Title: 'Walkabout' Tourism: The Indigenous tourism market for Outback Australia

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Abstract: Tourism development for remote Indigenous 'places' is globally expounded for the potential to garner economic benefits for socio-economically disadvantaged Indigenous citizens. In remote 'Outback' areas of Australia, where half the population are First Australians, tourism is an important industry but has been in decline in recent decades. Whilst Indigenous tourism product development has been pursued it has, along with other niche markets, delivered at best limited and isolated successes. But Indigenous people in Outback Australia are themselves highly mobile, making frequent and regular trips away from home communities and towns. In the past these trips were labelled derogatorily as 'walkabout', in spite of trip characteristics positing those 'on the move' firmly within accepted definitions of tourism. Few studies to date have explicitly considered Indigenous citizens as tourists, and there has been no systematic research on the potential size or characteristics of the 'market', an awkward contradiction given the historical focus on generating tourism at places where Indigenous people live. This research analyses Census data for Australia from the perspective of providing baseline information about the potential of the Indigenous tourist market to support Outback tourism, focusing on identifying the size and characteristics of the internal Outback market and the flows and characteristics of people to and from other meta regions. The results clearly demonstrate there is a potential, with the profile of Indigenous visitors to Outback areas being very different to those travelling away. With financial gains being only one of the potential benefits, this should prompt a re-envisioning of the phenomenon of Indigenous mobility as it may relate to tourism and encourage a research agenda examining market development.

Response to Reviewers: Please see attached file detailing our responses to reviewer comments.

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‘Walkabout’ Tourism: The Indigenous tourism market for Outback Australia
1. INTRODUCTION

Indigenous people in Australia number around 600,000, with 120,000 of these living in remote or ‘Outback’ areas (Van Caenegem, Cleary & Drahos, 2014). Outback (or, alternatively, ‘remote’) living Indigenous residents are known to be highly mobile on a short-term basis. Trips between the many small Outback communities (where the large majority of residents are Indigenous), to and from service towns and other larger communities are documented as part of everyday life (Prout and Yap, 2010). Historically, trips were met with derision from officious bodies whose remit was the assimilation and rectitude of First Australians (Taylor, Johns, Steenkamp & Williams, 2011a) and, exhibiting this lack of understanding and empathy, the term ‘walkabout’ was widely adopted to denote the seemingly unexplainable and unplanned itineraries associated with trips ‘away from home’ (Petersen, 2004).

In the contemporary era, governments in nations like Australia and Canada have enacted policies to ‘normalise’ the socio-economic conditions for remote living Indigenous people (Taylor and Carson, 2009). In this context, short-term Indigenous mobility has continued to be presented as a challenge for service provision and consequently for improving outcomes in health, wellbeing, education, housing and employment (Taylor et al., 2011a).

Contemporary literature on Indigenous mobility in remote areas recognises voluntary motivators like visiting friends or relatives, attending sporting or cultural events, and shopping or recreation as important motivators for trips to, from and within the Outback (Prout, 2008; Taylor and Carson, 2009; Carson et al., 2013). Nevertheless, an extensive literature search reveals only two studies have broached Indigenous mobility as constituting tourism; one from a conceptual viewpoint (Peters and Higgins-Desbiolles, 2012) and one examining the issue of Indigenous visitors to the city of Darwin in the Northern Territory of Australia (Carson et al., 2013). The paucity of research on Indigenous people ‘on the move’ from the tourism perspective reflects complex historical, conceptual and sociological factors; as well as an absence of data architectures for specifically measuring Indigenous tourists.

Tourism in Outback areas, meanwhile, has been in long-term decline since at least the 1990s (Schmallegger, Taylor & Carson, 2011). The extent of decline for individual regions appears related to the degree of remoteness, with gloomy observations made about regions specifically marketing themselves as part of the ‘Australian Outback’ (Carson & Taylor, 2009). The development of an Outback Indigenous tourism market (comprising visits to Indigenous cultural sites, activities involving Indigenous people or stays at Indigenous communities) has been prioritised by tourism development and marketing organisations for some decades. But evidence of successes are limited with the problematic supply of Indigenous tourism products, infrastructure and services (Buultjens & Fuller, 2007; Tremblay, 2009 & 2010), together with demand side constraints being documented as limiting widespread gains from tourism for Outback Indigenous communities and residents (Schmallegger & Carson, 2007).

Given the deflated environment for Outback tourism, it is anachronistic that tourism involving Indigenous residents, who make frequent short-term trips within, to and from Outback areas, has almost exclusively been discussed from the perspective of Indigenous people as providers. What has been largely ignored, and is the focus of this study, is the notion of Indigenous people as tourists. The logical extension is that there may be untapped
potential (or at least unrecognised contributions) from such a market. In this study we examine Indigenous mobility from the paradigm of people on the move as tourists to spotlight the market’s characteristics and potential.

2. BACKGROUND

The Australian landmass is the size of continental United States (excluding Alaska) but has a population of just 23 million who are largely concentrated in and around big east coast cities like Sydney (4.6m), Melbourne (4.4m) and Brisbane (2.3m), their hinterlands and in the rapidly growing city of Perth (2m) in the far west of the country. By 2012 some 80% (and growing) of the nation’s population resided in city and peri-urban areas (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2012). Away from the eastern coastal strip, population densities fall dramatically to around 1 person per square kilometre. The Outback, shown in yellow in Figure 1, is that part Australia inland and north of capital cities and the regional (green) areas on the mainland of the continent. It constitutes more than three quarters of the Australian landmass but is home to less than 5% of residents. There are high proportions of Indigenous Australians (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people) resident in Outback Australia, around half overall, represented by 90% of the population in some areas.

Figure 1 – Australia’s remoteness areas and Indigenous communities

Source: Wordpress, 2012

Tourism has long been an important industry for Outback regions, which comprise 12 of the 76 Tourism Regions (see ABS, 2014) defined for the purpose of official tourism data collections (notably National Visitor Survey and International Visitor Survey conducted by Tourism Research Australia). For the Outback overall, visits and economic attributions have progressively declined in recent decades (Carson & Taylor, 2009). While variations in the indicators of decline for individual Outback regions have occurred, the key markets of backpackers, organised coach tours and self-drive markets have stagnated throughout (Schmallegger et al., 2011). In tandem with circa 20% declines in total (international and domestic combined) visitor numbers between 1999 and 2009 (Schmallegger & Carson,
2010), record numbers of Australians have travelled overseas each year for at least the last ten years. With domestic visitors accounting for two-thirds of Outback itineraries this has been a critical issue.

Flailing Outback tourism has prompted national, state and territory organisations responsible for its tourism development, as well as organisations with a specific Outback remit (regional and local tourism organisations and regional development networks) to proffer alternative markets. Activities like heritage (Carson, Prideaux, Coghlan and Taylor 2009), four wheel drive (Taylor & Prideaux, 2008), wildlife (Carson & Schmallegger, 2009), fossicking and farm or station tourism (Taylor & Carson, 2007) identified. However, stark assessments on levels of success towards diversification exist. Schmallegger and Carson’s (2010) study, for example, points to institutional and developmental ‘lock in’, a tendency for tourism organisations to focus on mass tourism based on short visits to landscape icons. Consequently, post-Global Financial Crisis improvements for national tourism indicators have not been observed for individual Outback regions (Taylor and Carson, 2010).

Another market pursued with intent as a means of redressing declines in the Outback has been Indigenous tourism (Whitford & Ruhanen, 2009); referring to non-Indigenous visits to Indigenous communities, to sites of cultural significance, and to engagement with Indigenous people through tours or viewing or purchasing arts or crafts. Despite the hyperbole around the potential for Indigenous Outback communities to garner positive economic outcomes from participating as hosts, a range of complex and interrelated issues are recorded on the supply of tourism products and experiences in the Outback (Buultjens & Fuller, 2007; Tremblay, 2009 & 2010). Similarly, there are demand side constraints with Indigenous experiences receiving low priority on visitor itineraries (Schmallegger & Carson, 2007; Taylor & Carson, 2010). With visitor numbers, expenditure, nights and activities in Outback areas at historical low points, and with repeat visits uncommon, such difficulties have proven indomitable with the consequence of only isolated pockets of long-term successes in the establishment and sustainment of Outback Indigenous tourism businesses (Buultjens & Fuller, 2007; Carson & Taylor, 2009).

3. INDIGENOUS MOBILITY AND TOURISM

In recent times, knowledge about the causes and consequences of Indigenous mobility in Outback areas has improved from studies in anthropology, migration and from research used as the basis for determining the demand and supply for services like housing, health and education. It has been widely recognised that understanding trip motivations is important from the perspective of these topics (Morphy, 2007a; Taylor et al., 2011a). Habibis (2011), for example, argued there is a need to distinguish between voluntary and involuntary trip motivations, recognising that voluntary trips may involve travel for holiday and recreation purposes or visits to friends and relatives. While such voluntary trips are commonly linked to discussions of tourist markets in non-Indigenous contexts, they have not been recognised as tourist trips in the context of Indigenous mobility. Instead, Indigenous travel patterns have broadly been described as falling within one of three categories: ‘sacred’ travel (people travelling to fulfil obligations to kin, culture and traditional land), service-related travel (people travelling to access health and social services), or travel perceived as socially motivated but causing social problems (people travelling to access non-sacred entertainment, including access to alcohol and gambling) (Carson, Carson & Taylor, 2013). The latter two
are usually described in relation to the ‘urban drift’ of people travelling from remote communities to urban centres.

Despite improved knowledge and understanding about Outback trips, these continue to be labelled in negative ways where travellers are Indigenous. In the Northern Territory, for example, the word ‘transient’ or ‘itinerant’ is commonly used with negative and stereotypical labelling permeating public discourse. Indigenous visitors are singled out for anti-social behaviour including crimes, defacing public spaces and alcohol abuse (Carson et al., 2013). Meanwhile, academic pursuits for the cause of deepening understanding about trips and visitors have tended to over-attribute the ‘force’ of culturally derived motivations as catalysts for trips (Taylor et al., 2011a). These viewpoints posit culture as defining the structure of trips, determining trip parties and demarking destinations (for example, Morphy, 2007b). A post-colonial academic fixation with culture and trips has come at the expense of conceiving and articulating alternative paradigms associated with more mainstream touristic motivations and attributes (Peters & Higgins-Desbiolles, 2012; Carson et al., 2013).

Substantial gaps in understanding about the numbers, characteristics, sources and destinations of people on the move also reflects the limitations of official data collections (Taylor et al., 2011b). The Census in Australia, for example, captures a snapshot of migration (both residential and short-term) at one and five years prior, but this is not overtly designed to provide insights on tourist markets and their potential. Data sets from Indigenous housing and service providers in urban centres have started to provide improved information on the volume and sources of Indigenous travellers but do not identify voluntary (or touristic) trips, and are limited to capturing ‘problematic’ travellers requiring particular (health or social) services. On the other hand, comprehensive tourism-specific data sets (such as the National Visitor Survey conducted by Tourism Research Australia, or the Northern Territory Travel Monitor, previously conducted by the Northern Territory Tourism Commission) do not request Indigenous status or target Indigenous residents in their sample frames because they are not considered as a sector within Australia’s domestic tourist market.

Indeed, in our extensive literature search, we could identify only two articles that openly recognise and discuss mobile Indigenous Outback residents as tourists per se. The first is Peters and Higgins-Desbiolles’ (2012) paper in which they argue for short-term trips by Indigenous people in the Outback to be recognised as tourism. They denoted, for example, that intermarriage between people from different clans, and therefore places of residence, developed a domestic diaspora, stimulating travel for the purpose of visiting friends and relatives. They conclude the reason for no consideration of Indigenous people as tourists has been:

“…the absence in the tourism literature of the notion of Indigenous people as tourists reflects the hegemonic gaze of non-Indigenous persons and determines and thereby limits our understanding of the important phenomenon of Indigenous tourism.” (pg.7)

More recently, Carson and colleagues (2013) segmented Indigenous visitors from Outback communities to the city of Darwin in the Northern Territory of Australia (also called ‘longgrassers’ because many camp in the tall grass around the city) into long-term residents (those in town for more than six months with no intention to return to Outback communities), tourists (those in town for less than three months with an intention to return to Outback communities) and those in transition between the two groups but with no firm indication as to which category they might end up in. They contested that around a third of visitors could be
classified into the tourist segment, with trip motivations ranging from recreation, health related purposes, escapism, shopping, access to services, to visiting friends and relatives. They proposed that, to residents at least, such visitors were ‘problem tourists’ who “...are incompatible with the accepted dominant status of tourism and emerge from social distance between tourists and hosts, or between different groups of tourists.” (Carson et al., 2013, pg.1). Importantly, they reasoned that considering visitors as tourists might help identify ways to manage friction between visitors and residents as well as develop targeted service responses.

Both studies began the important and nascent conceptual work in addressing the absence of (or perhaps reluctance to produce) literature on Indigenous people from Outback areas as tourists. But neither overtly examined the potential at macro-regional levels, nor did they examine the market potential for destination regions, like the Outback itself, by studying key characteristics like age, gender, family and socio-economic profiles. On that basis, the current study is the first to provide baseline data and information on Indigenous people on the move in Australia as tourists and as a potential tourist market for Outback regions.

4. METHODS

This study provides two broad sets of analyses and results. First, given the high mobility of Indigenous residents of Outback areas, their significant over-representation in the Outback population compared to elsewhere, and the limited attention paid to Indigenous mobility in the literature, we examine the characteristics of those on the move who are Indigenous Outback residents. This is akin to assessing the ‘home grown’ market potential. We outline the relationships between being a resident of the Outback on the move with demographic, socio-economic and other characteristics. We compare and contrast these to Indigenous people on the move who are residents of other meta-regions; specifically Capital Cities and Hinterlands, as well as to non-Indigenous people on the move. Secondly, we examine the flows of people who are on the move (by source and destination) between Outback, Capital City and Hinterland regions as a proxy for assessing tourist market development opportunities for receiving destinations, with a focus on the Outback. This component of the research is akin to examining the potential inbound and outbound markets.

We use data from the national Census of Population and Housing conducted by the Australian Bureau of Statistics each five years. The Census is designed to collect demographic and socio-economic data from all people in Australia on a specific night (in early August) and is the only comprehensive national data set providing information on Indigenous non-residential (i.e. short-term) mobility. Census data can be analysed to differentiate between the place at which a person was enumerated on Census night and their place of usual residence. Downstream coding processes enable users of the data to construct custom matrices to identify those on trips (away from home) and their characteristics. Flows data is constructed by comparing the place of enumeration with the place of usual residence.

We developed three custom geographic regions from smaller statistical areas (called Statistical Area Level 3’s – AS’s) – the Outback, Hinterlands and Capital Cities (Figure 2). These enable the Outback to be analysed as one region and facilitate comparisons across geographic levels. Unfortunately, users can only extract information on flows for those aged fifteen years or older because these data are stored in the ‘Place of Work’ database. This, and a number of other reasons including the tendency for many people to not state or partially
state where they live and where they were on Census night, means the data on flows can be seen as indicative only, with its value laying in comparing sub-sets (for example between the regions) rather than absolute numbers. In the analysis of internal Outback trips we utilised Statistical Area Level 2’s (SA2’s – smaller statistical areas than SA3’s) to distinguish likely distances from ‘home’.

**Figure 2 – Meta regions used as the basis for this study**

Gaps in the data infrastructure mean this study does not incorporate a detailed market segmentation based on psychographic, behavioural and other trip-related characteristics, but does provide a starting platform on which future research activities can be based. There are a range of limitations in using Census data for these purposes. Not least, the Census is a snapshot held on one night in early August, which in the north of Australia is the ‘dry’ season, allowing relative ease of movement since river and creek crossings on roads are traversable. The implications of this are twofold. First, the characteristics of people on the move and their trips might be quite different at different times of the year and secondly, the raw numbers are a point in time snapshot with the annualised figures likely to be many times higher. Another limitation relates to Census methods and reporting. Indigenous status is self-identified in the Census, with significant numbers leaving the question as ‘not stated’, meaning that some Indigenous travellers cannot be identified as such. The overall effect is that estimates of the numbers of Indigenous people on the move in this research are very much conservative, such that the size of the ‘market’ is likely to be much larger than has been suggested here. In addition, the Census cannot report on trip characteristics like purpose, lengths of stay and travel parties.

5. RESULTS

5.1 Outback Indigenous residents on the move

5.1.1 Market size and composition

In 2011, 2.6% (605,000) of Australians resided in Outback areas. Indigenous Australians comprised around 2.7% of the national population in that year but in Outback areas were 24% (130,000) (Table 1). In Outback areas a greater proportion of both Indigenous (10%) and
non-Indigenous (20%) residents were away from home in comparison to the rest of Australia (7% and 4% respectively). The high figure for non-Indigenous people reflects non-resident Outback employment in the mining (fly-in-fly-out) and construction sectors, with some 30% of non-Indigenous people who were away from home in the Outback at the time of the Census working in these.

Table 1 - Summary 2011 population indicators for people ‘on the move’

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Summary indicators</th>
<th>Indigenous</th>
<th>Non-Indigenous</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Proportion of the national population</td>
<td>2.7%</td>
<td>97.3%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proportion of the Outback population</td>
<td>21.5%</td>
<td>78.5%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proportion of national population living in Outback areas</td>
<td>23.7%</td>
<td>2.4%</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proportion of residents away from home - Australia</td>
<td>6.9%</td>
<td>4.4%</td>
<td>4.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proportion of residents away from home - Outback areas</td>
<td>8.1%</td>
<td>20.0%</td>
<td>17.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indigenous status of people away from home - Australia</td>
<td>4.1%</td>
<td>95.9%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indigenous status of people away from home - Outback areas</td>
<td>9.9%</td>
<td>90.1%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Authors calculations from custom Census tables.

Nationally approximately 28% (10,500) of all Indigenous Australians on the move were located in Outback areas, 42% (16,300) in Hinterlands and 30% (11,000) in Capital Cities. Despite this, there was no correlation at the individual Outback region level between the proportion of the population who were Indigenous and the proportion on the move. Figure 3 demonstrates that the ‘gap’ between proportion Indigenous and proportion on the move is very large for some regions in the Outback. Indeed, three of the top five regions for Indigenous composition (the Far North of Queensland, East Arnhem and Daly-Tiwi-West Arnhem regions in the Northern Territory) had below average proportions of Indigenous people away from home on Census night.

Figure 3 - Indigenous population and per cent away from home, Outback residents 2011
5.1.2 Age and gender profiles for Indigenous people on the move

Of those Indigenous Outback residents on the move, people aged 10-19 years and 20-29 years comprised more than 40% of Indigenous people away from home on Census night (23% and 19% respectively). But the age profile for people on the move differed markedly by gender with males skewed towards younger age groups and the female distribution very consistent across all age groups at around 15%. Indeed, the direction of age and gender specific correlations between age and the probability of being away are opposite. For males, being away from home was negatively correlated to age ($r^2 = -0.78$) while for females the correlation was positive ($r^2 = 0.73$).

Standardising by age and gender revealed additional perspectives, with females on the move over-represented (compared to the proportion in the population) at ages 20-29 years and in the older age groups (Figure 4). Males aged 10-19 were substantially over-represented (or highly ‘on the move’). Meanwhile the very young were substantially under-represented indicating a small share of people less than 9 years of age were away from home on Census night.

**Figure 4 – Comparison of proportion in the population and the proportion away from home, Outback Indigenous residents away from home, 2011**

Source: Prepared by authors from custom Census tables.
5.1.3 Other socio economic indicators of Outback Indigenous residents on the move

Of the Outback Indigenous residents attending an educational institution at the time of the Census, 9% were away from home. Profiling by type of institution (Figure 5) shows people attending post-school institutions (Tertiary and Further Education (TAFE), University and Other institutions) were far more likely to be on the move. A third of university attendees, for example, were away from home, although this should be tempered by the observation that only 2% (around 500) of Outback Indigenous residents aged 10-19 years were attending such institutions compared to 5% of non-Indigenous Outback residents. This finding is not unexpected since there is no permanent tertiary level infrastructure at remote Indigenous communities.

Figure 5 – Type of educational institution attending, Outback Indigenous residents away from home, 2011

Source: Prepared by authors from custom Census tables.
Considering the partner status of Outback Indigenous residents, the results show residents who were never married as most likely to be away from home. Divorced and separated people were also over-represented, however married people were less likely to be on the move. In terms of labour force status, employed people comprised 32% of the labour force, but were less likely to be away from home on Census night at 8.3% (Figure 6).

**Figure 6 - Labour force status and being away from home, Outback Indigenous residents away from home, 2011**

![Labour force status distribution](image)

Source: Prepared by authors from custom Census tables. Note: Labour force status distribution refers to the distribution of those away from home amongst the labour force status categories.

The income distributions for Indigenous Outback residents suggest those on the move were distributed across higher personal income levels in comparison to those who were at home on Census night (Figure 7). This may reflect the age and gender profile of people on the move, featuring a relatively high proportion of women aged 50 years or more (see Figure 4).
5.2 Geographic flows and profiles of Indigenous visitors to and from the Outback

Flows data are only available for people aged 15 years and over (see section 4. Methods). Consequently, data reported in this section represents a sub-component of the overall population, at 65% of the Outback Indigenous population and 62% of the national Indigenous population.

On Census night there were around 2,100 visitors to the Outback from Hinterland (1,122) and Capital City regions (990), equivalent to 1% of the resident Indigenous population of both non-outback regions. At the same time, 2,667 Outback Indigenous residents were away from their SA2 (the lowest level of analysis possible with Census data) of usual residence; equivalent to 3% of the Outback Indigenous resident population. Using a proxy rate of Indigenous people away from home and on a trip within the same SA2 in Outback areas (recorded in summary format for remote WA, QLD and NT at 1% of the population) would suggest another 860 Outback Indigenous residents could be estimated to be on trips (within the same SA2) in the Outback, bringing the total number on Outback trips to 5,627, or 4.3% of the resident Outback Indigenous population.

As well as flows into the Outback from Capital Cities and Hinterlands, outbound flows are chronicled in the Census with 989 Outback Indigenous residents on trips to Hinterland areas and 1,350 to Capital Cities in 2011; combined equivalent to 2.7% of the Outback resident Indigenous population. Collectively, the intra, inbound and outbound flows data indicate that the equivalent of 6.4% of the Indigenous resident population (fifteen years of age and over) were ‘on the move’ on Census night.

The age profile for residents of Capital Cities or Hinterlands who were visiting the Outback was substantially older than for the resident Outback population, and particularly for those from Hinterlands (Figure 8). On the other hand, around a quarter of outbound trips (from the Outback) to Capital Cities or Hinterlands were by those aged 15-19 years (Figure 9). The education profiles of outbound travellers demonstrate many trips are connected to educational institution attendance. Around half, for example, were attending a secondary school or post-
school institution at Census time, more than double the proportion for this age group in the resident Outback Indigenous population (21%). Very few people on a trip into the Outback (13% for both those from Capital Cities and those from Hinterlands) were attending an educational institution, but for those who were, a far greater proportion than for Outback residents (41% compared to 16%) were attending a post-secondary institution.

**Figure 8 - Age profile for Outback residents and visitors to the Outback, 2011**

![Age profile for Outback residents and visitors to the Outback, 2011](image)

Source: Prepared by authors from custom Census tables.

**Figure 9 – Age profile for Outback residents and those on trips from the Outback, 2011**

![Age profile for Outback residents and those on trips from the Outback, 2011](image)

Source: Prepared by authors from custom Census tables.

Personal income profiles for visitors to the Outback were skewed markedly towards the higher end when compared to Outback residents, especially for visitors from Capital Cities (Figure 10). Indicative of this, 58% of visitors to the Outback had weekly incomes above the median for the Australian population as a whole ($577 in 2011). More than two thirds of visitors from Capital cities were above the national median compared to just 49% of the Australian population overall. Labour force data echoes this, as a far greater proportion of
visitors to the Outback were employed (59%) compared to Outback residents (36%) and those visiting Capital Cities and Hinterlands from the Outback (56%).

**Figure 10 – Personal income profiles, Outback residents and visitors to the Outback, 2011**

![Graph showing personal income profiles for Outback residents and visitors from Capital Cities and Hinterlands, 2011.](source)

Source: Prepared by authors from custom Census tables.

### 6. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This research has begun the work of providing baseline data from the perspective of mobile Indigenous people in the Outback as ‘tourists’. Results revealed a number of important features about the size and potential of the market. Our analysis focused on two broad groups: Indigenous residents counted away from home at the time of the Census, for whom we could obtain detailed socio-demographic data but not detailed information on the places they were visiting; and secondly Indigenous people aged 15 years and over who were visiting the Outback as residents of Capital Cities or Hinterlands and those visiting Capital Cities or Hinterlands as residents of the Outback. The former delivers information about the internal market for Outback Indigenous tourism while the latter delivers some perspectives on inbound and outbound markets.

On a national basis, 4.1% of all people away on trips on Census night were Indigenous Australians, much higher than their representation in the population (2.7%). In Outback areas numbers were significant with the combined number of Indigenous people on Outback trips at the time of the Census equivalent to 4% of the resident Outback Indigenous population. The absence of a relationship between the proportion of Indigenous residents and proportions on the move was an unanticipated result since literature on Indigenous mobility suggests travel for certain activities occurs in groups (Taylor and Carson, 2009). For example, travel for
Indigenous cultural activities might be presumed a more common driver in areas with higher Indigenous representation in the resident population. Cultural activities are largely group based, with regions where a high proportion of the population are Indigenous shown in various data sets (for example, the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey and the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Survey undertaken by the Australian Bureau of Statistics) to correlate with high rates of cultural participation. On that basis we would anticipate regions in northern parts of the country (where Indigenous representation in the population is highest) to have a higher proportion of people on the move, but this is not the case. There are a range of possible explanations, including issues with the application and interpretation of the Census questions around ‘place of usual residence’ (Morphy, 2007a); but it may also be the case that contemporary mobility patterns are changing to become less group focused, and this is a topic which would benefit greatly from further research.

Our flows data also uncovered positive aspects in relation to market potential, with the annualised figure of Indigenous visitors to the Outback (from both within other Outback areas outside of the Outback) likely to be many times higher than the 2,500 recorded in the Census. This is because Census data is a point-in-time snapshot, is not adjusted for people undercounted in the Census, nor for high rates of non-response to questions on Indigenous status, incomes and other key variables. Of equal note, compositional differences between the inbound market and resident population of the Outback are marked. Visitors to the Outback were older, better educated, more likely to be employed and had considerably higher incomes, even by national population standards. This contravenes the widespread perception of homogenously low incomes amongst Australia’s Indigenous population.

Meanwhile, flows in the reverse direction, by Outback residents to other regions were led by students travelling to access educational facilities. This facet of Indigenous mobility has largely escaped notice in the public discussion of trips into towns and cities from the Outback. Instead, the negative intentions and actions of such individuals are highlighted; a further awkward contradiction given the intensive policy and public focus on the role of education in ‘closing gaps’ between Indigenous and other Australians. As a group, visitors from the Outback to Capital Cities and Hinterlands were younger, had lower incomes and were less well educated. On balance, therefore, the composition of flows between the meta-regions used in this study is clearly of net benefit to Outback areas.

With relatively large numbers of Outback residents travelling within the Outback (about the same number as visiting from the other individual regions) at the time of the Census, this indicates likely service needs (transport, accommodation, F&B and entertainment, for example) for providing opportunities for tourism industry development. Furthermore, while Census data does not capture the trip characteristics of length, expenditure and purpose, other studies in Outback areas have identified commonalities in these. Trips to and around Outback areas are said to be frequent, regular, and high in repeat visitation (Prout, 2008). Invariably trips involve combinations of trip purposes (Carson et al., 2013; Habibis, 2011; Prout & Yap, 2010) with length of trip consistently denoted as high, and in many cases up to several weeks or months of duration (Morphy, 2007b; Habibis, 2011; Carson et al., 2013). Visiting Friends and Relatives is likely to be an important motivator in encouraging longer and repeat trips, particularly in areas where there have been marriages between clans from different communities (often hundreds of kilometres apart). These trip characteristics are in contrast to Outback trips by non-Indigenous people, which (in some areas at least) are dominated by low rates of repeat visits and very limited destination loyalty. From this perspective, the
Indigenous tourist market may be less volatile than conventional Outback tourist markets (such as backpackers, coach tourists or grey nomad travellers), and therefore provide opportunities to build an industry less prone to external market shocks.

The high level results reported here do not provide detailed information the complexities of individual trip motivations, patterns and consequences from Indigenous tourism as we have defined it. They highlight the necessity for more research to differentiate motivations amongst cohorts (for example by gender or by regions) in order to contemporise the literature on Indigenous mobility to reflect changing patterns and motivations. This is a difficult task given there are no data collection activities currently in place to facilitate such knowledge. A more fine-grained geographical study might also reveal hotspots for travel and for particular segments of the market, for whom targeted infrastructure and products might be appropriate. A further role for research is to help identify where Indigenous tourism might best help address declines in other markets, to the extent that the two might be spatially aligned from a developmental viewpoint.

From a theoretical perspective, the absence of studies on the Indigenous tourist market to date indicates a popularised tendency to view Indigenous people away from home through anthropological lenses. These explicitly seek to understand the role of culture in generating and shaping trips. In light of this study, broader conceptual and epistemological narratives are warranted. It is difficult to argue, for example, that those travelling to large capital cities might be primarily seeking to fulfil cultural obligations. Examining the issue from a tourism market perspective is one alternative approach, although understanding Indigenous travel patterns from a tourism perspective does require acceptance of the concept. Such acceptance might encourage more primary data collection activities, which has added emphasis given the conservative nature of estimates in this study about the size of the market.

Congruent with the potential identified in this study is the need for further investigations into how such potential might be developed. Given the small size of Outback communities one or two sustainable jobs from Indigenous tourism might make a large difference. Gains do not necessarily have to be financial transactions secured from travellers since providing services like an accommodation hub, in places where flows are concentrated, could attract infrastructure and grants, as well as assist in addressing homelessness or itinerancy issues. Currently there is no focus on ‘industry development’ or product development in relation to the market as defined in this study. Clearly, as all tourists do, Indigenous people on the move consume accommodation, food and beverages, transport and other items on their trips. But approaches to managing the issue of Indigenous people on the move from and within Outback areas are, by and large, premised on regulation and penalisation (see Carson et al., 2013) without due diligence to market concepts. Given that tourism offers much more than financial gains (with social exchange, education, cultural transfer and technology diffusion all associated spin-offs from burgeoning global tourism), a major part of the ‘gains’ to be had for Outback and other destinations in receipt of Indigenous people on the move is in re-envisioning the phenomenon from one of problems to one of potential, thereby focusing on making all tourists feel welcome.
References


**Detailed Response to Reviewers**

**Detailed notes on addressing reviewer’s comments: Walkabout’ Tourism: The Indigenous tourism market for Outback Australia**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reviewer comments</th>
<th>Author’s responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1. Introduction</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The bracketed text about 'longrasses' in paragraph two should be deleted as this is repeated later in the paper.</td>
<td>The bracketed text is now deleted.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The introduction needs a concluding sentence stating the aims of the paper - the final paragraph of section 2 seems like it belongs at the end of the introduction and would suffice.</td>
<td>As suggested, the final paragraph of section two has been moved to the introduction to state the aims of the paper.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2. Background</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The final sentence of paragraph 1 (beginning &quot;The Outback, shown in yellow…&quot;) should be moved up to follow the sentence that ends &quot;…per square kilometre&quot;.</td>
<td>The sentence has been moved.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The phrase &quot;…but with up to 90%&quot; should be replaced with 'represented by'</td>
<td>The phrase has been replaced.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In paragraph 2 the 'diverse set of circumstances' needs to be explained.</td>
<td>We have re-written this paragraph to provide better clarity and more information on the context; including details about the number of official (for national data collection purposes) tourism regions which comprise the Outback in Australia.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Also, in the same paragraph when referring to visitor numbers some clarification of whether the numbers reported are international and domestic is required.</td>
<td>We have clarified that this is domestic and international visitors combined.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In paragraph 3 the name Taylor needs to be added to the Carson, Prideaux and Coghlan (2009) reference.</td>
<td>The name has been added</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In the same paragraph, &quot;developmental 'lock-in'&quot; needs to be explained.</td>
<td>We have clarified this as “a tendency for tourism organisations to focus on mass tourism based on short visits to landscape icons.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3. Indigenous mobility and tourism</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paragraph 2, sentence 3 the word ‘Indigenous’ should be inserted before visitors at the beginning of the sentence.</td>
<td>The word has been inserted.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remove the sentence beginning &quot;The tendency has been…&quot; - it is superfluous.</td>
<td>The sentence has been removed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paragraph 3 - is the first Taylor et al reference 2011a or 2011b? (there is no reference to the 2011b listing in the reference list in the paper)</td>
<td>This reference is 2011b and has been corrected accordingly.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paragraph 4, sentence 2 (beginning &quot;Peters and…&quot;) makes no sense to me.</td>
<td>As suggested we have re-written this section to add clarity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>4. Methods</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paragraph 1, sentence 2 add the word limited before &quot;attention paid to…&quot;</td>
<td>The word has been added.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paragraph</td>
<td>Correction</td>
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<tr>
<td>Paragraph 3, sentence 1 refers to Outback shown in Figure 2 map whereas map key has 'Remote' (as noted in my opening comments)</td>
<td>We have rectified this mismatch.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>As you rightly point out in the final sentence in this section, there is some doubt associated with the value of Census data with respect to extrapolating results to potential tourism patterns - I think you need to take care not to take your own conclusions further than they can be supported.</td>
<td>We have modified the paper in several places to take into account this suggestion, which we see as important in terms of ensuring the paper is robust. For example, in the methods we have removed the inference that, since the literature has generally identified common purposes for Outback trips, we can extrapolate the same for trips recorded from the data used as the basis of this study.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In Table 1 I do not follow what the differences are between the data shown in rows 4 and 6, and again in rows 5 and 7? These need to be either relabelled or more clearly explained in the text.</td>
<td>We have amended the labelling as suggested to indicate that rows 5 and 7 refer to the Indigenous status of those away from home, whereas rows 4 and 5 refer to the proportion of residents away from home.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In the paragraph below the table there is an extra bracket after '16,300'</td>
<td>The bracket has been removed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 3 does not really work for me as the central data (away from home) is too small to understand properly. This might be improved by redrawing as a line graph with dual vertical axes (i.e., with 'indigenous percent' on one side and 'away from home' on the other with different scales.</td>
<td>We would like to propose that, with some modification to the text, the insights this figure provides means it is worth keeping in its current format. Accordingly, we have modified the text referring to the diagram to denote that it highlights the gap in some regions between percent away and percent resident. Also, and in line with the reviewer’s comment below questioning why we anticipated finding higher proportions of people away in areas where Indigenous representation is higher, we have explained why we anticipated this and what the causes might be.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 4 needs a more descriptive caption/title.</td>
<td>We have amended the caption as suggested.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I cannot follow the final sentence of the first paragraph section 5.1.3</td>
<td>We have amended this sentence as follows: “This finding is not unexpected there is no permanent tertiary level infrastructure at remote Indigenous communities.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 5 might also be improved by changing to a dual vertical axis graph - also the horizontal axis needs to be altered so all the category names can be seen.</td>
<td>On reflection we have removed the second series from this chart as it distracted from the main finding that a large proportion of those on trips AND attending an educational institution were away at university. On our version of the chart all of the category names are shown clearly, however we will double check these when we upload the file.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I cannot follow what you mean by the sentence beginning &quot;results for partnering status…”</td>
<td>The sentence has been rephrased based on the reviewer’s comment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In the paragraph preceding Figure 6 I think the commentary would be strengthened by simply stating the obvious - i.e., that those working were more likely to be at home on census night.</td>
<td>We have amended as suggested in order to improve clarity.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| The graph in Figure 6 does not adequately display the data - it needs to be changed to an alternative format. | WE were unsure whether the reviewer’s comments were made in relation to actually being able to see the data (i.e. a technical issue) or understand it’s meaning. We suspected the latter and so have
removed the second series in the chart to add clarity on the results.

In the paragraph below Figure 6, I do not see the relevance of the data on income as it is currently presented. It might be better to comment on why there are differences and what the reason for them might be. Also, it would be better to add the % in the labour force for the first 3 groups in the graph and comment on the % of those people who earn less than a particular amount and then just compare median indigenous incomes with median non-indigenous.

We have removed the (admittedly!) confusing text on median incomes and re-written this paragraph to add clarity.

Figure 7 needs a horizontal axis legend that explains what income is reported (i.e., is it household? personal? the same as in Figure 10?)

We have added a legend ‘Annual personal income (SAUD)” to both figure 7 and Figure 10.

In paragraph 2, section 5.2 is the SA2 region you refer to still within the Outback?

Yes – and we have added this clarification to the text.

Figure 10 needs the income categories explained and an (n=?) after each of the legend entries.

We have added these suggestions to the chart.

6. Discussion and conclusion

In Paragraph 2, the first 2 sentences appear to contradict each other?

We have amended this paragraph to clarify our interpretations.

I am not convinced that ’outback residents on trips were underrepresented” is a valid conclusion from the data you have presented.

We have removed reference to over or under representation and modified the relevant paragraph as this is likely, as the reviewer has pointed out, to confuse readers.

Paragraph 2, sentence 3 I do not understand why you expected a relationship between the indigenous population proportion and the proportion on the move?

We have refined the text to explain why we had expected this result – essentially the common trip motivators described in the literature would lead us to anticipate a relationship. We have also added text on why a lack of relationship might exist.

Paragraph 3 should have the word ‘Indigenous’ inserted at the beginning of the sentence starting ’Visitors to the Outback…” and the sentence amended to better explain that you mean indigenous visitors to other outback regions - if this is what you do mean?

Yes, we do mean indigenous visitors. ‘Indigenous’ has been inserted and the sentence amended to explain that we mean visitors from both within and outside of Outback areas.

Paragraph 5 needs some commentary on the potential importance of VFR as a travel motivator.

We have added some text to outline the likely importance of VFR.

The opening sentence of Paragraph 6 should be changed to read ”However, the high level results reported here do not provide detailed and complex…"

The sentence has been changed accordingly.

References

The reference Schmallegger (2011) does not appear in the paper?

The reference has been removed as it was not used in the text.

As noted earlier, I am not sure if the Taylor et al (2011b) papers was referenced in text but the ’b’ just left out?

The text was referenced and the in-text reference has been corrected.

There are some inconsistencies in the text between your use of ’and’ and ’&’ in references.

This has been rectified to the use of ‘&’ in all cases.