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1992 and 2011

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A profile of sales audits of a remote Aboriginal community’s general store: 1992 and 2011

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The spending patterns on food and drink in three remote Northern Territory Aboriginal communities, as recently described by Brimblecombe et al. in the MJA,1 remind us of an audit in a different remote community in 1992, whose results were included in a manuscript we published in ANZJPH in 1997.2 Of the total expenditure at the store, takeaway and club, 29.1% was on beer, 22.1% on cigarettes, 44.7% on food and other beverages and 4.1% on non-food items.2 Proportional spending within the “food” items was high for sugary drinks and low for quality protein items and fresh fruit and vegetables. The health implications of these data stirred the interest of the NT Legislation’s Public Accounts Committee.3 We compared this information with data for the 2011 financial year recorded directly for new initiatives in remote communities probably lie with local enterprises. A new landowner-family store was opened in March 2013, in this same community, which optimises use of existing subsidies and local enterprise, and tries to enhance availability of healthy foods at reasonable prices. Its patronage and food spending patterns will be of interest. Here, and more broadly in Indigenous Australia, collaborative programs with corporations like Coca-Cola Amatil could enhance healthy eating patterns, minimise expenditure on items damaging to health and contain environmental pollution.

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Figure 1: Comparison of sales from audits of a remote Aboriginal community’s store: 1992 and 2011.