



Ngaanyatjarru
Pitjantjatjara
Yankunytjatjara
Women's Council

Office of Gender Equity and Diversity
Department of People, Sport and Culture
PO Box 37037
Winnellie, Larrakia Country, NT, 0820
By email: dpsc.oged@nt.gov.au

The Ngaanyatjarru Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara Women's Council (NPYWC) writes a submission in response to the **Northern Territory's Development of a Gender Equality Strategy**

Who are we?

Ngaanyatjarru Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara Women's Council (NPYWC) is a member-led, Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation (ACCO), governed and directed by Ngaanyatjarru Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara (NPY) women from 26 remote desert communities across the cross-border regions of Western Australia (WA), South Australia (SA), and the Northern Territory (NT)—an area covering over 350,000 square kilometres and a population of approximately 6,000 Anangu. Guided by women's law, authority, and culture, NPYWC delivers a wide range of health, social, and cultural services, and social enterprise opportunities, that promote safety, wellbeing, and empowerment for Anangu women, children, and families in the NPY Lands. **Annexed and labelled "A"** is a map of the region.

Embedded in NPYWC's history is the gathering and strategic organisation of NPY women who wanted to be seen and heard during the Pitjantjatjara Land Rights movement. **Annexed and labelled "B"** is a painting by Mantatjara Wilson (deceased) that tells the story of the time Anangu women came together to form their own Women's Council. NPYWC's theory of change and service provision is deeply rooted in local strengths-based, trauma-informed and healing practices that champion Anangu as being best placed to articulate and determine their own needs. Self-determination is the catalyst for transforming communities with the intention of every person fulfilling their right to full emotional, social, physical and spiritual wellbeing.

NPYWC's Domestic and Family Violence Service (DFVS) is informed by the [Strengthening Community Capacity to End Violence \(SCCTEV\) framework](#) (2018) which was developed in collaboration with the Australian Childhood Foundation. This document reflects the way that NPYWC engages with communities in acts of reflection, dialogue and resistance to family, domestic and sexual violence (DFSV), its effects and its causes. NPYWC's response to the **Northern Territory Government's Development of a Gender Equality Strategy** (the 'Strategy') draws from this work. Our submission addresses Focus Area 3: Safety. Importantly, Safety directly intersects with the other focus areas: community engagement, health and wellbeing, economic security, and leadership and participation.

Our Submission

Evidence-based approach – Drivers of Domestic Violence

The NT Government's recent Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Reduction Strategy 2025 – 2028 cites Our Watch's substantial evidence that gender inequality and rigid gender stereotypes are consistently key drivers of DFSV. NPYWC welcomes a strategy that targets this key driver of DFSV. However, NPYWC notes Our Watch equally cites the continued impacts of colonisation as a key driver of DFSV for Aboriginal and Torres Strait

Islander women. For the safety of Aboriginal women and children who experience the highest rates of DFSV in Australia, NPYWC urges the Gender Equality Strategy to support programs and services that mutually address both drivers. Doing so is necessary for alignment with the forthcoming Our Ways - Strong Ways - Our Voices National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Family Safety Plan and to the NT Government's commitments under the National Agreement on Closing the Gap (CTG) (primarily Target 13).

Embedding Aboriginal Governance & ACCO-Led Responses

The DFVS SCCTEV framework states:

"Strategies to end violence will not work if they are imposed in the community. The most effective strategies are those which can amplify, extend and resource acts of resistance to violence that are already being enacted by individuals in the community" (p. 23).

A key mechanism in which the Strategy can meaningfully and structurally centre safety and adopt an evidenced based approach is to prioritise ACCO-led program delivery. This would also align with the NT Government's commitment to the CTG Priority Reform areas and genuine partnership obligations listed below. These reforms are intended to enfranchise ACCOs and their cultural authority and expertise in meeting the needs of the communities they service:

1. **Priority Reform 1- Formal partnerships and shared decision-making:**

- o Communities have long told governments that culturally safe and community-led services are essential to their healing and safety. A strong Strategy is one that includes a genuine commitment to building and strengthening structures that empower Anangu with shared decision-making authority alongside governments to accelerate policy and place-based progress against CTG.

2. **Priority Reform Two – Building the community-controlled sector:**

- o Organisations like NPYWC are best placed to respond to DFSV affecting Anangu. We need strong, long-term, new investment to help build the community-controlled sector which will continue to guarantee trauma-informed and strengths-based service delivery.

3. **Priority Reform 3 - Transforming government organisations:**

- o The NT government must detail their internal responsiveness and accountability mechanisms dedicated to improving outcomes for communities. This includes meaningfully investing in workforce capability to recognise and respond to the needs of the community in culturally appropriate ways. This would include funding for cultural guidance and training, recognition of local authority structures as well as the ongoing resourcing of translation and interpreting. **Annexed and labelled "C"** highlights the importance of resourcing language as it depicts the high percentage of Western Desert language speakers in the NPY Lands.

For any program to be effective, "it must be grounded in the resources that emanate from cultural ways of living and relating" (SCCTEV framework, p. 15). Existing NPYWC initiatives are examples of community-led, evidence-based programs that directly address both key drivers of DFSV - gender inequality and colonisation. Anangu-led projects that engage in prevention, recovery and healing include NPYWC's DFVS Malparara-Malparara Project which works with women who have lived and living experience of DFSV, the Uti Kulintjaku Project works alongside women to increase mental health literacy in language while the Uti Kulintjaku Watiku (Men's) Project works with men to support mental health and encourage healthy interpersonal relationships. Further, the NPYWC's Youth program and Kulintja Palyaringkunytjaku (KP) Project Officers support young people to understand and respond appropriately to topics such as healthy relationships, substance use, mental health, social media, and other associated harms. Information on these projects are **Annexed and labelled "D"**. Importantly, all these projects align with

our strategic priorities of centring Anangu voices, culture, governance and agency; contributing to evidence-based practice and building on strong relationships with stakeholders.

Very remote regions and cross-border implications

The Strategy must consider the unique context of remote and very remote regions such as the NPY Lands. Framing solutions by Western-defined state and territory boundaries negatively impacts Anangu living well on Country. Our clients and community members travel between jurisdictions and women frequently travel to other communities and use physical space and specific relationships to increase their safety. Utilising cross-jurisdictional collaboration in the Strategy is critical. Consideration of how programs delivering services in this region can be further supported, expanded and funded should be central to decision making processes.

Cross-Border Coordination: Collaboration between networks like the Family Safety Meeting (SA), Family Safety Framework (NT), and Multi-Agency Case Management (WA) is vital to prevent women from falling through jurisdictional gaps. Differences in risk assessments, infrastructure in communities (such as remote safe houses and remote houses), discrepancies in resource allocation as well as funding inequality for services across the tri-state region all impact how women experience these gaps. Strengthened cross-border collaboration is also needed for a unified police response. This includes a need for regular interjurisdictional police meetings, increased training on the Cross-Border Justice Scheme, and funding for initiatives such as the previously defunded Cross Border Intelligence Desk which identified and monitored high risk cross-border DFSV offenders and victims and undertook requests for information from external service providers and police from different jurisdictions.

Whilst a unified police response can offer the possibility of enhanced safety in a tri-state context, NPYWC's DFVS currently only supports survivors of violence as identified disclosures of incidents of domestic violence to the Cross Borders Indigenous Family Violence Program can jeopardise the safety of women. Referrals to this program sit better with police or other services who are engaged with the offender. Although NPYWC have met with the Men's Behaviour Change program within this cross-border initiative in previous years, it has primarily been to ensure there is clarity and understanding regarding what services are offered, and what resources can be shared with survivors of violence where appropriate. Furthermore, within NPYWC, there is a movement towards internal programs via current programs that focus on the social and emotional wellbeing of men, which de-centre violence and similarly adopt Malparara-Malparara frameworks. It is also important to note that NPYWC's DFVS does not refer men to internal men's programs within the organisation for the same reasons as above, rather, Anangu men in the program lead decision making around participation.

Basic unmet needs impacting safety in the NPY Lands

DFSV has compounding structural factors that, left unaddressed, undermine any progress towards reducing and eradicating DFSV in our communities. Anangu families' capacity to curb DFSV and adult incarceration rates linked to DFSV for example, is severely impeded by the experience of entrenched disadvantage. A genuine commitment must be made from the NT Government to address systemic, structural violence such as poverty and homelessness. Efforts in prevention, intervention, and healing are restricted when basic needs remain unmet. Our service has observed how poverty can act as an exacerbating factor to violence and NPYWC often sees women engaging more frequently with our DFVS when they are experiencing food insecurity. **Annexed and labelled "E"** graphs the total personal weekly income on the NPY Lands and **annexed and labelled "F"** depicts comparative grocery process between the APY Lands and Alice Springs to highlight the specific remote and very remote discrepancy in the cost of living.

The importance of recognising the many, unique intersections with violence in our context will support transformation for women and communities experience DFSV. DFSV does not happen in a vacuum, which the Strategy must identify by highlighting intersections with disability, elder abuse, housing and homelessness. We urge the NT Government to shine a spotlight on these issues and prioritise meeting basic needs and human rights in the context of criminal justice, health justice, social and cultural justice to adequately address safety in the NT. For integrated and coordinated systems to be accountable, effective and have a positive impact, we need multi-disciplinary, intersectional approaches to initiatives that are underpinned by evidence-based practice.

Monitoring & evaluation

There is a broad deficit in the NT Government's ability to collect and monitor DFSV data which contributes to a lack of safety for Anangu and deeply impacts the outdated, unreliable and inconsistent CTG data across jurisdictions. The Strategy needs a commitment to monitoring and evaluation (M&E), and this work needs to be co-designed with ACCOs to privilege Indigenous Methodologies, Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property (ICIP) and Indigenous Data Sovereignty (IDS) Principles. M&E is critical to strengthening and expanding safe pathways for women and helps organisations like NPYWC support women who may avoid participating in data collection if there are risks associated with intersecting with child protection, misidentification or further incarceration for people using violence.

Conclusion

For NPYWC, particularly in a remote and very remote context, we need a comprehensive and evidence-based approach to addressing gender inequality as experienced by Anangu - one that prioritises prevention and healing, recognises and addresses intergenerational-trauma and is rooted in the priorities and self-determination of Anangu. By acknowledging colonisation as a key driver of DFSV, privileging ACCO-led responses and governance and committing to co-designed monitoring and evaluation practices, the Strategy will be in a stronger position to genuinely keep Anangu women and their families safe.

This concludes NPYWC's submission in response to the **Northern Territory's Development of a Gender Equality Strategy**. Thank you for providing NPYWC the opportunity to make comment and please do not hesitate to contact us if there are any further questions about what we have raised in this submission.

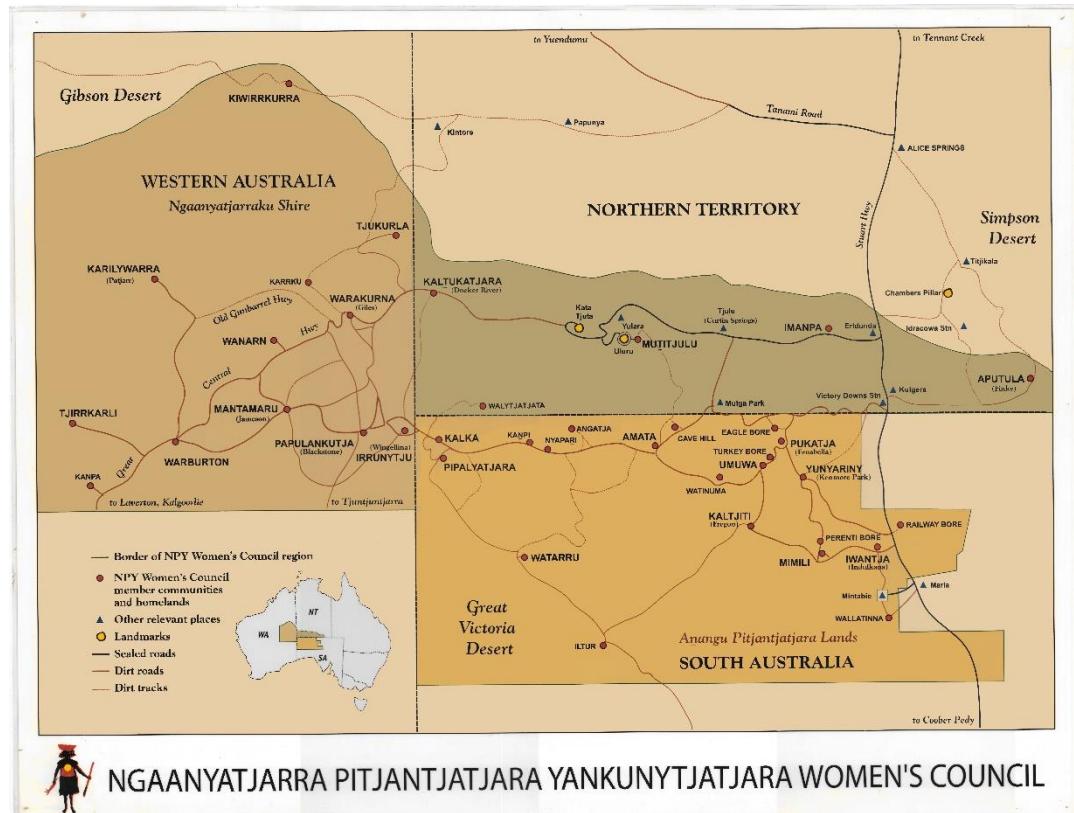
Kind Regards,



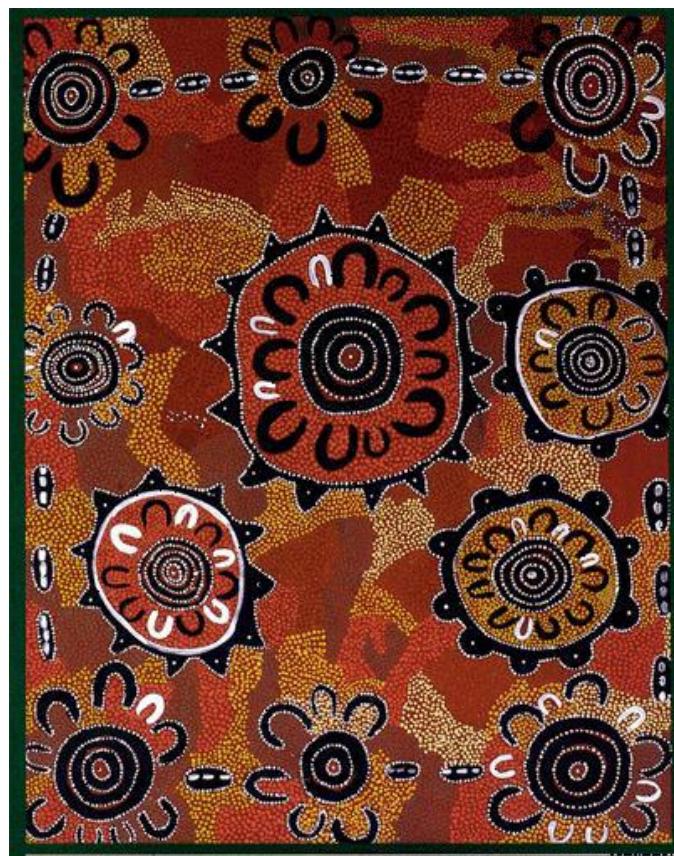
Andrea Mason
Chief Executive Officer
7th January 2026

[NPYWC Annual Report 2023-24](#)
[NPYWC Strategic Plan 2024-2029](#)

Annexure A:



Annexure B:



"This painting tells the story of how the NPY Women's Council was started in 1980. I made a cassette tape and sent it around to all the communities for women to listen to. The black line going around the painting with the white marks is the cassette travelling around to all the women in communities."

All the women listened to that cassette about the idea of starting up a Women's Council. They sat down and talked together. Then we all came together at Kanpi to have our first meeting together. That is the big circle in the middle with all us women sitting around. This was the first time we came together, all us Pitjantjatjara, Ngaanyatjara, Yankunytjatjara women." - Mantatjara Wilson (deceased)

Annexure C:

Western Desert Languages NPY Lands

2,172 (or 5 out of 10 people) speak **Pitjantjatjara**



990 (or 2 out of 10 people) speak **Ngaanyatjarru**



383 (or 1 out of 10 people) speak **Yankunytjatjara**



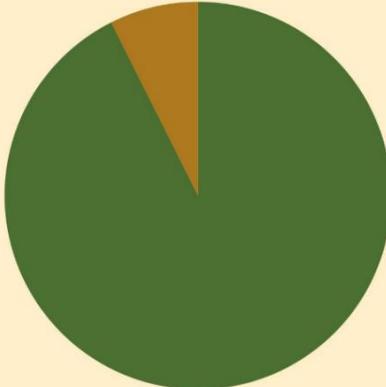
Additionally:

- 149 (or 3.4 per cent) speak **Pintupi**
- 45 (or 10 per cent) speak **Luritja**
- 12 (or 0.3 per cent) speak **Wangkatha**.

Source: ABS Census of Population and Housing (2021)

93 per cent of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people living on **NPY Lands** speak an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander language at home. Other than North East Arnhem Land, this is the greatest proportion of all Empowered Communities.

● Speaks a First Nations language at home
● Does not speak a First Nations language at home



Annexure D:

Malparara-Malparara Project

This group began in 2020 and is a multigenerational, Anangu women-led initiative with women who have lived experience of DFSV. Project activity is focussed on the interrelated domains of learning work, healing work, action work, practical work and supportive work. The group is supported by project staff, an interpreter and an evaluator. Central to the Project's activities are the multi-day workshops where the members come together in a safe, supported place to share stories, learn from each other and DFVS staff, engage in healing and teach the DFVS staff about Anangu ways to work safely. The women see the Project as embodying Anangu voice and an Anangu way of working, drawing on Anangu culture and knowledge and exemplifying the Malparara way of working: that is, Anangu and non-Aboriginal staff working side by side and drawing on each other's knowledge. A significant development in the Project is the shift and increase in workshops and camps on Country led by the Anangu team members that engage women experiencing violence in their communities.

The below quotes from members of Malparara-Malparara are demonstrative of way the group operates and how Anangu knowledge is centred:

"I think if I wasn't going for [Malparara-Malparara] training, I'd be scared to share it because there's a bigger story when it comes to domestic violence. But I came for this training all the time [and] I feel a lot more comfortable sharing it with teenagers and doing the workshops [on Country]. I feel excited to share what I learned in the workshops... I get that nervous feeling out and put the brave feeling into it" (Malparara-Malparara team member, 2023).

"Malparara-Malparara, it's like all the Anangu from lands we come together... and... it's our tjukurpa [story/Law], ...how we see, how we feel, how we can do it, it's all about us Anangu women supporting [others]... it's helpful Anangu way... we have our university too in our Anangu way, in a safe way we can [teach the caseworkers] ... We work together whitefella way and Anangu way ... [to]... be safe for everyone, be safe, happy, and enjoy [when] they go out bush" (Malparara-Malparara team member, 2023).

Uti Kulintjaku

The Uti Kulintjaku group, which means "to think and understand clearly" is led by senior Aboriginal women. Its aims are to strengthen the shared understanding of mental health, increase help-seeking behaviours, improve health services' cultural competency, and promote Aboriginal leadership. The group has developed several resources to support mental health in the community, including flashcards that depict feelings in both Pitjantjatjara and English, a 'words for feelings map' illustrated poster to help people express their emotions, a meditative colouring book featuring artwork by senior Anangu women and Ngangkari, and a collaboration with Smiling Mind to offer meditation resources in Pitjantjatjara and Ngaanyatjarra. This group is important in addressing the ongoing impacts of colonisation through intergenerational and collective trauma.

Uti Kulintjaku Watiku Project

The Uti Kulintjaku Watiku Project is an Anangu led, strengths-based initiative that brings together a team of 15 respected senior and younger Anangu men to learn from each other and identify ways to strengthen Anangu identity, increase Anangu wellbeing and promote healing to prevent family violence. The project's activities include workshops for the group members, small camps and bush trips, and large intergenerational camps. The Watiku team has developed several culturally specific, language-based resources including the award-winning book, Tjanimaku Tjukurpa. A key outcome of the Project over the last three years is the Watiku team's articulation of an Anangu approach to family violence primary prevention.

This approach is grounded in Anangu knowledge – the Tjukurpa (Creation story/Law) and guided by Anangu ways of teaching and learning. It leads with the strength of Anangu culture and the knowledge that men need to be strong and nurturing within their families. This approach is about supporting young men to develop a sense of identity and their place in the world. As a Senior Uti Kulintjaku Watiku team member stated:

"Just as I've learned from my grandfather, [the Uti Kulintjaku Watiku Project] enables me to educate my grandsons in a really good way... young men are listening and understanding and really taking on board the things that they need to survive well into the future, to live."

Kulintja Palyaringkunytjaku (KP) Project Officers

Within the NPYWC Youth Service sits the Kulintja Palyaringkunytjaku (KP) Project which supports NPYWC youth workers, young people aged 10 – 25 years and community members in the NPY region to understand and respond appropriately to topics such as healthy relationships, substance use, mental health, social media, and other associated harms. These sessions take place in facilitated camps and education workshops.

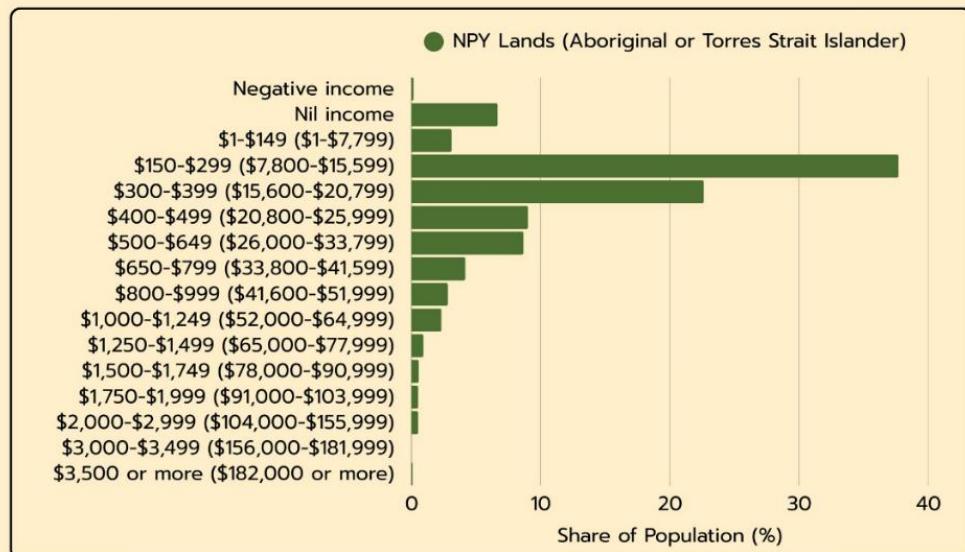
A significant event hosted for the past two years was the Kungkas (women) AFL 9's competition. Over 120 young women from 17 remote communities travelled to Yulara where they played football and engaged in KP activities. It is the biggest and only AFL competition for remote Aboriginal women. This event is significant, young women were playing football in a context where they have not seen their mothers or older sisters play football. Communities actively supported young women to participate and congratulated them on their return home. In the remote community of Kiwirrkurra, community members

had dragged mattresses outside their home to celebrate and welcome home the young women home after they arrived in the dark after the multi-day journey to return home. The impact an event like this has on individuals and communities cannot be underestimated. Initiatives like this are key in addressing underlying drivers of DFSV.

Annexure E:

Total Personal Weekly Income NPY Lands

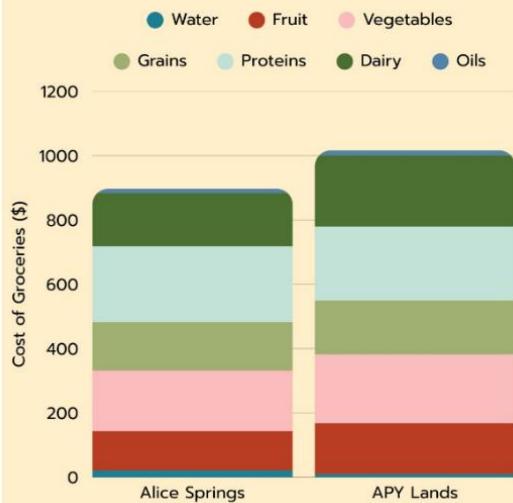
In 2021, 70 per cent of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people living on **NPY Lands** earnt less than \$400 per week. Around 60 per cent earnt between \$150 and \$399 per week, an amount consistent with the basic rate of JobSeeker in 2021 (\$310 per week for a single). Only 5 per cent earnt more than \$1,000 per week.



Grocery Prices APY Lands and Alice Springs

Groceries	Alice Springs	APY Lands
Water	\$21.71	\$10.30
Fruit	\$122.07	\$157.52
Vegetables	\$188.13	\$214.09
Grains	\$150.45	\$168.02
Proteins	\$235.86	\$230.15
Dairy	\$165.88	\$221.04
Oils	\$13.02	\$15.33
Total	\$897.12	\$1,016.45

A family of four needs to spend \$1,016 a fortnight on **APY Lands** to buy groceries consistent with a recommended diet. This is 13 per cent more than it costs in **Alice Springs** (\$897).



Source: Lewis M, Herron L, Bryce S, Wells L, Balmer L, Rainow S, Lee AJ (2022). School of Public Health, The University of Queensland.