

**From:** [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Tuesday, 25 February 2025 4:34 PM  
**To:** Food Security Strategy  
**Subject:** Feedback - National Strategy for Food Security in Remote First Nations Communities

Good Morning,

As a public health dietitian working with remote communities in the Northern Territory (NT) and having engaged in discussions with other health professionals in similar contexts, I would like to provide feedback on the National Strategy for Food Security in Remote First Nations Communities.

**Frequency of Strategy Evaluation:** While I concur with the proposed triennial evaluations stated in the discussion paper, I recommend additional annual monitoring. This approach will help inform yearly business plans and financial allocations for teams and organizations operating in remote communities.

**Resources and Governance Mechanisms for Effective Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning:**

- **NT Market Basket Surveys:** De-identifying data can hinder the investigation into the factors contributing to price disparities across different communities/regions. Removing de-identification would facilitate a clearer understanding of these factors, including differences in management or ownership (e.g., privately owned versus store group managed such as ALPA/Outback Stores).
- **Monash University Benchmarking Data:** This data should be utilised as a standard for evaluation.
- **Menzies' Good Food Systems Project Model and Tools:** These should be considered for comprehensive monitoring, evaluation, and learning throughout the strategy's implementation.

**Housing:** The evidence from the Healthabitat "Housing for Health" initiative demonstrates that funding directed towards repairs and maintenance of homes significantly improves health hardware (e.g., functioning showers and kitchens) compared to building new homes. Additionally, the definition of 'safe water' should include palatability. There is merit in exploring financial contributions from residents for housing maintenance if damage is caused by them. Moreover, it is essential to consult with communities to determine the types of housing they prefer, potentially leading to more efficient constructions, such as blocks of one-bedroom units instead of larger houses.

**Stores and Supply Chains:** It is commendable that these are included in the strategy. It is crucial to ensure standalone takeaways are covered under the NT Remote Stores Program (previously the NT Remote Stores Licensing Program) and other jurisdictions. These smaller sites, which are often the only food source outside the main store's operating hours, play a significant role in the community. The research and work of Monash University, Menzies, and the Arnhem Land Progress Aboriginal Corporation (ALPA) in remote stores provide a solid foundation to inform national practices, policies, and standards.

**Health:** The strategy must ensure that the focus on downstream/acute care does not overshadow upstream/preventive/environmental factors targeting the social determinants of health.

**Healthy Economies:** There should be routine education and support for communities in financial planning and budgeting skills. In the context of increasing local employment in stores, this is generally not a gap in Top End NT communities. Instead, it may be more beneficial to provide training for local community members in housing repairs and food agriculture.

**General Observations:** Overall, the strategy is very aspirational. More details are needed regarding the funding and resources required, as well as a breakdown and detail of smaller, more manageable short-term goals. Additionally, clarity on the prioritization of the numerous goals and proposed actions would be beneficial.

From discussions with colleagues working in remote communities, it is noted that family humpbugging and overcrowding significantly contribute to food insecurity. Often, only specific members within the household, such as the elderly, have their food taken. It would be advantageous to explore options that enable these vulnerable family members to safeguard their food supply.

Kindest,

Public Health Nutritionist/Dietitian  
Population & Primary Health Care Outreach Team

NT Health

Floor 2A, Casuarina Plaza, 258 Trower Road, Casuarina  
PO box 40596, Casuarina, NT 0811