov.au/profile/33>

<sup>22</sup> BushTel (n.d.) Community Profile – Orrtipa-Thurra. <https://bushtel.nt.gov.au/profile/26>

Health Services	<b>Table 6: Community Health Services</b>		
	Atitjere <sup>23</sup>	Engawala <sup>24</sup>	Orrtipa-Thurra <sup>25</sup>
	Atitjere Health Centre	Engawala Health Centre	Orrtipa-Thurra-Thurra Health Centre
Source: Data compiled from BushTel (n.d.) Community Profiles for Atitjere, Engawala and Orrtipa-Thurra. <a href="http://www.bushtel.nt.gov.au/profile">www.bushtel.nt.gov.au/profile</a>			
Education and Training	<b>Table 7: Community Education and Training Facilities</b>		
	Atitjere <sup>26</sup>	Engawala <sup>27</sup>	Orrtipa-Thurra <sup>28</sup>
	Harts Range School	Alcoota School	Bonya School
Source: Data compiled from BushTel (n.d.) Community Profiles for Atitjere, Engawala and Orrtipa-Thurra. <a href="http://www.bushtel.nt.gov.au/profile">www.bushtel.nt.gov.au/profile</a>			
Children's Services	<b>Table 8: Community Children's Services</b>		
	Atitjere <sup>29</sup>	Engawala <sup>30</sup>	Orrtipa-Thurra <sup>31</sup>
	According to the Central Desert Regional Council Atitjere has a creche	According to the Central Desert Regional Council Engawala has a Child Care Service	
Source: Data compiled from Central Desert Regional Council (n.d.) Atitjere. <a href="https://centraldesert.nt.gov.au/atitjere">https://centraldesert.nt.gov.au/atitjere</a> ; Central Desert Regional Council (n.d.) Engawala. <a href="https://centraldesert.nt.gov.au/engawala">https://centraldesert.nt.gov.au/engawala</a> .			
Community Services	<b>Table 9: Community Services</b>		
	Atitjere <sup>32</sup>	Engawala <sup>33</sup>	Orrtipa-Thurra <sup>34</sup>
	Central Desert Regional Council (CDRC) provides the following services: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CDRC office</li> <li>• Municipal services</li> <li>• Waste management</li> <li>• Airstrip maintenance</li> <li>• Centrelink</li> <li>• Post office</li> </ul>	Central Desert Regional Council (CDRC) provides the following services: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CDRC office</li> <li>• Municipal services</li> <li>• Waste management</li> <li>• Airstrip maintenance</li> <li>• Centrelink</li> <li>• Housing maintenance</li> <li>• Tenancy management</li> <li>• A library</li> <li>• Community Safety</li> </ul>	

<sup>23</sup> BushTel (n.d.) Community Profile – Atitjere. <https://bushtel.nt.gov.au/profile/42>

<sup>24</sup> BushTel (n.d.) Community Profile – Engawala. <https://bushtel.nt.gov.au/profile/33>

<sup>25</sup> BushTel (n.d.) Community Profile - Orrtipa-Thurra. <https://bushtel.nt.gov.au/profile/26>

<sup>26</sup> BushTel (n.d.) Community Profile – Atitjere. <https://bushtel.nt.gov.au/profile/42>

<sup>27</sup> BushTel (n.d.) Community Profile – Engawala. <https://bushtel.nt.gov.au/profile/33>

<sup>28</sup> BushTel (n.d.) Community Profile - Orrtipa-Thurra. <https://bushtel.nt.gov.au/profile/26>

<sup>29</sup> Central Desert Regional Council (n.d.) Atitjere. <https://centraldesert.nt.gov.au/atitjere>

<sup>30</sup> Central Desert Regional Council (n.d.) Engawala. <https://centraldesert.nt.gov.au/engawala>

<sup>31</sup> BushTel (n.d.) Community Profile - Orrtipa-Thurra. <https://bushtel.nt.gov.au/profile/26>

<sup>32</sup> BushTel (n.d.) Community Profile – Atitjere. <https://bushtel.nt.gov.au/profile/42>

<sup>33</sup> BushTel (n.d.) Community Profile – Engawala. <https://bushtel.nt.gov.au/profile/33>

<sup>34</sup> BushTel (n.d.) Community Profile - Orrtipa-Thurra. <https://bushtel.nt.gov.au/profile/26>

	<p>agency</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Housing maintenance</li> <li>Tenancy management</li> <li>A library</li> <li>Community Safety Patrol</li> <li>Aged Care</li> <li>Youth Sport and Recreation program</li> </ul> <p>Other Services</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Rainbow Gateway (CDP Provider)</li> </ul>	<p>Patrol</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Aged Care</li> <li>Youth Sport and Recreation program</li> </ul> <p>Other Services</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Women's Centre</li> <li>Rainbow Gateway (CDP Provider)</li> </ul>		
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Source: Data compiled from Central Desert Regional Council (n.d.) Atitjere. <https://centraldesert.nt.gov.au/atitjere>; Central Desert Regional Council (n.d.) Engawala. <https://centraldesert.nt.gov.au/engawala>.

Aboriginal Organisations	<b>Table 10: Aboriginal Organisations operating in Communities</b>			
	No	Atitjere <sup>35</sup>	Engawala <sup>36</sup>	Orrtipa-Thurra <sup>37</sup>
	1	Atitjere Homelands Store Aboriginal Corporation	Engawala Art Centre Aboriginal Corporation	Tyantyenge Aboriginal Corporation – Bonya Store
2		Ntjamina General Store Aboriginal Corporation		

Source: Data compiled from BushTel (n.d.) Community Profiles for Atitjere, Engawala and Orrtipa-Thurra. [www.bushtel.nt.gov.au/profile](http://www.bushtel.nt.gov.au/profile)

Government Agencies	<p><b>Local Government</b> Central Desert Regional Council</p> <p><b>NT Government</b> Department of Health (Central Australia Health Service) Northern Territory Police, Fire and Emergency Services Department of Education and Training</p> <p><b>Australian Government</b> National Indigenous Australians Agency</p>
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<sup>35</sup> BushTel (n.d.) Community Profile – Atitjere. <https://bushtel.nt.gov.au/profile/42>

<sup>36</sup> BushTel (n.d.) Community Profile – Engawala. <https://bushtel.nt.gov.au/profile/33>

<sup>37</sup> BushTel (n.d.) Community Profile - Orrtipa-Thurra. <https://bushtel.nt.gov.au/profile/26>

	<p>Services Australia Central Land Council</p> <p>Statutory Authority Central Land Council</p>
Regional Council	<p>The Central Desert Regional Council (CDRC) provides essential services to Engawala and Atitjere, including municipal services, waste management, airstrip maintenance, Centrelink support, housing maintenance and tenancy management, a library, Community Safety Patrol, aged care services, and a Youth Sport and Recreation program. Atitjere also benefits from a post office service. However, details regarding the services provided by the CDRC to Orrtipa-Thurra are not published by the council.<sup>3839</sup></p>
Visitor Accommodation	<p>The Central Desert Regional Council provides visitor accommodation in Atitjere, accommodation can be found at the Gemtree Roadhouse and Caravan Park located 45 minutes from Engawala.<sup>40</sup></p>
Power/Water	<p>Electricity in both Atitjere and Engawala is supplied at the Northern Territory standard tariff with standard connection charges. Atitjere has a plentiful groundwater source, while Engawala's supply is limited; both communities treat their water with sodium hypochlorite and monitor it monthly for microbes. Atitjere uses private septic systems, whereas Engawala has a fully reticulated sewerage system.<sup>4142</sup> No records are available for Orrtipa-Thurra.<sup>43</sup></p>
Community Events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Atitjere plays in the Central Australian Football League (CAFL), with the 2025 season commencing in April.<sup>44</sup></li> <li>• Harts Range Rodeo takes place on Friday to Monday: 1st – 4th August 2025.<sup>45</sup></li> <li>• Aileron Rodeo has already taken place in 2255, with 2266 dates to be confirmed.<sup>46</sup></li> </ul>

<sup>38</sup> Central Desert Regional Council (n.d.) Atitjere. <https://centraldesert.nt.gov.au/atitjere>

<sup>39</sup> Central Desert Regional Council (n.d.) Engawala. <https://centraldesert.nt.gov.au/engawala>

<sup>40</sup> Data Compiled from BushTel (n.d.) Community Profile – Atitjere, Engawala and Orrtipa-Thurra. [www.bushtel.nt.gov.au/profile/](http://www.bushtel.nt.gov.au/profile/)

<sup>41</sup> BushTel (n.d.) Community Profile – Atitjere. <https://bushtel.nt.gov.au/profile/42>

<sup>42</sup> BushTel (n.d.) Community Profile – Engawala. <https://bushtel.nt.gov.au/profile/33>

<sup>43</sup> BushTel (n.d.) Community Profile - Orrtipa-Thurra. <https://bushtel.nt.gov.au/profile/26>

<sup>44</sup> Play AFL (n.d.) TIO CAFL. <https://play.afl/northern-territory/competitions/tio-cafl>

<sup>45</sup> Harts Range Amateur Race Club (n.d.) The 78th Harts Range Races. <https://hartsrangeraces.org.au/>

<sup>46</sup> Aileron Bush Club (n.d.) Tickets and Pricing. <https://aileronbushclub.com/tickets>

## Step 2: Workforce Research

Step 2 provides workforce data for Atitjere and Engawala, excluding Orrtipa-Thurra due to the absence of census data. The analysis includes demographic details, labour force participation rates, and employment status, offering valuable insights into the local workforce context.

### Target Group

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

### Target Group Definition

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

For the purpose of this report, the target group 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.<sup>47 48</sup>

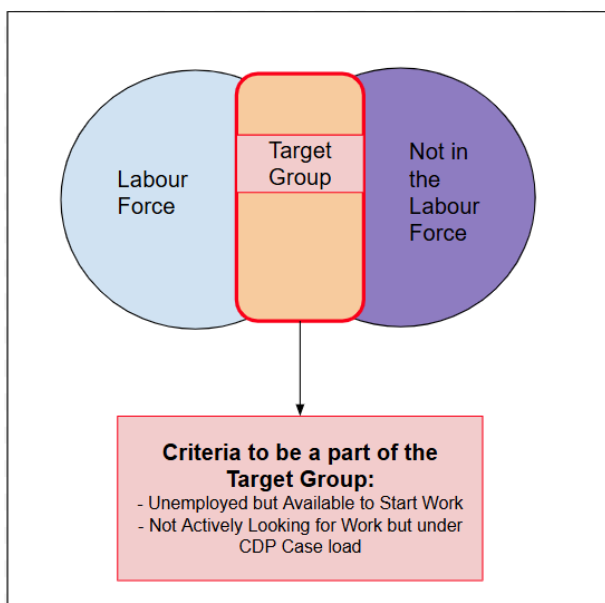


Figure 2: Target Group Definition

#### Text Box 1: Labour Force Participant

##### Labour Force Participant

Someone who is either employed or unemployed but *actively seeking work*, as defined by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS). Individuals who are not in the labour force include those who are neither working nor actively looking for work due to reasons such as retirement, study, caregiving responsibilities, disability, or voluntary inactivity.

#### Text Box 2: Mutual Obligation Requirements

##### Changes to Mutual Obligation Requirements

The suspension of mutual obligation requirements can have an impact on the data. This is because the ABS only considers someone to be unemployed if they are *actively looking* for work. When mutual obligation requirements are suspended, it is possible that some job seekers may not have undertaken the job search that they normally would have, in which case they would be classified as not in the labour force rather than unemployed.

<sup>47</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Labour Force Explained* (2023). <https://www.abs.gov.au/websitedbs/d3310114.nsf/home/labour+force+explained>

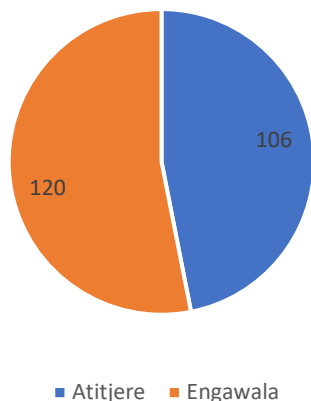
<sup>48</sup> *Jobs and Skills Australia* (2024). *Small Area Labour Markets September Quarter 2024*. [https://www.jobsandskills.gov.au/sites/default/files/2024-12/small\\_area\\_labour\\_markets\\_-\\_september\\_quarter\\_2024.pdf](https://www.jobsandskills.gov.au/sites/default/files/2024-12/small_area_labour_markets_-_september_quarter_2024.pdf)

## 2.1 Workforce Demographics

### Working Age Population

Across Atitjere and Engawala the working age population (15+) consists of 273 people, with 226 individuals (82.7%) identifying Aboriginal. The distribution varies by community:

- **Atitjere:** 106 Aboriginal working-age residents<sup>49</sup>
- **Engawala:** 120 Aboriginal working-age residents<sup>50</sup>



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*This report aims to address the barriers, successes and complexities faced by the 226 working aged Aboriginal residents of The Plenty region with residential addresses in Atitjere and Engawala.*

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**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

29% of Aboriginal working-age residents responded that they were participating in the labour force in the 2021 census, while 71% responded that they were not in the workforce. The community labour force breakdown is as follows:

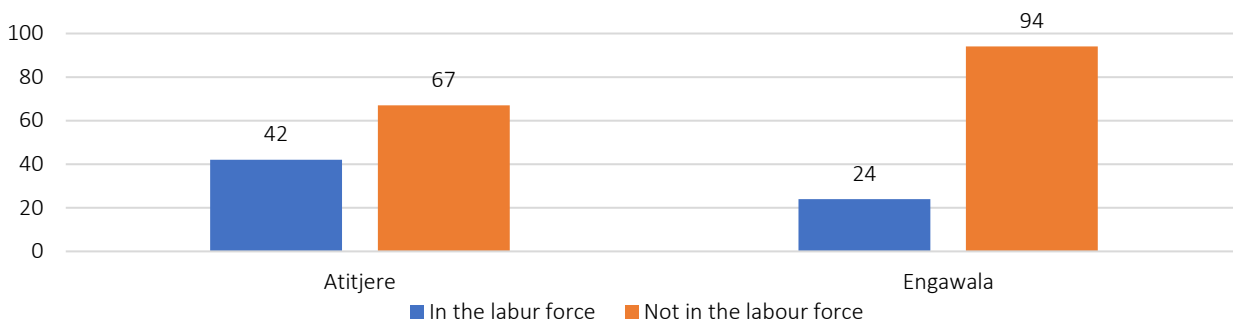
- **Atitjere:** 42 in labour force; 67 not participating<sup>51</sup>
- **Engawala:** 24 in labour force; 94 not participating<sup>52</sup>

<sup>49</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics (2021), *Census of Population and Housing, Atitjere. I01 Selected Person Characteristics by Indigenous Status by Sex.* Canberra: ABS, 2021.

<sup>50</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics (2021), *Census of Population and Housing, Engawala. I01 Selected Person Characteristics by Indigenous Status by Sex.* Canberra: ABS, 2021.

<sup>51</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics (2021), *Census of Population and Housing, Atitjere. I19 Selected Labour Force, Education and Migration Characteristics by Indigenous Status by Sex...* Canberra: ABS, 2021.

<sup>52</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics (2021), *Census of Population and Housing, Engawala. I19 Selected Labour Force, Education and Migration Characteristics by Indigenous Status by Sex.* Canberra: ABS, 2021.

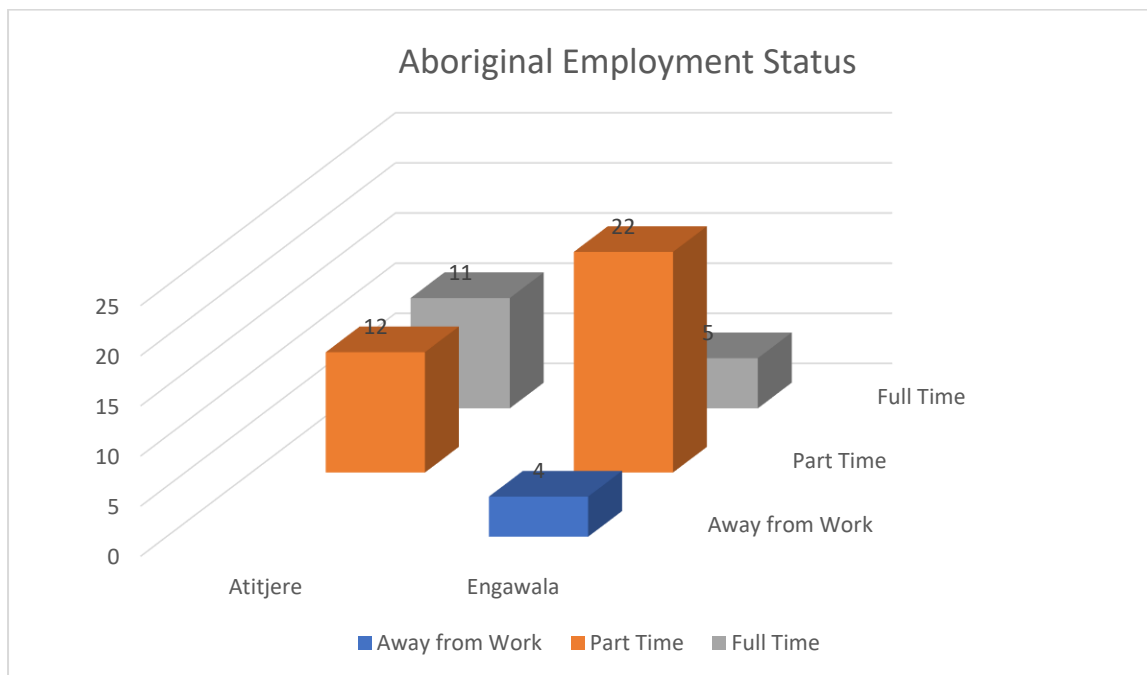


**Figure 4: Aboriginal Labour Force Numbers**

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

## Employment Status

According to the 2021 Census, 54 Aboriginal residents were employed across Atitjere and Engawala.<sup>53</sup> Of this number, 16 individuals responded that they were employed full-time, 34 individuals responded that they are employed part-time, and 4 individuals reported being away from work at the time of the census.<sup>54</sup>



**Figure 5: Aboriginal Employment Status**

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

<sup>53</sup> Compiled from Australian Bureau of Statistics (2021), Census of Population and Housing for Atitjere and Engawala. I21 Labour force status by sex for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander persons. Canberra: ABS, 2021.

<sup>54</sup> Compiled from Australian Bureau of Statistics (2021), Census of Population and Housing for Atitjere and Engawala. I21 Labour force status by sex for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander persons. Canberra: ABS, 2021.

## Community Development Program (CDP) Participants

Recent CDP figures have been provided by the National Indigenous Australian Agency (NIAA) for the region of the Plenty. The data contains additional information about participants placed in employment as well as participants achieving outcomes and provides the following insights:

The Plenty Community Cluster shows 181-224 participants per quarter from July 2023 to March 2025, with participant numbers increasing 18.8% over the reporting period. Employment placement data remains consistently low across all quarters (<20 placements and therefore information is suppressed), indicating limited success in moving participants from CDP into employment. Broader programme outcomes show similarly minimal progress, with October-December 2024 recording zero participants achieving outcomes.

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
The Plenty	181	182	202	224	209	205	215

\*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
The Plenty	<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.

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
The Plenty	<20	<20	<20	<20	<20	0	<20

Data Source for Tables 11, 12 and 13: NIAA (2025). Jobs, Economic Development Data 2024-25. Remote Employment and Community Development Services Information Request by Desert Knowledge Australia. Unpublished, not for wider circulation.

### Text Box 3: Note on CDP Participation vs. Persons of Employable Age



The total number of CDP participants in a region may be higher than the total number of employable residents as the geographic boundaries for CDP regions will include homelands and people who are employed and on CDP.

The comparison and estimate provided above are indicative for the reader to review in-line with actual numbers, as a general comment the report notes that, seasonal work, tightening of mutual obligations or changes in referral criteria and other factors will also have a direct impact on the numbers.

## Jobseeker Recipients

Jobseeker and Youth Allowance recipients in the Central Desert Region increased from 908 individuals (37.7% of the population aged 15-64) in March 2020 to 1,227 (51% of the population aged 15-6) in April 2025.<sup>55</sup> This is an increase of 319 people. These trends should be interpreted with caution, as the data are drawn from different programs and regional boundaries, which complicates direct comparison.

**Table 14: JobSeeker and Youth Allowance Recipients in the Northern Territory**

<b>JobSeeker</b>					
export  reset 					
Current month	April 2025		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
<b>Northern Territory</b>	23,955	14.7	19,925	12.2	+4,030
Alice Springs	2,115	11.7	2,378	13.2	-263
Barkly	1,452	33.7	1,162	27.0	+290
Belyuen	23	21.7	18	17.0	+5
<b>Central Desert</b>	1,227	51.0	908	37.7	+319
Coomalie	145	18.6	113	14.5	+32
Darwin	3,387	6.0	3,159	5.6	+228
Darwin Waterfront Precinct	15	5.8	14	5.4	+1
East Arnhem	3,101	48.5	2,040	31.9	+1,061
Katherine	1,065	16.1	1,082	16.3	-17
Litchfield	850	5.7	674	4.5	+176
<b>MacDonnell</b>	1,502	36.3	1,143	27.6	+359
Palmerston	1,795	7.1	1,719	6.8	+76
Roper Gulf	2,010	43.8	1,420	30.9	+590
Tiwi Islands	800	46.8	599	35.0	+201
Unincorporated NT	690	14.3	678	14.1	+12
Victoria Daly	731	38.4	494	26.0	+237
Wagait	47	18.7	37	14.7	+10
West Arnhem	1,933	42.7	1,553	34.3	+380
West Daly	1,070	52.2	735	35.8	+335
Greater Darwin	6,095	3.7	5,622	3.5	+473

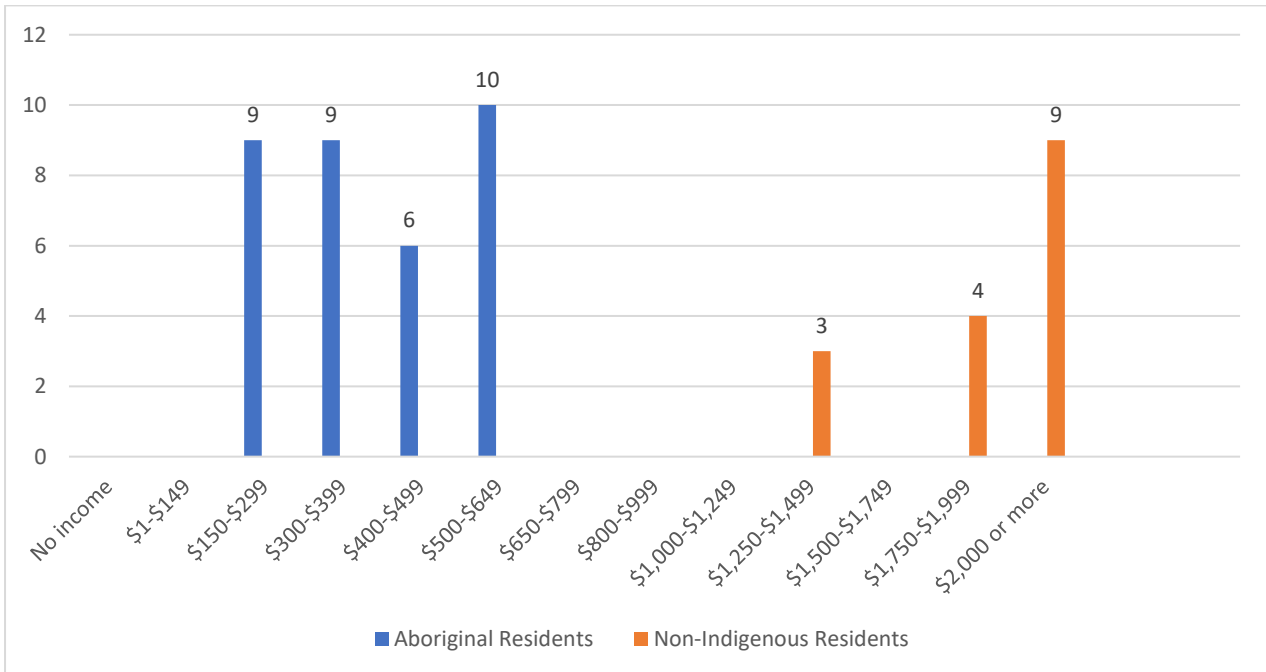
Source: Department of Social Services - JobSeeker and Youth Allowance recipients - monthly profile via [data.gov.au](https://data.gov.au). Compiled and presented by .id - informed decisions

Source: Department of Social Services – JobSeeker and Youth Allowance recipients. Compiled and presented by .id - informed decisions

<sup>55</sup> 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

A total of 34 Aboriginal residents and 16 non-Indigenous residents from Atitjere and Engawala responded to 2021 Census questions on individual incomes. While no one reported earning less than \$150 per week, 100% of Aboriginal respondents had an income of under \$650 per week, compared to non-Indigenous respondents earning over \$1,250 per week.<sup>56</sup> These figures reflect the economic disadvantage experienced by Aboriginal residents in very remote communities, where incomes are among the lowest nationally.<sup>57</sup> This income disparity limits access to essential goods, services and opportunities, and highlights the need for targeted initiatives to create sustainable, liveable-wage employment opportunities that support economic participation and improved outcomes for Aboriginal residents.



**Figure 6: Total Personal Income of Residents in Atitjere and Engawala**

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

<sup>56</sup> Compiled from Australian Bureau of Statistics (2021), Census of Population and Housing, for Atitjere and Engawala. I08 Total Personal Income (Weekly) By Sex for Aboriginal by Sex. Canberra: ABS, 2021.

<sup>57</sup> Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (2023) 2.08 Income, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Performance Framework. <https://www.indigenoushpf.gov.au/measures/2-08-income>.

## 2.2 Skills in the Community

This section analyses education and training levels across Atitjere, Engawala and Orrtipa-Thurra which directly impact workforce capacity and employment opportunities. Understanding current skills and training patterns provides the foundation for aligning workforce planning with identified employment gaps and community-identified opportunities for job creation.

### Education

The development of a strong future workforce is tied to the educational opportunities and outcomes of young people.<sup>58</sup> Core competencies in language, literacy, numeracy and digital skills and access to higher levels of schooling and vocational training are essential for equipping students with the skills needed for future employment. However, current educational limitations create barriers to accessing employment opportunities, particularly for professional positions that require university qualifications. The data presented below from the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (2024) highlights key challenges in the education landscape across Atitjere, Engawala and Orrtipa-Thurra including low school attendance rates and a lack of secondary education options.

**Table 15: 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
Atitjere <sup>59</sup>	0-4 years	19	5	26%
	5-14 years	32	32	100%
	15-24 years	26	3	12%
Engawala <sup>60</sup>	0-4 years	12	4	33%
	5-14 years	14	10	71%
	15-24 years	33	3	9%

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

**Table 16: School Profile Data**

Metric	Harts Range School <sup>61</sup>	Alcoota School <sup>62</sup>	Bonya School <sup>63</sup>
Location	Atitjere	Engawala	Orrtipa-Thurra
Year Range	T-8	T-9	T-6
Enrolment Numbers	39	29	6
Aboriginal Students	97%	100%	100%
Non-English Language	75%	100%	75%

<sup>58</sup> 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>

<sup>59</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics (2021). *2021 Census: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples Profile, Atitjere. I01 Selected Person Characteristics by Indigenous Status by Sex*. Canberra: ABS, 2021

<sup>60</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics (2021). *2021 Census: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples Profile, Engawala. I01 Selected Person Characteristics by Indigenous Status by Sex*. Canberra: ABS, 2021

<sup>61</sup> Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (2024), *Harts Range School Profile, My School 2024*. <https://www.myschool.edu.au/school/50093>

<sup>62</sup> Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (2024), *Alcoota School Profile, My School 2024*. <https://www.myschool.edu.au/school/50074>

<sup>63</sup> Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (2024), *Bonya School Profile, My School 2024*. <https://www.myschool.edu.au/school/50081>

Background			
Student-to-Teacher Ratio (See Text Box 4)	5:1	5:1	3:1
Attendance Rate (Semester 1, 2024)	54%	41%	69%
Students Attending 90%+ of the Time	14%	5%	0%
VET in School	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable
Senior Secondary Outcomes	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable
2023 School Funding (Per Student)	\$1,592,187 (\$38,834)	\$901,068 (\$43,095)	\$685,346 (\$68,535)
ICSEA Value (National Average)	680 (1000)	562 (1000)	No data available.

Source: © Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) 2009 to present, unless otherwise indicated. This material was downloaded from the ACARA website ([www.acara.edu.au](http://www.acara.edu.au)) (<https://www.myschool.edu.au/home>) (accessed 15 July 2025) and was not modified. The material is licensed under CC BY 4.0 (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>). ACARA does not endorse any product that uses ACARA material or make any representations as to the quality of such products. Any product that uses material published on this website should not be taken to be affiliated with ACARA or have the sponsorship or approval of ACARA. It is up to each person to make their own assessment of the product.

#### Text Box 4: Student to Teacher Ratio

The Student to Teacher ratio is a measure that indicates how many students there are for every one teacher in a school, district, or educational system.

**How It Is Calculated:**      Student to Teacher Ratio =  $\frac{\text{Total Number of Students}}{\text{Total Number of Teachers}}$

#### Key Observations:

- **Access to Secondary Schooling:** None of the schools offer secondary education beyond Year 6 to 9. While students can remain in their community to continue schooling with a focus on post-primary literacy, numeracy, and employment pathways programs,<sup>64</sup> access to a complete secondary curriculum requires students to leave their communities and attend regional high schools with residential facilities, boarding schools in Darwin or Alice Springs, or interstate boarding schools.<sup>65</sup>
- **Attendance Challenges and Workforce Readiness:** Attendance rates range from 41% to 69%, with 0% to 14% of students attending 90% or more of the time. These figures indicate significant barriers to consistent school participation that will directly impact future workforce capacity. As community aspirations presented in Section 3 of this report identify numerous opportunities for local employment in education, infrastructure, and service delivery, improving educational engagement is key in developing the local workforce needed to implement these initiatives.
- **High Engagement with the School:** In the 5–14-year age group, school engagement is notably high in both Atitjere and Engawala, with 100% and 71% of children respectively reported to be enrolled in an

<sup>64</sup> Northern Territory Government. (n.d.). Remote secondary school choices. <https://nt.gov.au/learning/primary-and-secondary-students/remote-students-and-parents/remote-secondary-school-choices>

<sup>65</sup> Ibid

educational institution according to the 2021 census data. Harts Range School and Alcoota School currently offer classes up to Year T–8 and T–9. This suggests that if secondary education were made available locally, young people aged 15 and above might be more likely to remain engaged in schooling within their communities. However, it is also important to note that enrolment does not necessarily reflect attendance.

## Literacy, Numeracy and Language Context

NAPLAN data serves as a useful measure of foundational literacy, numeracy, and language proficiency for school aged children nationally. However, there is no publicly available 2024 NAPLAN data for Harts Range School, Alcoota School, or Bonya School. Notably, Bonya School has no recorded NAPLAN data in the publicly accessible archives of the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority,<sup>66</sup> while Alcoota School's NAPLAN data has not been updated since 2014.<sup>67</sup> Similarly, the most recent data for Harts Range School is from 2022.<sup>68</sup>

**Table 17: NAPLAN Scores**

Subject	Year Level	Harts Range School <sup>69</sup> (2022)	Alcoota School <sup>70</sup> (2014)	Bonya School <sup>71</sup> (No Data)
Reading	3	No scores provided	225 (418)	No scores provided
	5	No scores provided	314 (501)	No scores provided
	7	No scores provided	No scores provided	N/A
	9	N/A	No scores provided	N/A
Writing	3	362 (422)	210 (402)	No scores provided
	5	No scores provided	261 (468)	No scores provided
	7	No scores provided	No scores provided	N/A
	9	N/A	No scores provided	N/A
Spelling	3	No scores provided	279 (412)	No scores provided
	5	No scores provided	345 (498)	No scores provided
	7	No scores provided	No scores provided	N/A
	9	N/A	No scores provided	N/A
Grammar	3	No scores provided	252 (426)	No scores provided
	5	No scores provided	299 (504)	No scores provided
	7	No scores provided	No scores provided	N/A
	9	N/A	No scores provided	N/A

<sup>66</sup> Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (2024), *Bonya School Profile, My School 2024*.  
<https://www.myschool.edu.au/school/50081>

<sup>67</sup> Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (2024), *Alcoota School Profile, My School 2024*.  
<https://www.myschool.edu.au/school/50074>

<sup>68</sup> Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (2024), *Harts Range School Profile, My School 2024*.  
<https://www.myschool.edu.au/school/50093>

<sup>69</sup> Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (2024), *Harts Range School Profile, My School 2024*.  
<https://www.myschool.edu.au/school/50093>

<sup>70</sup> Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (2024), *Alcoota School Profile, My School 2024*.  
<https://www.myschool.edu.au/school/50074>

<sup>71</sup> Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (2024), *Bonya School Profile, My School 2024*.  
<https://www.myschool.edu.au/school/50081>

Numeracy	3	313 (400)	279 (402)	No scores provided
	5	No scores provided	340 (488)	No scores provided
	7	No scores provided	No scores provided	N/A
	9	N/A	No scores provided	N/A
Participation Rate		45% (95%)	89% (95%)	-

Source: © Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) 2009 to present, unless otherwise indicated. This material was downloaded from the ACARA website ([www.acara.edu.au](http://www.acara.edu.au)) (<https://www.myschool.edu.au/home>) (accessed 15 July 2025) and was not modified. The material is licensed under [CC BY 4.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/) (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>). ACARA does not endorse any product that uses ACARA material or make any representations as to the quality of such products. Any product that uses material published on this website should not be taken to be affiliated with ACARA or have the sponsorship or approval of ACARA. It is up to each person to make their own assessment of the product.

The limited data that is available indicates performance significantly below national averages, aligning with broader trends of educational inequities affecting Indigenous and remote students, as underscored in the 2024 National NAPLAN results.<sup>72</sup>

The 2021 Census indicates that Indigenous languages are the primary languages spoken with 93% of Aboriginal residents responding that they primarily speak an Australian Indigenous language at home.<sup>73</sup> In Atitjere, 20 Aboriginal residents reported speaking only English at home while 126 residents responded that they use Indigenous languages at home.<sup>74</sup> In Engawala 100% of Aboriginal residents who responded to this question reported that they use Indigenous languages at home, with no one responding that they speak English only at home.<sup>75</sup>

This linguistic landscape presents both challenges and strategic opportunities for workforce planning. While English proficiency barriers may limit access to some employment opportunities, the strong Indigenous language base provides foundation for culturally based employment in education, cultural services, and community programs identified through the community aspirations presented in Section 3 of this report. Bilingual or multilingual workforce planning strategies that respect and incorporate Indigenous languages alongside English could enhance educational engagement, support language preservation, and create pathways to employment that are aligned with the linguistic and cultural heritage of these communities.

## Vocational Education and Training (VET)

This summary provides an overview of Vocational Education and Training (VET) activity in The Plenty region, including Atitjere, Engawala and Orrtipa-Thurra. It details both general VET program participation and specific apprenticeship and traineeship pathways that support local workforce planning. Critical to workforce planning is understanding how current VET offerings align with key employment industries and locally funded projects,

<sup>72</sup> 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/>

<sup>73</sup> Data compiled from Australian Bureau of Statistics (2021). 2021 Census: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples Profile for Atitjere and Engawala. 105 Australian Indigenous Languages Used at Home by Proficiency in Spoken English for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Persons. Canberra: ABS, 2021

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

<sup>75</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics (2021). 2021 Census: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples Profile, Engawala. 105 Australian Indigenous Languages Used at Home by Proficiency in Spoken English for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Persons. Canberra: ABS, 2021

existing workforce demand, and community priorities. This analysis is based on data that was provided to Desert Knowledge Australia by the Department of Education for the purposes of this report.

In 2024, The Plenty delivered 11 VET qualifications, spanning entry-level programs to Certificate IV-level qualifications. The table below captures all VET Courses offered in this region between 2022 - 2024, and the number of students enrolled in each. Please note enrolment numbers below 5 have been rounded to 5 to protect student privacy, actual values are  $\leq 5$ .<sup>76</sup>

**Table 18: Student count for DET Funded VET Programs**

DET Funded VET Programs – The Plenty	2022	2023	2024
Certificate I in Automotive Vocational Preparation			5
Certificate I in Visual Arts	13	7	14
Certificate II in Local Government	6	5	
Certificate II in Resources and Infrastructure Work Preparation			5
Certificate II in Retail Services	5		5
Certificate II in Visual Arts		5	5
Certificate III in Civil Construction Plant Operations	6		5
Certificate III in Local Government	6	8	5
Certificate III in Visual Arts			7
Certificate IV in Disability	5	5	
Essential Skills for Community Aged Care Workers			5
Induction to Leisure and Health		5	
Learner Support			8
NT White Card			8

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

In addition, up to five residents of The Plenty engaged in apprenticeships or traineeships in 2025, focusing exclusively on Certificate II in Retail Services. This represents a decline from prior years, where retail and local government pathways were more widely subscribed.

**Table 19: A&T count for Apprenticeships and Traineeships**

Apprenticeships & Traineeships – The Plenty	2022	2023	2024	2025
Certificate III in Local Government	5	6	5	
Certificate III in Local Government (Operational Works)	5			
Certificate II in Retail	5			5
Certificate III in Retail	5	5		
Certificate IV in Retail Management		5	5	

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

<sup>76</sup> *Department of Trade, Business and Asian Relations. (2025). Data provided to Desert Knowledge Australia for report purposes only. [Unpublished raw data].*

2021 Census data indicates that Public Administration and Safety, Health Care and Social Assistance, Education and Training, and Retail Trade are the primary employment sectors in Atitjere and Engawala.<sup>77</sup> These sectors provide the foundation for workforce engagement and should guide Vocational Education and Training (VET) offerings.

Visual Arts emerged as the most popular training area in 2025. Fourteen students enrolled in Certificate I, and when combined with Certificate II and III, Visual Arts accounted for the largest share of VET participation - 26 students across all certificate levels. While formal positions in the sector are limited, the Art Centre provides income-generating opportunities that may not be reflected in Census employment data. Through the Centre, artists create and sell paintings, pottery, and other works, supporting local livelihoods in a region where traditional employment opportunities are scarce.<sup>78</sup>

## University Qualifications

The 2021 Census indicates that no Aboriginal residents in Atitjere or Engawala hold university-level qualifications.<sup>79</sup>

**Table 20: Highest Qualification (Non-School)**

Non-School Qualification	Atitjere	Engawala
Postgraduate Degree, Postgraduate Diploma or Postgraduate Certificate	0	0
Bachelor's degree	0	0
Advanced Diploma and Diploma Level	0	0
Certificate III & IV Level	9	12
Certificate I & II Level	3	21
Certificate Level (Not further defined)	6	4

*Data compiled from Australian Bureau of Statistics (2021) Census of Population and Housing for Atitjere and Engawala. Table I20c, Highest Non-School Qualification: Level of Education (A) By Indigenous Status by Age by Sex.*

<sup>77</sup> Data compiled from Australian Bureau of Statistics (2021) Census of Population and Housing for Atitjere and Engawala. G54 Industry of Employment by Age by Sex. Industry of Employment by Age by Sex. (Canberra: ABS, 2021).

<sup>78</sup> Engawala Art Centre (n.d.) About Us. <https://www.engawalaarts.com.au/about>

<sup>79</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics (2021) Census of Population and Housing: Atitjere and Engawala. Table I20c, Highest Non-School Qualification: Level of Education (A) By Indigenous Status by Age by Sex

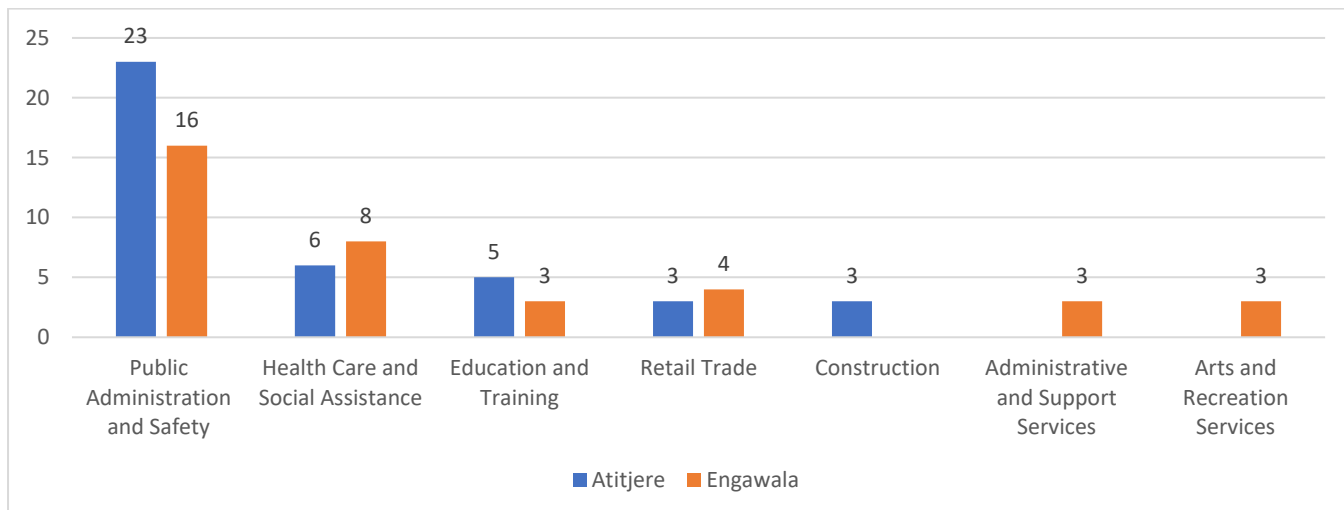
## 2.3 Employment

Building on the analysis of the education and training landscape, this section of the report examines current employment patterns, key industries, and job vacancies across Atitjere and Engawala. Understanding where jobs currently exist and where demand lies, provides important context for aligning training opportunities with employment pathways. Please note, Orrtipa-Thurra workforce and employment demand have been researched but direct demographic insights are unavailable given limitations of census data.

### Key Employment Industries

The 2021 Census provides data on employment across Atitjere and Engawala. However, it does not distinguish between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal residents in employment by sector. Therefore, this analysis reflects overall community employment patterns.

Employment is concentrated in a small number of sectors, with Public Administration and Safety as the largest employer in both communities, followed by Health Care and Social Assistance, and Education and Training<sup>80</sup> respectively. Retail Trade also contributes to local employment; it accounts for seven jobs across the two communities.<sup>81</sup> These sectors represent the main sources of local employment.



**Figure 7: 2021 Employment by Industry**

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

### Occupational Distribution

The 2021 Census data provide a snapshot of employment by occupation and industry across Atitjere and Engawala. However, it does not distinguish between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal residents and represents a combined total for all employed persons aged 15 years and over.

- **Community and Personal Service Workers:** Form the largest occupational group. These roles often require cultural knowledge and are focused on direct service delivery to

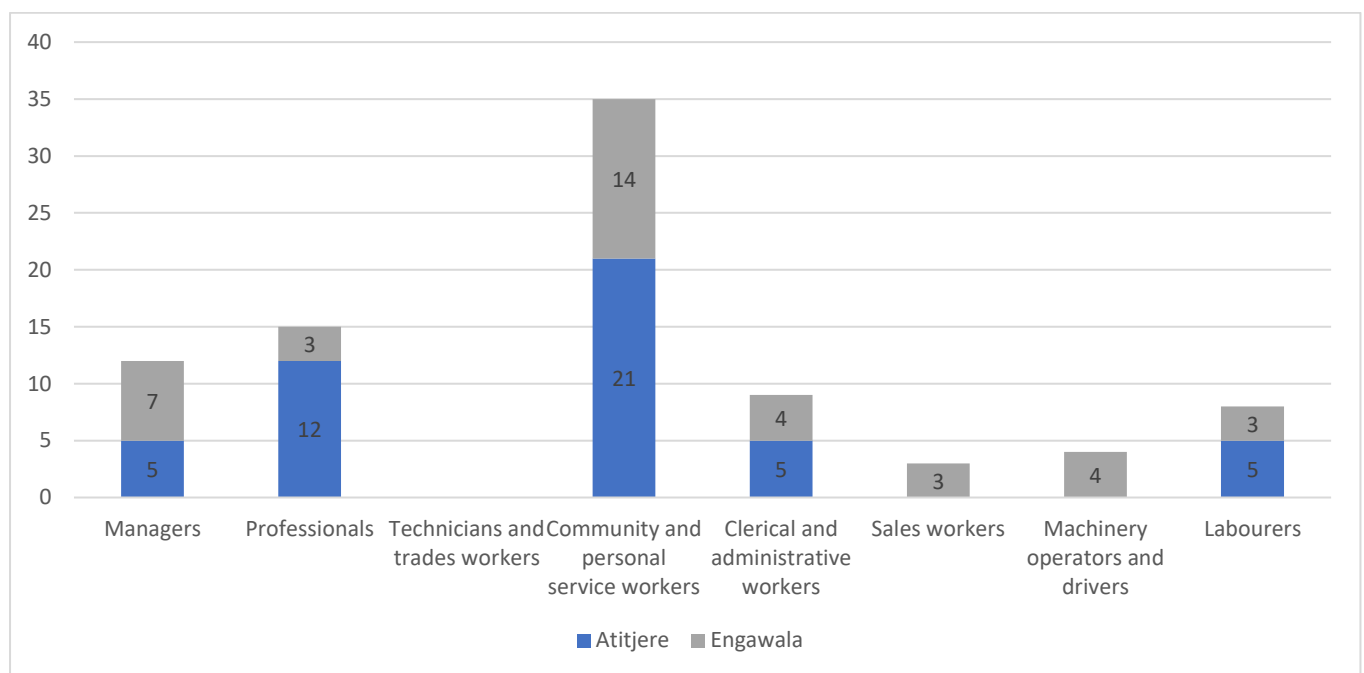
<sup>80</sup> Data compiled from Australian Bureau of Statistics (2021) Census of Population and Housing for Atitjere and Engawala. G54 Industry of Employment by Age by Sex. Industry of Employment by Age by Sex. (Canberra: ABS, 2021)

<sup>81</sup> Ibid

residents.<sup>82</sup>

- **Professionals:** Is the second most common occupation across the communities. This category includes teachers, health professionals and other specialised roles requiring formal qualifications.<sup>83</sup>
- **Managers:** Constitute the third largest occupation type.<sup>84</sup>

Notably there are no local technicians or trades workers in Atitjere or Engawala<sup>85</sup> - no electricians, plumbers, carpenters, mechanics or other skilled trades. This represents a significant workforce gap, particularly given these roles are essential for community infrastructure and maintenance. This absence combined with little local employment in the construction industry across both communities suggests these communities are likely heavily reliant on external contractors for essential services. The lack of trades workers has implications for VET planning, highlighting an opportunity for locally delivered trades training that, when paired with targeted employment pathways, could reduce dependence on outside services, create much-needed local jobs, and positively impact local economies.



**Figure 8: 2021 Employment by Occupation**

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

<sup>82</sup>Data compiled from Australian Bureau of Statistics (2021) Census of Population and Housing for Atitjere and Engawala. G60 Occupation by Age by Sex. (Canberra: ABS, 2021).

<sup>83</sup>Ibid

<sup>84</sup>Ibid

<sup>85</sup>Ibid

## Workforce Demand

There are fourteen vacant roles across Atitjere and Engawala. Among these, four are entry-level positions that do not require formal qualifications, eight require formal VET qualifications, and two demand university-level qualifications, such as those for remote area nurses.

A review of publicly advertised jobs on 16 June 2025 identified three available roles across the three communities, all requiring formal qualifications. In addition, the Central Desert Regional Council—which employs 21 staff across Atitjere and Engawala, 90% of whom are Indigenous—had eight vacancies: five in Atitjere and three in Engawala. Unlike the other roles, these positions were advertised locally on community noticeboards rather than online.

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 three schools:







**Table 21: May 2025 Education Vacancies (excluding teaching vacancies)**





School	Harts Range School	Alcoota School	Bonya School
Location:	Atitjere	Engawala	Orrtipa-Thurra
Total Vacant Positions:	1	2	0
Position Title:			
Preschool Coordinator		1	
General Support	1		
Maintenance Officer		1	

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

**Table 22: Qualifications Required and Education Pathways to Role Vacancies**

Occupation	Employer	# of Roles	Qualification	Details	Education/ Training Provider	Cultural Framework
Electrical Superintendent, Underground	-	1	<a href="#">Relevant Electrical Trade Qualification</a> + relevant experience	Government supported places available	Charles Darwin University (Alice Springs)	<b>Building the Community</b> 
Remote Area Nurse	NT Health	2	<a href="#">Bachelor of Nursing</a>	4 years, (Commonwealth supported places available)	Charles Darwin University (Darwin Campus)	<b>Caring for Family and Community</b> 

Support Officer, Works – Engawala	Central Desert Regional Council	1	White Card, on the job training	-	-	<p>Servicing the Community</p> 
Casual Support Officer, Youth Sports and Recreation – Engawala	Central Desert Regional Council	1	<a href="#">Certificate II in Community Services</a> (or similar relevant qualification)	6 months, fee free for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students	Bachelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education; Charles Darwin University	<p>Caring for Family and Community</p> 
Casual Support Officer, Community Safety Patrol - Engawala	Central Desert Regional Council	1	On the job training	-	-	<p>Caring for Family and Community</p> 
Coordinator, Aged Care – Atitjere	Central Desert Regional Council	1	<a href="#">Certificate II in Community Services</a> (or similar relevant qualification) + relevant experience	6 months, fee free for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students	Bachelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education; Charles Darwin University	<p>Caring for Family and Community</p> 
Senior Admin Officer, Council Services – Atitjere	Central Desert Regional Council	1	<a href="#">Certificate IV in Business</a> / <a href="#">Certificate II in Community Services</a> + relevant experience	18 months, fee free for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students / 6 months, fee free for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students	Bachelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education; Charles Darwin University	<p>Servicing the Community</p> 
Casual Support Officer, Youth Sports and Recreation – Atitjere	Central Desert Regional Council	1	<a href="#">Certificate II in Community Services</a> (or similar relevant qualification)	6 months, fee free for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students	Bachelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education; Charles Darwin University	<p>Caring for Family and Community</p> 

Casual Support Officer, Community Safety Patrol - Atitjere	Central Desert Regional Council	1	On the job training	-	-	Caring for Family and Community 
Team Leader, Youth Sports and Recreation – Atitjere	Central Desert Regional Council	1	<a href="#">Certificate II in Community Services</a> (or similar relevant qualification)  + relevant experience	6 months, fee free for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students	Bachelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education; Charles Darwin University	Caring for Family and Community 
Preschool Educator	Alcoota School	1	<a href="#">Diploma of Early Childhood Education and Care</a> (or similar) + Relevant Experience	1 year, fee free for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students	Batchelor Institute	Caring for Family and Community 
Maintenance Officer	Alcoota School	1	<a href="#">Certificate II in Construction Pathways</a>	3 months, fee free for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students	Batchelor Institute	Building the Community 

Data sourced from Central Desert Regional Council (n.d.) Engawala; Central Desert Regional Council (n.d.) Atitjere

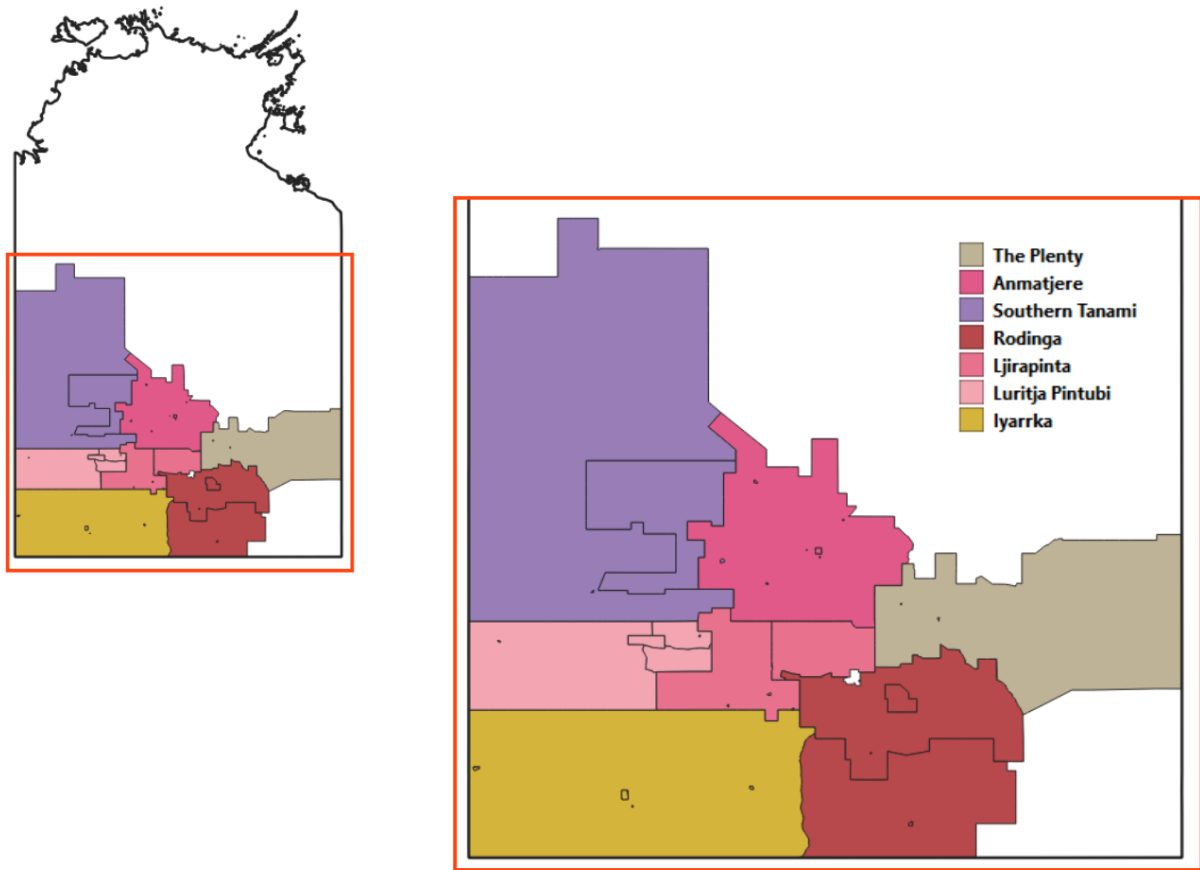
## 2.4 Economic Context

Economic factors play a central role in shaping workforce participation and opportunity in The Plenty region. This section examines regional economic output, workforce structure and the specific context for Indigenous workforce planning. Understanding these dynamics provides key insights for addressing barriers and leveraging opportunities for local employment and economic inclusion.

### Gross Regional Product (GRP)

The economic profile of The Plenty region provides essential context for understanding regional economic activity and workforce opportunities. The analysis below incorporates GRP data for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous populations while highlighting Indigenous-specific economic patterns.

For the purposes of this section of the report, the regions have been identified in line with the map below:



**Figure 9: Map of Clusters**

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

### **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.

The total regional workforce includes 194 employed residents,<sup>86</sup> and its economic output can be measured in two complementary ways:

- **Total Place of Work (POW) GRP:** \$146.09 million<sup>87</sup>  
This is the total value of all goods and services produced by businesses and organisations physically located in the region, regardless of where their workers live. It reflects the size of the regional economy and the scale of economic activity happening within the region's boundaries.
- **Employed Resident GRP:** \$54.75 million<sup>88</sup>  
This figure captures the total economic value generated by people who live in the region, no matter where they work. It measures the combined economic contribution of all residents, whether they are employed locally or commute elsewhere.

Resident GRP accounts for 37.5% of total GRP, indicating that \$91.3 million in economic value is generated by non-resident workers and external operations.

The Plenty Cluster, which includes the communities of Atitjere, Engawala, and Orrtipa-Thurra, is a remote region with a small, predominantly Indigenous population. Its economy is shaped by a mix of pastoral activities, government services, and a modest mining sector, with significant external funding and a high reliance on government benefits

<sup>86</sup> ID Consulting Pty Ltd (2025). *Economic and Demographic Analysis of The Plenty Region*. Unpublished report prepared for Desert Knowledge Australia, 2025.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>88</sup> ID Consulting Pty Ltd (2025). *Economic and Demographic Analysis of The Plenty Region*. Unpublished report prepared for Desert Knowledge Australia, 2025

**Table 23: Total Regional versus Indigenous GRP Data**

Category	Total Workforce	Employed Resident Workforce	GRP by Place of Work (POW) (\$)	GRP by Place of Residence (\$)	GRP per POW Worker (\$)	GRP per Resident Worker (\$)
Total Regional	273	194	146,093,498	54,752,386	535,141	282,228
Indigenous	80	79	28,259,913	12,605,091	353,249	159,558

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

- The POW GRP per capita for the region is approximately \$535,141, which is high for a small, remote community and reflects the presence of external economic drivers such as mining and government services.
- Employed Resident GRP per capita is \$282,228, indicating the average economic value generated by each resident worker.
- Indigenous residents make up 29% of the total workforce (80 out of 273), generate 19% of the region’s POW GRP, and 23% of Employed Resident GRP.
- Indigenous Employed Resident GRP per capita (\$159,558) is lower than the regional average, potentially indicating structural barriers to higher-value employment and the relatively higher share of Indigenous employment in government and community services.

### Indigenous Economic Participation

Of the 194 employed residents in the region, 80 are Indigenous,<sup>89</sup> representing 41% of the total resident employed workforce.

- **Total Place of Work (POW) GRP:** \$28.26 million<sup>90</sup>
- **Employed Resident GRP:** \$12.6 million<sup>91</sup>

The \$15.66 million gap between the Place of Work GRP and the Employed Resident GRP for Indigenous regional residents indicates that a substantial portion of the region’s economic activity is generated by Indigenous workers who commute into the area, or by businesses based locally that employ non-resident Indigenous staff.

### Workforce Distribution and Industry Sectors

The regional economy is centred on Agriculture, Forestry, and Fishing, Mining, and Construction, with the following key industry contributions among all regional residents:

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>90</sup> ID Consulting Pty Ltd (2025). *Economic and Demographic Analysis of The Plenty Region*. Unpublished report prepared for Desert Knowledge Australia, 2025

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid*

**Table 24: GRP Value added - Employed Regional Residents**

Industry Sector	Total Value Added (\$M)	Indigenous Value Added(\$M)	Total Employees	Indigenous Employees	Indigenous Employment Rate (%)
Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing	\$19.7M	\$2.8M	54	8	15%
Mining	\$14.81M	—	11	0	0%
Construction	\$9.44M	\$6.3M	20	14	70%
Public Administration & Safety	\$2.01M	\$1.25M	42	26	62%
Health Care & Social Assistance	\$1.64M	\$1.0M	27	16	59%
Education & Training	\$1.26M	\$0.25M	17	3	18%
Retail Trade	\$0.49M	\$0.35M	8	6	75%
Administrative and Support Services	\$0.56M	—	5	0	0%
Arts and Recreation Services	\$0.25M	\$0.25M	5	5	100%
Transport, Postal and Warehousing	No data provided	—	2	2	100%
Accommodation and Food Services	\$0.19M	—	3	0	0%

Data source: ID Consulting Pty Ltd (2025). *Economic and Demographic Analysis of the Plenty Region*. Unpublished report prepared for Desert Knowledge Australia, 2025<sup>92</sup>

Indigenous employment in the Plenty region demonstrates significant variation across sectors, highlighting both areas of strength and opportunities for improvement. Key industries such as Agriculture, Forestry, and Fishing, the largest contributor to the region’s GRP (\$19.7M), have low Indigenous participation, with 15% of the workforce being Indigenous.<sup>93</sup> Similarly, Mining, the second-largest economic sector (\$14.81M), employs no Indigenous workers, and Education and Training shows limited inclusion, with 3 of 17 employees being Indigenous.<sup>94</sup> Additionally, sectors such as Administrative and Support Services and Accommodation and Food Services employ no Indigenous workers,<sup>95</sup> highlighting opportunities for targeted workforce initiatives.

In contrast, several regional sectors show significantly higher Indigenous employment rates. Construction, the third-largest contributor to GRP (\$9.44M), has a 70% Indigenous workforce contributing \$6.3M to the sector’s \$9.44M output. Public Administration and Safety employs the highest number of Indigenous workers across

<sup>92</sup> 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.

<sup>93</sup> 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.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid

<sup>95</sup> Ibid

all sectors.<sup>96</sup> Indigenous staff make up 75% of employees in the Retail sector, however it should be noted this sector accounts for a total of 8 jobs regionally.<sup>97</sup> The Health Care and Social Assistance sector is made up of a 59% Indigenous workforce, and while only providing a small number of jobs regionally, the Arts and Recreation Services and Transport, Postal, and Warehousing Sectors are 100% Indigenous staffed.<sup>98</sup>

## 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

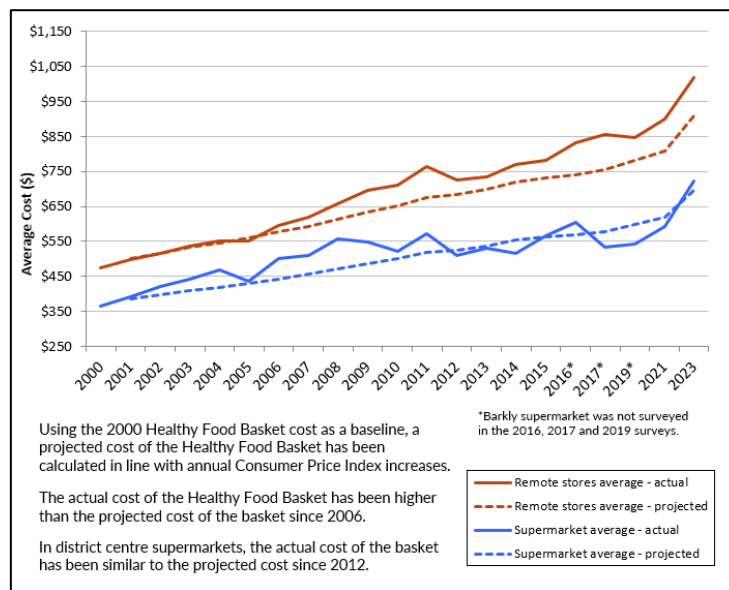


Figure 10: Market Basket Survey - Cost of a Food Basket from 2000-2023

Source: Northern Territory Government, NT Market Basket Survey 2023

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

- 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.<sup>99</sup>
- The 'Current Diet Basket' costs \$1,072 in remote stores compared to \$890 in Alice Springs.<sup>100</sup>
- From 2021 to 2023, the cost of the Healthy Food Basket rose by 13% in remote stores,<sup>101</sup> highlighting increasing cost pressures.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>99</sup> NT Health (2023). Attachment A - 2023 NT Market Basket Survey Summary Report. Darwin.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>101</sup> NT Health (2023). Attachment A - 2023 NT Market Basket Survey Summary Report. Darwin.

Community members in Atitjere directly experience these cost pressures, with residents reporting that they "run out of money after a week due to high prices of food in community."<sup>102</sup> Limited buying power in local stores exacerbates the issue as the "Atitjere store can't buy enough bulk to get lower prices."<sup>103</sup>

These inflated costs create immediate financial challenges for job seekers. A single parent with dependent children receiving the maximum JobSeeker Payment of \$836.50 per fortnight<sup>104</sup> falls \$141.50 short of affording the 'Healthy Food Basket' and \$235.50 short of the 'Current Diet Basket,' before accounting for other essential living expenses. This financial gap illustrates how income support payments cannot meet basic needs and emphasises the importance of creating accessible local employment opportunities.

### Transportation Costs

Households in Atitjere, Engawala, and Orrtipa-Thurra face significant transportation challenges due to their geographical isolation and the considerable distances to essential services in Alice Springs, 215 km from Atitjere, 180 km from Engawala, and 367 km from Orrtipa-Thurra. High travel costs exacerbate these challenges. In 2024, unleaded petrol prices in the region reached 268.7 cents per litre, according to the NTCOSS Transport Factsheet, a 16.7-cent increase from 2023 and well above the national average.<sup>105</sup>

The Centre Bush Bus provides a vital transport link for Atitjere and Engawala, connecting them with Alice Springs. However, it does not service Orrtipa-Thurra, operates only on Tuesdays and Thursdays, and charges \$270 for a return journey for a single adult.<sup>106</sup> The combination of long distances, high fuel costs and expensive, infrequent public transport creates significant barriers for individuals seeking access to training, employment and essential services outside their communities.

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<sup>102</sup> Atitjere OCARC Community Meeting Notes (2023). Unpublished, not for wider circulation.

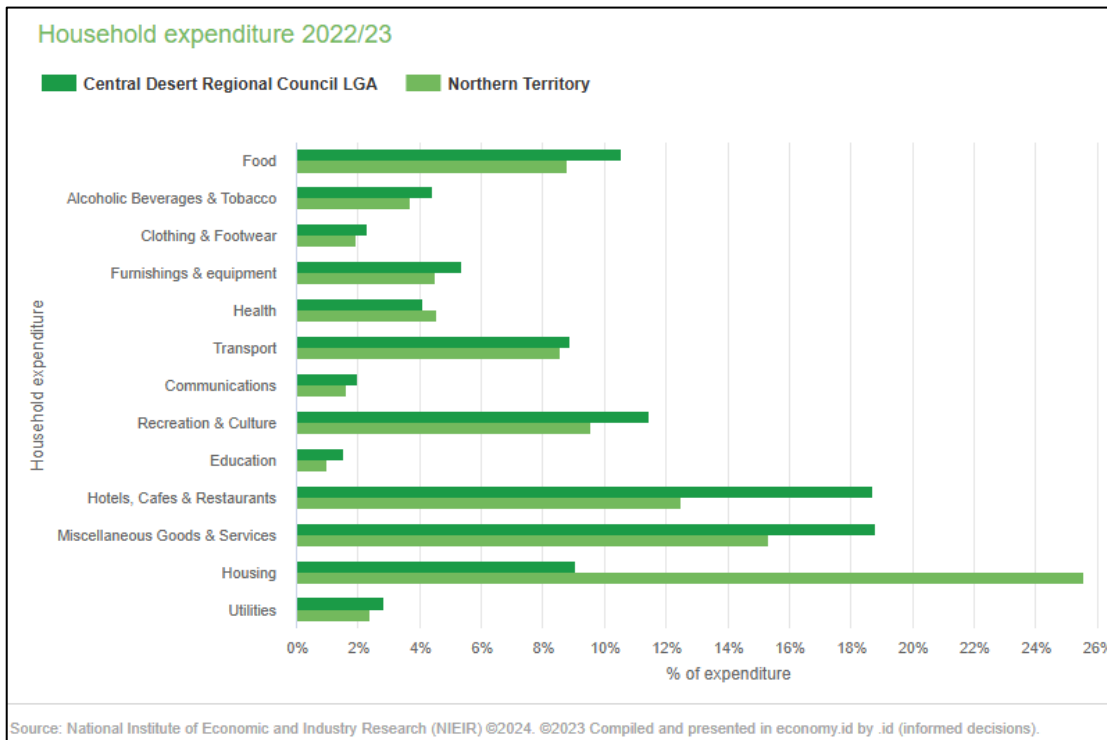
<sup>103</sup> Ibid

<sup>104</sup> Servies Australia (2025) Jobseeker Payment. <https://www.serviesaustralia.gov.au/how-much-jobseeker-payment-you-can-get?context=51411>

<sup>105</sup> 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>

<sup>106</sup> Centre Bush Bus (n.d.) Bus Timetables. [www.centrebushbus.com.au/bus-timetables/](http://www.centrebushbus.com.au/bus-timetables/)

## Regional Household Expenditure



**Figure 11: Household Expenditure 2022-23 Central Desert 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)

While community-specific data is not available, expenditure patterns for the broader Central Desert Regional Council area provide important insights into financial pressures:

- Households spend a higher proportion of total expenditure across most categories compared to NT averages.<sup>107</sup>
- The most notable differences in expenditure allocation are toward food, recreation and culture, hotels, cafes and restaurants, and miscellaneous goods and services.<sup>108</sup>

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

In the 2021 Census, 38 Aboriginal households in Atitjere and Engawala responded to household income questions.<sup>109</sup> However, this represents a small portion of the combined Aboriginal working-age population (226

<sup>107</sup> .id (Informed Decisions) (2024). Household Expenditure. <https://economy.id.com.au/rda-northern-territory/household-expenditure?IndkeyNieir=23402&WebID=130>.

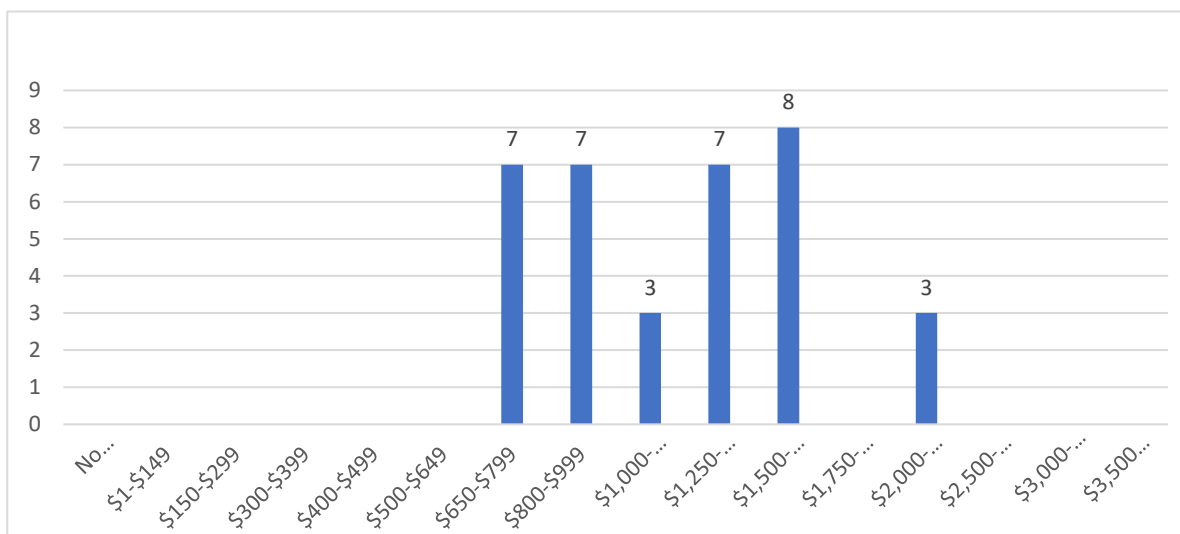
<sup>108</sup> Ibid.

<sup>109</sup> Data compiled from Australian Bureau of Statistics (2021). 2021 Census: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples Profile for Atitjere and Engawala. 117 total household income (weekly) by Indigenous status of household. Canberra: ABS, 2021

individuals aged 15+),<sup>110</sup> suggesting the data may not fully capture the economic conditions or diversity of income sources within these communities.

2021 census data shows:

- No Aboriginal households reported negative, nil, or very low incomes (under \$300 per week), suggesting basic income support systems are effectively reaching residents.<sup>111</sup>
- No Aboriginal households reported earnings below \$650 per week or above \$2,499 per week. This indicates an absence of both extremely low-income and high-income households in the area.<sup>112</sup>
- Most of the Aboriginal households who responded to this census question, (29 out of 38) fell into the income brackets between \$650 and \$1,749 per week.<sup>113</sup>



**Figure 12: Weekly Reported Aboriginal Household Incomes in Atitjere and Engawala**

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

<sup>110</sup> Data compiled from Australian Bureau of Statistics (2021), Census of Population and Housing, Atitjere and Engawala. I01 Selected Person Characteristics by Indigenous Status by Sex. Canberra: ABS, 2021.

<sup>111</sup> Data compiled from Australian Bureau of Statistics (2021). 2021 Census: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples Profile for Atitjere and Engawala. I17 total household income (weekly) by Indigenous status of household. Canberra: ABS, 2021

<sup>112</sup> Ibid

<sup>113</sup> Ibid

## Socio-Economic Advantage and Disadvantage

The SEIFA (Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas) data for the Central Desert Local Government Area (LGA) reveals that the communities in this region are among the most socio-economically disadvantaged in Australia across all major measures.<sup>114</sup> This highlights significant challenges in economic opportunity, education, and overall well-being for residents in these communities.

**Table 25: SEIFA Indexes for the Central Desert LGA**

Index	Score	Decile	Percentile
Index of Relative Socio-economic Advantage and Disadvantage	697	1	2
Index of Relative Socio-economic Disadvantage	524	1	3
Index of Economic Resources	589	1	5
Index of Education and Occupation	865	1	7

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

### Text Box 5: Note on SEIFA 2021 Data

The SEIFA 2021 data presented here is aggregated for the Central Desert LGA which includes the Plenty ward. This means that the scores reflect the combined socio-economic conditions across the entire Central Desert Local region, including the communities of Atitjere, Engawala and Orrtipa-Thurra. While this data provides valuable insights into the overall socio-economic landscape, it is important to interpret it with an understanding that variations may exist between the individual communities within the region.

<sup>114</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics (2021). SEIFA 2021 by Local Government Area (LGA) Local Government Areas - 2021: Central Desert. [https://dataexplorer.abs.gov.au/vis?tm=seifa%20lga&pg=0&df\[ds\]=SNAPSHOT\\_TOPICS&df\[id\]=ABS\\_SEIFA2021\\_LGA&df\[ag\]=ABS&df\[vs\]=1.0.0&pd=2021%2C&dq=70620..&ly\[c\]=SEIFA\\_MEASURE&ly\[rw\]=SEIFAINDEXTYPE&to\[TIME\\_PERIOD\]=false](https://dataexplorer.abs.gov.au/vis?tm=seifa%20lga&pg=0&df[ds]=SNAPSHOT_TOPICS&df[id]=ABS_SEIFA2021_LGA&df[ag]=ABS&df[vs]=1.0.0&pd=2021%2C&dq=70620..&ly[c]=SEIFA_MEASURE&ly[rw]=SEIFAINDEXTYPE&to[TIME_PERIOD]=false)

## Investment and Opportunity: Current Funding Allocations

The funding landscape in Atitjere, Engawala and Orrtipa-Thurra is characterised by regional investments with limited transparency or targeting at the individual community level. Most government funding flows through regional initiatives, making it challenging to track direct community impact. From available data, only 5 grants with clear community-specific allocations were identified, totalling \$2.9 million.<sup>115</sup> The majority of funding - approximately \$109.29 million<sup>116</sup> - comes through regional programs that benefit multiple communities simultaneously.

### Regional Funding Allocations

The following sectors received the largest regional and interstate funding allocations:<sup>117</sup>

**Table 26: Regional Investments in the Plenty**

Program category	Amount (\$M)	# Communities Shared Across	% Of Total Regional Funding	Primary initiatives	Grant Term
Indigenous employment and business	\$57.08	17	52.26%	Central Land Council Ranger Program	Jul 2021 - Jun 2028
Indigenous education	\$15.68	6	14.35%	Youth Development & Outside School Hours Care	Jan 2023 - Dec 2026
Aged care infrastructure	\$10.19	8	9.33%	Various infrastructure support programs	2024 - 2026
Indigenous health	\$8.82	9	8.07%	Community Safety Patrol	Jul 2022 - Jun 2025
Child health and wellbeing	\$7.25	25	6.63%	Early intervention family support services	Nov 2021 - Jun 2026
Aged care services	\$7.63	7	6.98%	Commonwealth Home Support Program	Jul 2018 - Jul 2025
Indigenous employment (cultural)	\$1.32	9	1.21%	Cultural mentorship and workforce participation	Jun 2024 - Jun 2025
Community development	\$0.70	9	0.64%	Family support brokerage services	Jun 2024 - Dec 2025
Local government	\$0.63	9	0.58%	Short-term employment through construction	Jul 2023 - Jun 2026

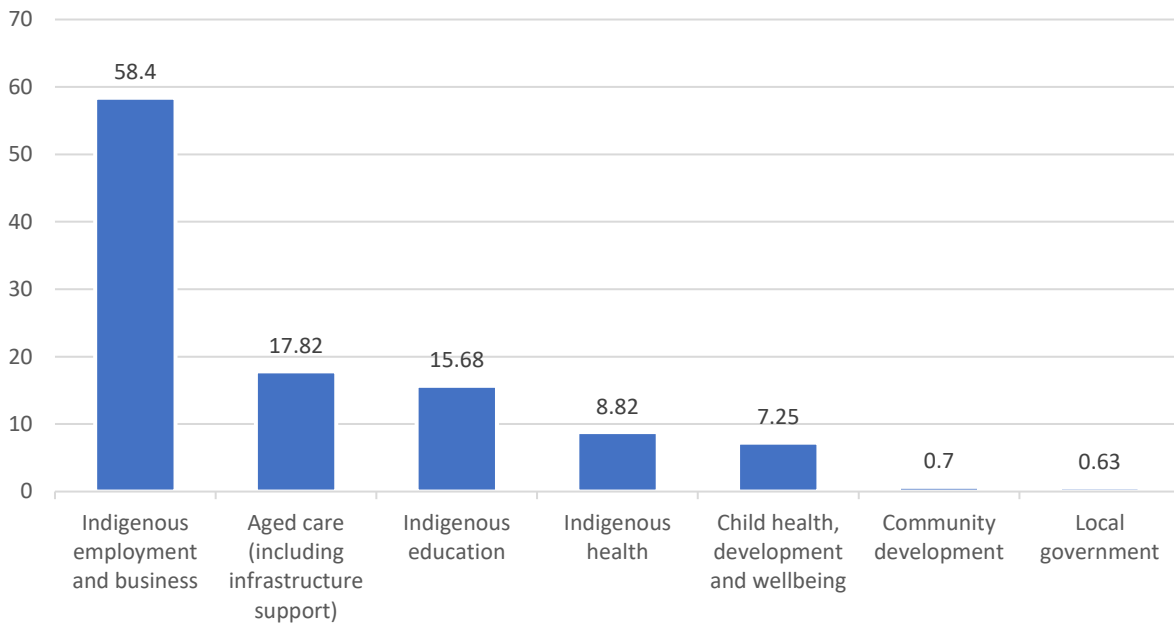
Source: Data compiled from BushTel (n.d.) Community Profiles for Atitjere, Engawala and Orrtipa-Thurra. [www.bushtel.nt.gov.au/profile](http://www.bushtel.nt.gov.au/profile)

<sup>115</sup> Data compiled from BushTel (n.d.). Projects and Grants. Northern Territory Government. <https://bushtel.nt.gov.au/profile/42?tab=projects>; <https://bushtel.nt.gov.au/profile/33?tab=projects>; <https://bushtel.nt.gov.au/profile/26?tab=projects>

<sup>116</sup> Ibid

<sup>117</sup> Ibid

### Regional Funding Allocations (\$M)



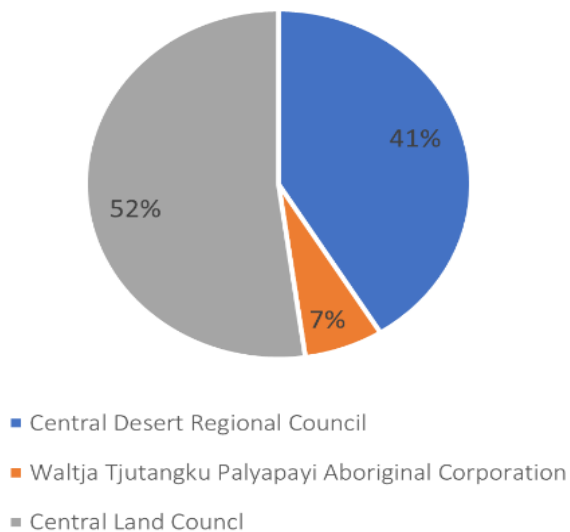
**Figure 13: Regional Investments (\$M)**

Source: Data compiled from BushTel (n.d.) Community Profiles for Atitjere, Engawala and Orrtipa-Thurra. [www.bushtel.nt.gov.au/profile](http://www.bushtel.nt.gov.au/profile)

Approximately \$109.29 million in regional funding allocations benefitting Atitjere, Engawala and Orrtipa-Thurra were awarded to:

1. Central Land Council (\$57.1M)
2. Central Desert Regional Council (\$44.97M)
3. Waltja Tjutangku Palyapayi Aboriginal Corporation (\$7.24M)

### Regional Funding Recipients



**Figure 14: Regional Funding Recipients in the Plenty**

Source: Data compiled from BushTel (n.d.) Community Profiles for Atitjere, Engawala and Orrtipa-Thurra. [www.bushtel.nt.gov.au/profile](http://www.bushtel.nt.gov.au/profile)

## Community-Specific Grants:<sup>118</sup>

The following locally funded initiatives present opportunities for local workforce planning. Key opportunities include the *Stronger Communities for Children* program, with \$1.39 million allocated across Atitjere and Engawala, and the *School Nutrition Project*, which receives \$0.79 million combined for the same communities, highlighting the potential for local employment in areas that support youth and community development. The Engawala Art Centre, funded through \$0.42 million, also presents an opportunity for local creative industry employment and entrepreneurship.

**Table 27: Community Specific Investment**

Program Category	Amount (\$M)	# Communities Shared Across	Primary Initiatives	Grant Term
Indigenous Education	\$1.39	2	Stronger Communities for Children Atitjere and Engawala	12/12/2024 - 31/12/2026
Indigenous Education	\$0.52	1	School Nutrition Project - Atitjere	01/01/2023 - 31/12/2026
Humanities	\$0.42	1	Engawala Art Centre - Indigenous Visual Arts Industry Support	03/08/2023 - 30/11/2025
Indigenous Communities	\$0.39	1	Bonya Community Solar Power Station	22/11/2019 - 31/12/2025
Indigenous Education	\$0.27	1	School Nutrition Project - Engawala	01/01/2023 - 31/12/2026

Source: Data compiled from BushTel (n.d.) *Community Profiles for Atitjere, Engawala and Orrtipa-Thurra*. [www.bushtel.nt.gov.au/profile](http://www.bushtel.nt.gov.au/profile)

These initiatives provide immediate local employment prospects while also informing Vocational Education and Training (VET) planning. By aligning training programs with the skills required by locally funded initiatives, training to employment outcomes can connect more effectively. Targeted VET training in areas such as community services, school-based education support, and visual arts could directly prepare jobseekers for roles within these programs, bridging the gap between training and employment outcomes.

At the regional level, significant funding concentrated in the Central Land Council's Ranger Program, the Central Desert Regional Council's Youth Development and Outside School Hours Care program, and combined aged care services and infrastructure funding presents further opportunities for employment and training alignment. Relevant VET training programs could include Conservation and Land Management; Community Services; and School Based Education and Support.

To fully realise these opportunities, funding bodies should integrate robust Indigenous employment targets and training requirements into grant criteria, particularly for locally delivered projects and services. This approach would maximise the impact of existing funding while ensuring these investments address immediate

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid*

employment needs and contribute to the region's long-term economic sustainability. In a region with limited job prospects, this creates a pathway to sustainable employment opportunities.

## Regional Infrastructure Projects

**Table 28: Regional Infrastructure Projects**

Project	Description & Status	Opportunities for The Plenty
The Plenty Highway Upgrades <sup>119</sup>	The Northern Territory Government has awarded over \$44 million to upgrade and seal a 27km section of the Plenty Highway, including concrete causeways at the Plenty and Marshall Rivers and Bonya Creek crossings, plus upgrades to intersections at Bonya community, Jervois Station Roadhouse, and Lucy Creek mine. Works will commence in July 2024 and are expected to finish by December 2025	This project will improve safety, reduce weather-related closures, and boost access for remote communities, supporting tourism, mining, and freight. It is expected to create 62 jobs, including 15 for Indigenous workers and 14 apprentices, boosting local employment, skills development fostering local employment and economic growth. The upgrades will reduce travel disruptions caused by weather, fostering economic growth and greater connectivity for Central Australian communities.
Better Bores for Communities <sup>120</sup>	\$34.3M to upgrade water supply in 10 communities including Atitjere. The project will deliver water source investigations, bore drilling, and equipping (such as pumps and pipes) to address water availability, quality, and reliability issues. Works will be led by Power and Water Corporation, with construction commencing in early 2025 and completion expected by 2027.	The NT Minister for Water Resources, Joshua Burgoyne, specifically stated: “This project is about more than just water supply. It’s about improving live ability, promoting economic opportunities, and supporting sustainable growth in these communities.” <sup>121</sup>
JORN Phase 6 (Defense Radar Upgrades) <sup>122</sup>	Facility upgrades at the Harts Range radar site as part of the Jindalee Operational Radar Network Mid-Life Upgrade. Construction scheduled from 2024 to 2026.	This project has the potential to create fixed-term jobs in construction as well as create potential contracts and business opportunities for local suppliers and service providers.

<sup>119</sup> Media Net. (2024) Works package announced for the Plenty Highway on The Outback Way. <https://newshub.medianet.com.au/2024/07/works-package-announced-for-the-plenty-highway-on-the-outback-way/58470/>

<sup>120</sup> Department of Lands, Planning and Environment (2025). \$34.3 million for better bores in 10 communities. <https://environment.nt.gov.au/news/2025/better-bores-for-communities>

<sup>121</sup> McCarthy, M. (2025). Over \$34 million for better water security in remote NT communities. Australian Government, Minister for Indigenous Australians. <https://ministers.pmc.gov.au/mccarthy/2025/over-34-million-better-water-security-remote-nt-communities>

<sup>122</sup> Department of Defence (2024). JORN Department of Defence (2024) Mid Life Upgrade. <https://www.defence.gov.au/defence-activities/projects/jorn-mid-life-upgrade>

Harts Range Project <sup>123</sup>	Ongoing rare earths, niobium, uranium exploration. Drilling campaign planned.	The Harts Range Project creates mining-related employment opportunities
Arafura Rare Earths – Nolans Project <sup>124</sup>	The Nolans Project, a major rare earth mine and processing facility, will be located approximately 135 kilometers north of Alice Springs and will have an initial operational life of about 33 to 39 years.	<p>During its operations, it is expected to deliver significant economic and employment opportunities to Central Australia together with secondary economic development through enhanced logistics capacity in Alice Springs.</p> <p>The project is expected to create up to 650 jobs during its 30-month construction phase and a further 350<sup>125</sup> jobs once operational. These opportunities will be extended to the Anmatyerr people with Native Title rights to the land near Aileron, which will be granted through jobs, training and economic development pathways.<sup>126</sup></p>

Source: Data compiled from Media Net (2024), Department of Lands, Planning and Environment (2025), Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet (2025), Department of Defence (2024), New Frontier Minerals Limited. (2024), and Arafura Rare Earths Limited. (2025).

<sup>123</sup> New Frontier Minerals Limited. (2024). Harts Range Project overview. <https://newfrontierminerals.com/projects-overview/harts-range-project>

<sup>124</sup> Arafura Rare Earths Limited. (2025). Arafura presents at the 2025 Prospectors & Developers Association of Canada (PDAC) Convention [Conference presentation]. <https://wcsecure.weblink.com.au/pdf/ARU/02921041.pdf>

<sup>125</sup> National Reconstruction Fund Corporation. (n.d.). Arafura Rare Earths Limited | Nolans Project in the Northern Territory. <https://www.nrf.gov.au/our-investments/arafura-rare-earths-limited-0>

<sup>126</sup> Gameng, M. (2020, July 25). Development of Nolans rare earths project in NT to create 650 jobs. Felix.Net. <https://www.felix.net/project-news/development-of-nolans-rare-earths-project-in-nt-to-create-650-jobs#:~:text=Development%20of%20Nolans%20rare%20earths,to%20proceed%2C%20subject%20to%20finance.>

## 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 three communities, numerous community-driven initiatives have been identified that offer dual benefits: meeting essential community needs while creating meaningful employment pathways for residents.

### Office of the Central Australian Regional Controller (OCARC) Community Meetings

In 2023, community aspirations were highlighted during an OCARC meeting in Atitjere. These initiatives highlight opportunities to create local jobs, address skills shortages, and enhance economic participation while delivering essential infrastructure and services. Key initiatives include:<sup>127</sup>

#### Housing and Community Infrastructure

- Provide municipal services on homelands: Delivering municipal services locally would create jobs for community members and enhance service provision.
- Establish a community-based housing maintenance team: Creating a local team for housing maintenance would provide steady employment opportunities.
- Install fences for Mt Eaglebeak houses: Fencing projects would provide local construction opportunities.
- Repair fences and complete renovations on outstations: These efforts would provide construction and maintenance jobs.
- Address housing overcrowding and provide additional housing: Expanding housing would create significant employment opportunities in construction and housing management.
- Upgrade community facilities, including the football field: Regular maintenance, facility upgrades, and installation of lights, change rooms, and toilet facilities would create jobs in construction and maintenance.
- Obtain a multi-purpose bus for community use: Acquiring a community bus could create driver positions while addressing transportation limitations, including the need for a bus to take students on excursion and camps, improving community mobility.

#### Economic Growth and Enterprise Development

- Establish a roadhouse with a new store: Construction and operation of a roadhouse would provide both short-term construction jobs and long-term roles in business management and retail, with the potential for profits going back to the community.
- Establish an arts centre as a social enterprise or business: Building an arts centre would create jobs in construction and management, as well as opportunities for artists to sell their work, with the potential for profits going back to the community.
- Establish a women's safe house in the community: Constructing a safe house would create jobs in construction and ongoing service provision.
- Enable the community to tender for contracts (roadworks, maintenance, waste management): Supporting local tenders would generate ongoing income for Atitjere as well as employment opportunities for residents.

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<sup>127</sup> OCARC Community Meeting Notes (2023). Unpublished, not for wider circulation.

- Enhance access to jobs within energy and mining projects, particularly at the garnet mine: This would create opportunities for local employment in nearby industries.
- Support in developing an art and bush medicine enterprise: This initiative could foster local entrepreneurship and create additional jobs.

### Education and Training

- Strengthen transition support between school and further education: Employing a support worker or youth worker could help bridge the gap for young people transitioning to higher education or employment.
- Establish an education centre for older youth and adults: This would create teaching and administrative roles, addressing a critical education gap.
- Provide secondary school options within the community: Establishing a secondary school would create jobs in teaching, in-school support, and administration.
- Community council training for community leaders: Providing training would build leadership skills and support local governance.
- Reintroduce resource centre and mechanic training under a CDEP model: Reviving this program would create jobs in training delivery and skilled trades.

### Health and Wellbeing

- Expand training and employment pathways for community dialysis services: This initiative would create jobs while meeting a critical healthcare need.
- Address staff shortages in health services: Recruitment of nurses and support staff would create local employment opportunities.
- Provide training for local health staff: Enhancing skills through targeted training would build local capacity and create roles in healthcare service delivery.
- Implement parenthood programs: Programs aimed at supporting parents could create roles for local facilitators.
- Continue and expand men's health team activities: Expanding these activities would generate roles in health education and service delivery.
- Advance programs on women's health education: This would create employment opportunities in health education and service delivery.
- Recruit an ambulance driver: Employing a local driver would create local employment opportunities while strengthening emergency response capacity in the community.
- Recruit additional sport and recreation officers: Hiring local staff would expand recreational activities and community engagement.
- Deliver the School Nutrition Project: Ongoing funding for the project (\$0.52m for Atitjere and \$0.27m for Engawala until 2026) supports local job creation, improved child health and school engagement.

With eleven current job vacancies across Atitjere, Engawala, and Orrtipa-Thurra, these community-identified initiatives present an opportunity to create meaningful employment pathways while addressing critical local needs. If supported by targeted training and funding, these initiatives have the potential to deliver essential infrastructure upgrades and enhance service provision while creating much needed local employment opportunities.

## School Action Plans: Education-Based Employment Opportunities

The On Country Learning Measure, a \$40 million initiative supported by both Northern Territory and Australian Governments, offers significant workforce planning potential across all three communities. School action plans, developed collaboratively with community members, cultural authorities, school staff, and students, outline several local employment pathways.<sup>128</sup>

### Harts Range School community members prioritised:<sup>129</sup>

- The school has people to help our kids in the classroom
- Community members work in the school

### Alcoota School community members prioritised:<sup>130</sup>

- The school has people to help our kids in the classroom
- There are extra people in the classroom to help our kids with reading, writing and maths
- Our people work in schools
- People can get full time government jobs

Please note, the Bonya School Action Plan has not been published online.



Figure 15: Harts Range School Action Plan

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

<sup>128</sup> Northern Territory Government, Department of Education. (n.d.). On-Country Learning Measure: Central Australian Schools Action Plans. <https://education.nt.gov.au/statistics-research-and-strategies/on-country-learning-measure-central-australian-schools-action-plans>

<sup>129</sup> Education NT (2024) Harts Range School Action Plan. [https://education.nt.gov.au/\\_\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0009/1369494/harts-range-school-action-plan.PDF](https://education.nt.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0009/1369494/harts-range-school-action-plan.PDF)

<sup>130</sup> Education NT (2024) Alcoota School Action Plan. [https://education.nt.gov.au/\\_\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0007/1369483/alcoota-school-action-plan.PDF](https://education.nt.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0007/1369483/alcoota-school-action-plan.PDF)

**E-MAILED**  
20/02/2024  
Culturally Responsive Learning

**ALCOOTA ACTION PLAN**

**Aspirations**

- Strong in their own identity and knowledgeable about Eastern Arrernte and Alyawarr culture.
- Able to meet challenges required for work and participation both within and beyond their own community.
- With the goal to ensure self-determination and community development.

**PRIORITY 1 School attendance**

**PRIORITY 2 Meaningful learning**

**PRIORITY 3 The right people**

**PRIORITY 4 Education is a partnership**

**PRIORITY 5 Wellbeing and inclusion**

NORTHERN TERRITORY EDUCATION ENGAGE GROW ACHIEVE  
CENTRAL AUSTRALIAN SCHOOLS Culturally Responsive Learning

**How are we going to get there?**

**PRIORITY 1 School attendance**

- The school has people to help our kids in the classroom
- The school knows what our kids need to help them to learn

**PRIORITY 2 Meaningful learning**

- The school will introduce a new maths program to help our students improve in numeracy.
- The school will provide a flexible program for secondary students.

**PRIORITY 3 The right people**

- Community members work in school

**PRIORITY 4 Education is partnership**

- Community works with the school to get our kids a good education
- Everyone in community is helping our kids succeed at school
- Parents and students participate in the annual school survey

**PRIORITY 5 Wellbeing and inclusion**

- School staff help us with making sure our kids are happy, healthy and ready for learning
- Teachers and school staff know about how to understand our kids and help them to learn

*Sybil McKay* Principal  
*Andrea Webb* School Body/Lead Committee  
*Andrea Webb* Cultural Authority

**Figure 16: Alcoota School Action Plan**

Source: Northern Territory Government Department of Education (NTE) Learning Measure: Central Australian Schools 2024

## Central Desert Regional Council Community Plans

The Central Desert Regional Council community plans for 2024-25 also identified local priorities that connect directly to workforce planning.

**Table 29: Atitjere Council Community Priorities<sup>131</sup>**

Community Priorities	Actions
Youth workshop and work experience	Consult with residents to develop Youth Sports and Recreation activities that include camping and life skills training
	Cultural activities to be included through school, involving Children’s Ground in the design of activities
Residential Aged Care Centre	Regional facilities could initially provide respite, then develop into full time residential care
	Investigate funding options to develop residential aged care centre
Advocacy for Atitjere based dialysis	Advocate to NT Health or other providers on behalf of residents
Advocacy with Jervois Mine	Advocate Jervois mines and NT Government on behalf of residents
Youth Employment (Job training and skills)	Youth Sport and Recreation to investigate training opportunities for youth in Atitjere
Industry development	Infrastructure, in collaboration with CDP, to explore developing a workshop. CDRC has a Road Maintenance program. The road department will review.
	Develop the region with the mine: Coordinate with the Northern Territory Government and find out various options.
Connection	Radio station: Explore possibilities with CAAMA.
Elderly	Residential Aged Care – (2 days): Aged Care to find out if this is possible. It might not be feasible due to funding and staffing issues.
Infrastructure	Public landscaping playground area
	Streetlight upgrade
	Men’s shed on Country learning
	Water tank and tap at the cemetery
	Public toilet at tourist camp (Blue Sky)
Youth, Sport and Recreation	Push bikes in the community
	Design footy jersey for women’s team

Source: Central Desert Regional Council. (2024). Central Desert Regional Council Atitjere Community Plan 2024-25.

<sup>131</sup> Central Desert Regional Council (2024) Atitjere Community 24/25 Community Plan. <https://centraldesert.nt.gov.au/component/edocman/atitjere-community-plan-2022?Itemid=0>

**Table 30: Engawala Council Community Priorities <sup>132</sup>:**

Community Priorities	Actions
Cultural Programs	More cultural programs in the community
Cultural Centre	Develop strategy and explore opportunities with NT Tourism and establish a cultural centre
	Partner with or engage with potential Not for profit Aboriginal controlled entities or other tourism service providers
Playgrounds, Sports and Rec facilities	Implement service levels for playgrounds and other facilities
Tourism – establish a welcome area along the main access road	Infrastructure to seek funding, such as tourism grants and the Community Benefit Fund
Housing	Advocate to Territory Families, Housing and Communities (TFHC) from discussions with community resident
Health services - operating hours of clinic	Advocate to Territory Health to increase operating hours of clinic
Youth employment	CDP to look for/create opportunities to help youth find jobs
Traffic management – speed humps	Roads to update Traffic Management Plan as per schedule and consider speed humps
Aged care trips and country visit excursions	Aged Care to increase the number of Country excursions as part of scheduled activities
Security / solar lights around the depot yard	Propose to Engawala LA to add this as an LA project

Source: Central Desert Regional Council. (2024). Central Desert Regional Council Engawala Community Plan 2024-25.

The combined aspirations expressed through OCARC Community Meetings, School Action Plans, and the Central Desert Regional Council’s community plans present valuable opportunities for workforce planning. The existing investments allocated to 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.

<sup>132</sup> Central Desert Regional Council (2024) Engawala Community 24/25 Community Plan. <https://centraldesert.nt.gov.au/our-council/documents/council-documents/communities/engawala-community-plan-2022>

# Workforce Planning Opportunities

The analysis of community demographics, education and training, the local employment landscape, economic context and community aspirations for Atitjere, Engawala and Orrtjipa-Thurra reveals numerous strategic opportunities for workforce planning. 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 to better ensure sustainable outcomes.

## 1. Improve access to services

Challenge	Suggested Actions
The cluster is geographically isolated with limited transport options, making access to essential services and employment difficult.	1.1 Advocate for improved frequency and affordability of transport services.
	1.2 Explore mobile/outreach services to supplement health, education, and social services.
	1.3 Prioritise local workforce participation in infrastructure upgrades and new service contracts.

## 2. Invest in digital connectivity and IT resources

Challenge	Suggested Actions
Inconsistent internet access and lack of IT infrastructure restrict opportunities for online learning, remote work, and digital engagement.	2.1 Invest in reliable broadband and Wi-Fi infrastructure.
	2.2 Provide community IT hubs and digital literacy programs.
	2.3 Ensure training and employment programs are accessible both online and offline.

## 3. Support small business activities

Challenge	Suggested Actions
The small population size and few local businesses limit job availability and economic diversification.	3.1 Continue to support Aboriginal-owned enterprise development (e.g., art centres, retail, roadhouses).
	3.2 Facilitate micro-grants and business mentoring for new business and community enterprise
	3.3 Encourage local procurement by regional employers and government agencies.

## 4. Support initiatives to reduce cost of living

Challenge	Suggested Actions
Essential goods and services are costly, while many households rely on income support, creating financial hardship.	4.1 Support local food production and retail initiatives to address food security and reduce costs.
	4.2 Promote local employment in funded projects.

	4.3 Advocate for fair pricing and improved freight for essential goods.
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5. Leverage existing investments to support Aboriginal Employment Programs:

Challenge	Suggested Actions
Funding allocations across the communities are not yet fully translated into local employment opportunities. Existing Programs and funding does not always result in meaningful local jobs or economic benefits.	5.1 <b>Coordinate the</b> collaboration with funding recipients and CDP Providers to support Aboriginal employment programs, setting robust local Aboriginal employment targets across key sectors
	5.2 Establish procurement policy requirements for all government-funded initiatives that prioritise purchasing from local Aboriginal business enterprises.
	5.3 <b>Continue</b> providing training and resources for community members to establish and run small businesses.
	5.4 Invest in community-identified projects like roadhouses, arts centres, housing, and health services.

6. Maximise community skills and engage local trades people

Challenge	Suggested Actions
There is a shortage of skilled tradespeople locally, leading to reliance on external contractors and missed employment opportunities. Large Contractors employ nationally through various online and other platforms that result in low local engagement and employment.	5.1 Develop a community skills register to match residents with job opportunities.
	5.2 Deliver targeted, on-Country training in trades and essential services.
	5.3 Set Aboriginal employment targets for all major contracts.
	5.4 Introduce a "Step-Up" Certification Model.

These opportunities can be implemented through a phased approach with community leadership and governance. By initiating these strategies with community leadership and cross-sector collaboration, the workforce planning challenges identified in Atitjere, Engawala and Orrtipa-Thurra could be addressed, creating meaningful employment pathways that contribute to community well-being and economic development.

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