

## *The Demography of the Territory's 'Midtowns': Tennant Creek (Issue No. 201305)*

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### **KEY FINDINGS**

- Tennant Creek town grew relatively slowly from 2001 to 2011 (around 15%), although at a faster rate than the surrounding Barkly region (5%).
- By 2011, Tennant Creek was made up largely of young to middle aged Indigenous residents and working to older aged non-Indigenous residents.
- In 2011 52% of the town's residents were Indigenous, slightly up on 2006 (49%), having gained on a net basis older Indigenous residents (males in their 40s and females over 55 years) but lost people aged 10-19 years.
- Non-Indigenous residents tend to migrate to and from the town to interstate, while Indigenous residents migrate in from the surrounding region and out to Darwin and interstate.
- The overseas born residents reached 10% of the population by 2011 with a number born in the Philippines arriving.
- The percentage of dwellings being purchased or owned outright (35%) in Tennant Creek was lower than for the NT and Australia (46% and 67%) in 2011 but higher than the Barkly region (24%). Greater proportions in town were renting (57%) with low median rents recorded in town (\$120/ week) and in the Barkly Region (\$60/ week).
- Prominent industries in town in 2011 were Public Administration and Safety (24%), Health Care and Social Assistance (14%), Education and Training (12%), Wholesale/ Retail trade (9%), and Construction (8%).
- Substantial improvements in educational attainment and post-school qualifications were reported from 2006 to 2011 for both the town and in the surrounding region.

### **RESEARCH AIM**

*This research brief is part of a series on the changing demography of the Northern Territory's 'Midtowns' – Tennant Creek, Katherine, Jabiru and Nhulunbuy.*

*This brief is on the major characteristics and changing nature of the resident population of Tennant Creek from 2006 to 2011 based on Census data and population estimates. We compare and contrast the changing resident population of the town of Tennant Creek and the surrounding Barkly region to other jurisdictions.*

*The research was conducted by **Pawinee Yuhun and Andrew Taylor** and was partially funded by the Northern Territory Treasury Demographic Research Grant.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

This research brief is part of a series on the changing demography of the Northern Territory's 'Midtowns' – Tennant Creek, Katherine, Jabiru and Nhulunbuy. Demographic change in small settlements in remote areas can be rapid and substantial, shifting the demand and need for services or infrastructure. This research brief aims to capture the major characteristics and changing nature of the resident population of Tennant Creek from 2006 to 2011 using Census data and population estimates. This research is funded by a Demographic research grant from the Northern Territory Treasury, however all information and opinions presented in this series are those of the authors.

### 1.1. Tennant Creek Overview

Tennant Creek was declared in 1934, and is located on the Stuart Highway 507 km north of Alice Springs and 669 km south of Katherine. The surrounding region, Barkly, is well known for its cattle industry. Many of Australia's premier cattle stations are situated in this region. Mining is another large contributor to the economy with gold discovered in the area during the 1930's, resulting in Australia's last gold rush. Other mining operations are still active today.

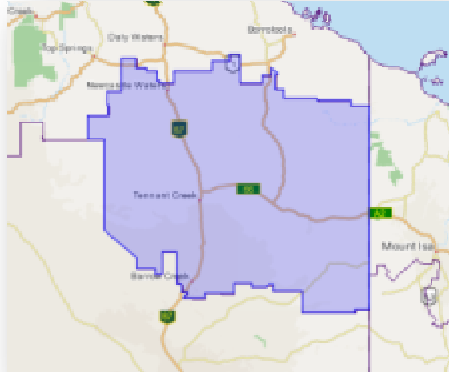
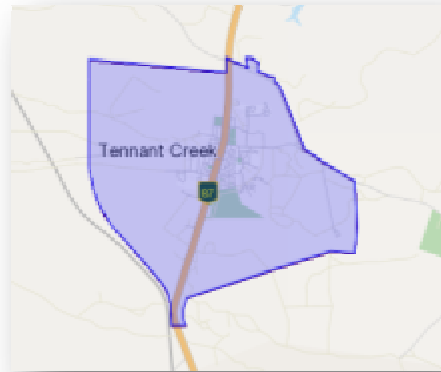
The traditional owners of the area surrounding Tennant Creek are the Warumungu people. Their stories can be seen at Nyinkka Nyunyu, one of Australia's Aboriginal Art & Culture centres situated in Tennant Creek. The two main Aboriginal languages spoken are Warumungu and Walpiri. The other main languages in the region are Walmanpa, Alyawarra, Kaytete, Wambaya and Jingili (Barkly Tourism, 2012; Barkly Shire Council, 2013).

### 1.2. Data Sources and Geography

This research brief discusses recent population change for Tennant Creek town and the surrounding region (Barkly). The data for Tennant Creek and the surrounding region are compared in parts to the rest of the NT. The data used for this research brief were based on the ABS Census' 2006 & 2011 Place of Usual Residence database. Other data are sourced from the ABS collection *3218.0 - Regional Population Growth, Australia, 2011*.

This brief will mainly focus on the geographical levels SA3 and SA2 (Statistical Area levels 3 and 2) but will also make comparisons with other geographical levels such as LGA (Local Government Area) (see Figures 1 and 2). The research brief will refer to Tennant Creek town (SA2) as 'Tennant Creek', and the remainder (Barkly SA2) as 'remainder of region'. The region itself (Barkly SA3) will be referred to as 'Barkly region'.

It should also be noted that The Australian Statistical Geography Standard (ASGS) was implemented in 2011 therefore data for SA3 and SA2 for Tennant Creek were not available in 2006. For the purpose of this research brief, 2006 data was attained for geographical levels SLA (Statistical Local Area) and SSD (Statistical Subdivision). The differences in geographical boundaries are minimal and do not affect the overall outcome of this research brief. Below are the maps of Barkly Region (SA3) and Tennant Creek Town (SA2).

**Barkly Region (SA3)**

**Tennant Creek Town (SA2)**

**1.3. Population Snapshot**
**Table 1: Tennant Creek and Barkly region snapshot, 2011**

2011		
Barkly Region (SA3)	Tennant Creek (SA2)	Remainder (Barkly SA2)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pop: 5,722</li> <li>• Median age: 28</li> <li>• 64% Indigenous</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pop: 3,061</li> <li>• Median age: 32</li> <li>• 52% Indigenous</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pop: 2,661</li> <li>• Median age: 25</li> <li>• 79% Indigenous</li> </ul>

**Table 2: Tennant Creek and Barkly region snapshot, 2006**

2006					
Barkly Region (SSD)*	Tennant Creek (SLA)**	Remainder (SLAs)***			
		Tennant Creek - Bal	Tableland	Elliott District (CGC)	Alpururulam (CGC)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pop: 5,390</li> <li>• Median age: 28</li> <li>• 60% Indigenous</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pop: 2,920</li> <li>• Median age: 31</li> <li>• 49% Indigenous</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pop: 1,208</li> <li>• Median age: 23</li> <li>• 84% Indigenous</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pop: 494</li> <li>• Median age: 27</li> <li>• 28% Indigenous</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pop: 415</li> <li>• Median age: 21</li> <li>• 84% Indigenous</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pop: 353</li> <li>• Median age: 26</li> <li>• 95% Indigenous</li> </ul>

\* Barkly SSD is equivalent to Barkly SA3.

\*\* Tennant Creek SLA is equivalent to Tennant Creek SA2.

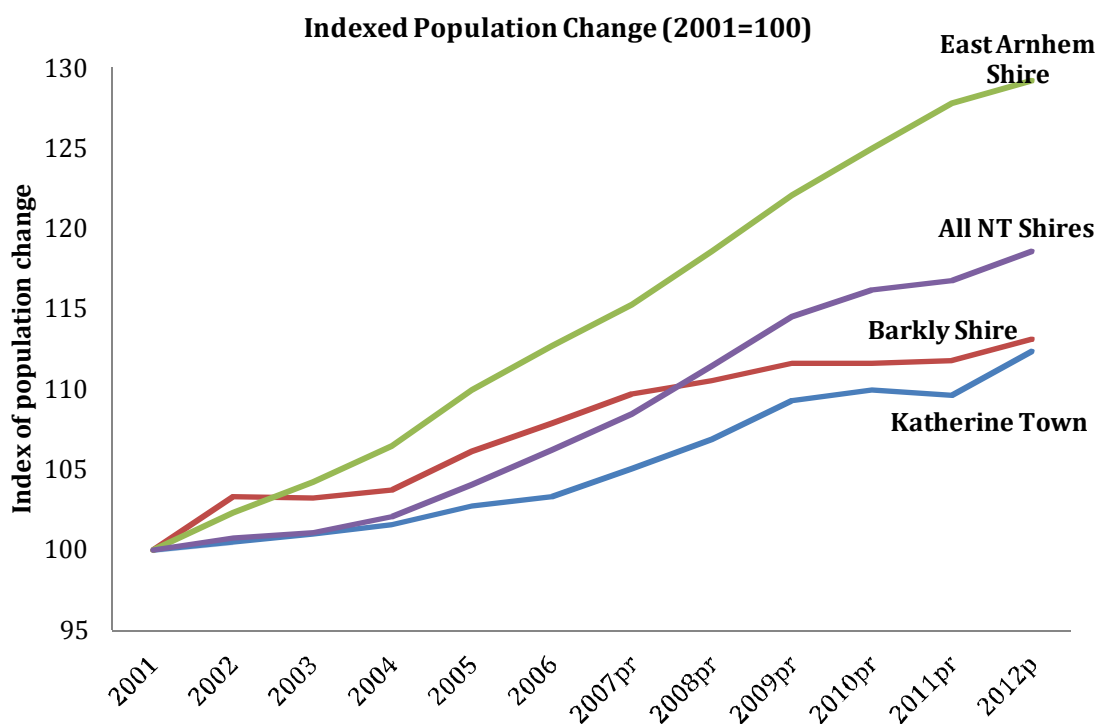
\*\*\* Barkly SA2 data were not available in 2006 and Tennant Creek region was made up of SLAs.

## 2. POPULATION CHANGE

### 2.1 Indexed Population Change

To compensate for Census counting issues, the ABS generates population estimates by adjusting Census counts to therefore produce population estimates. Figure 1 shows the change in estimated resident population by Local Government Area (LGA) such as East Arnhem Shire, Barkly Shire, Alice Springs town and all NT shires indexed to 2001. Indexing allows comparisons of varying population sizes. During this period Barkly Shire/region grew by 13%, slightly higher than Katherine town (12%) but lower than all NT Shires (19%) and East Arnhem Shire (29%).

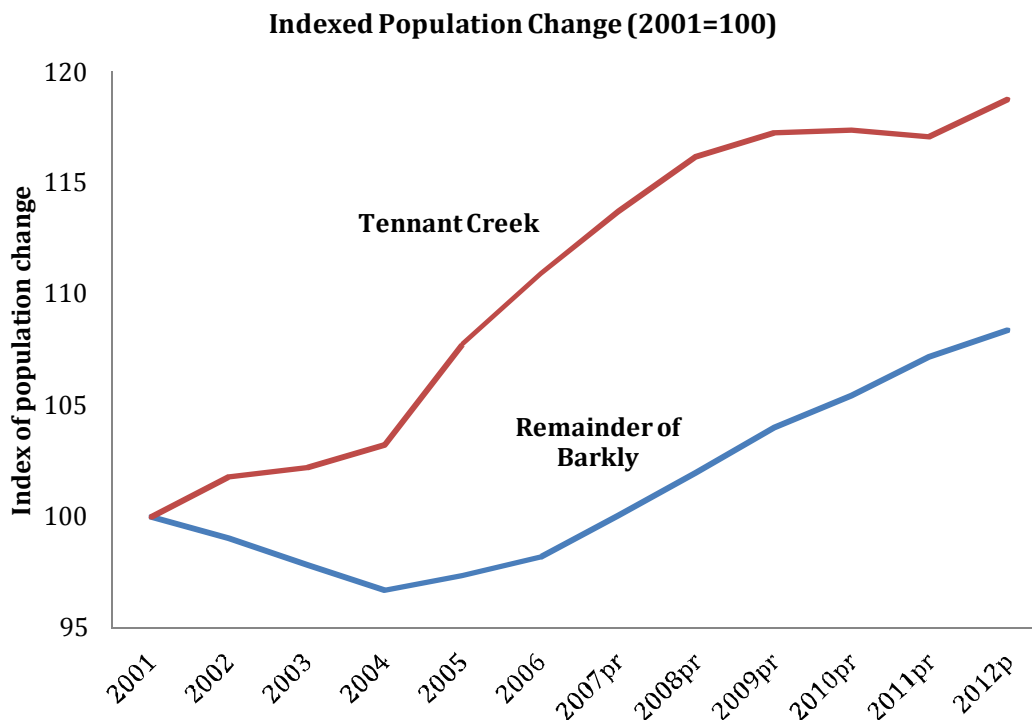
**Figure 1:** Indexed population change for selected NT shires, 2001 to 2012



Source: ABS 3218.0

Figure 2 shows the change in estimated resident population by Statistical Area level 2 (SA2), Tennant Creek and remainder of Barkly indexed to 2001. Tennant Creek grew by almost 19% between 2001 and 2012 and the remainder of Barkly experienced loss during the years 2001-2007 but had grown by 8% by 2012.

**Figure 2:** Indexed population change within the Barkly region, 2001 to 2012



Source: ABS 3218.0

**2.2 Changes to age, sex and Indigenous compositions**

In 2011, Tennant Creek consisted of 1,526 males and 1,535 females, a sex ratio of 99 males per 100 females. The population pyramid (Figure 3) shows that Tennant Creek was made up largely of young to middle aged Indigenous residents and working to older aged non-Indigenous residents. For the Indigenous population this is consistent with relatively high birth rates and low life expectancy. For the non-Indigenous population it is likely that the moderately high concentration of pre-retirement aged people reflects the age profile of employment. The Indigenous population made up 55% of the total Tennant Creek male population in 2011, 57% of total Tennant Creek female population, and 56% of the overall Tennant Creek population in 2011. Non-Indigenous people made up 44% of overall population.

**Figure 3: Tennant Creek town population pyramid, 2011**

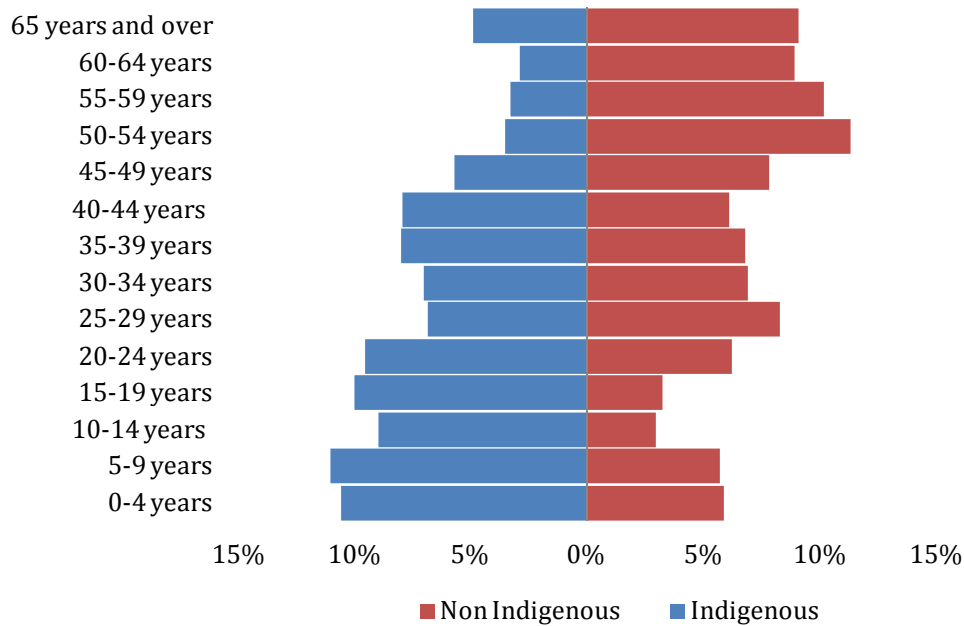
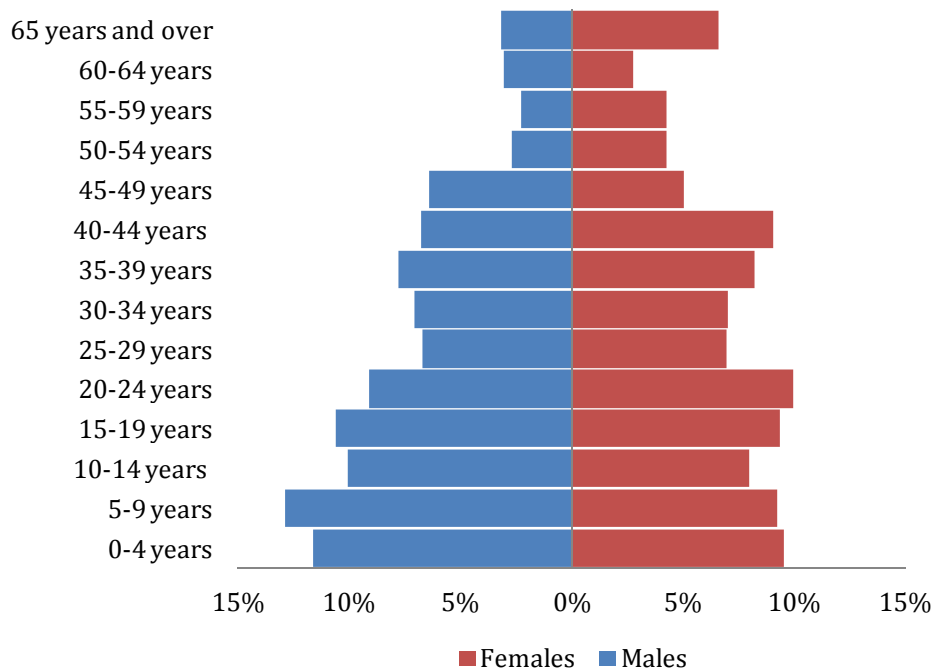
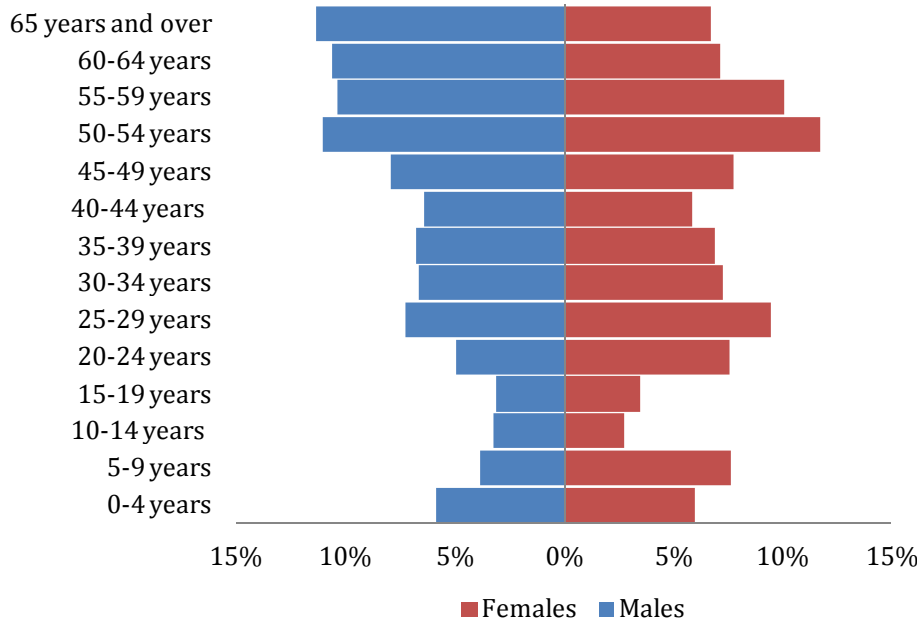


Figure 4 and Figure 5 below illustrate the population pyramids for Indigenous and non-Indigenous residents of Tennant Creek respectively. Figure 4 shows the male Indigenous population to be younger than for females with a larger proportion aged less than 20 years (20% more than Indigenous female population). Figure 5 shows the majority of older aged non-Indigenous residents were males.

**Figure 4: Tennant Creek Indigenous population pyramid, 2011**

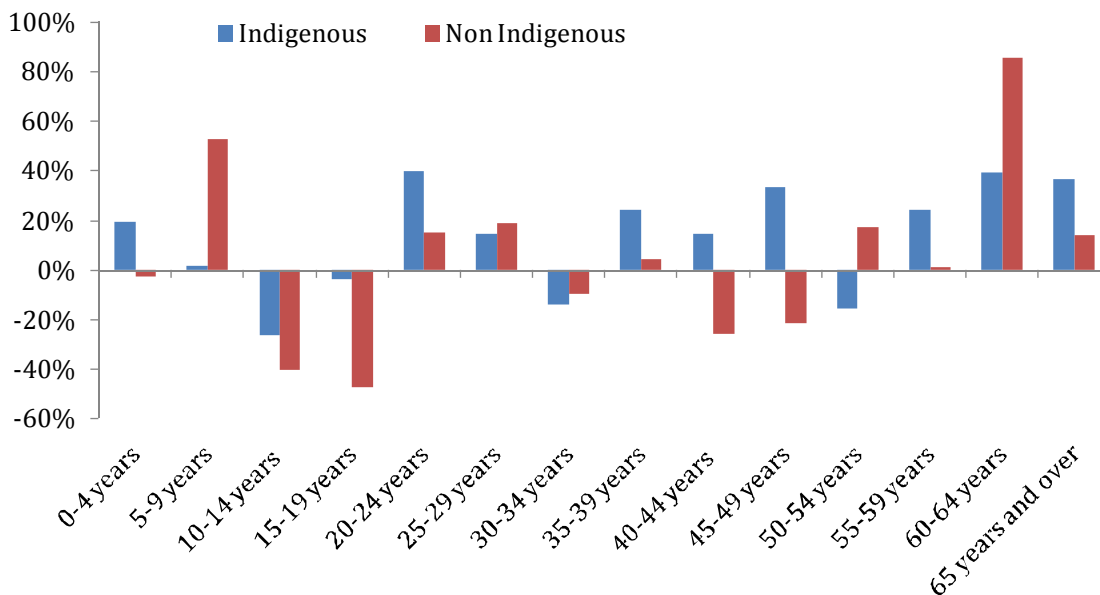


**Figure 5:** Tennant Creek non-Indigenous population pyramid, 2011



Net population change is calculated by subtracting the 2006 town population for each age group from the 2011 population. These should be seen as indicative as no adjustments for possible Census counting issues (people missed, double counted and so on) are incorporated. Figure 6 shows net population change for Tennant Creek where a net gain occurred at most age groups for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous residents. There were considerable gains of non-Indigenous males aged 5-9 years, but a loss at other young non-Indigenous ages, especially 10-19 years. There was a net loss of Indigenous residents 10-19 years.

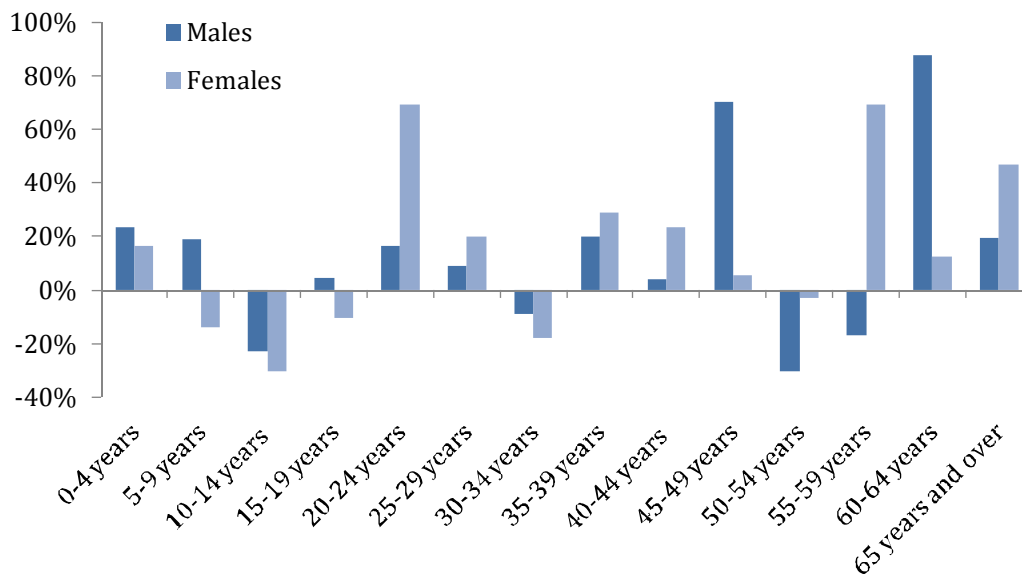
**Figure 6:** Net population change, Tennant Creek (SA2), 2006 to 2011





High growth occurred at certain age groups for the Indigenous population (Figure 7), especially males aged 45-49 years and 60-64 years, and females aged 20-24 and 55-59 years. A large net increase of females aged 65 and over occurred while loss of both males and females was recorded for the 10-14 years, 30-34 years, and 50-54 years age groups.

**Figure 7:** Net Indigenous population change, Tennant Creek (SA2), 2006 to 2011



### 3. POPULATION TURNOVER

Population turnover is measured as the absolute sum of movement from Tennant Creek to other parts of the Territory (intra-Territory turnover) and interstate and overseas migration to and from Tennant Creek. Between 2006 and 2011, turnover for Tennant Creek town was 45% of the 2011 resident population with interstate turnover at about a quarter of the population. The total turnover figure is conservative since no measure of the number of former Tennant Creek residents now living overseas is available.

**Table 3:** Population Turnover between 2006 and 2011: Tennant Creek SA2

Turnover category	In	Out	Net	Turnover*
Intra-Territory	342	216	126	18.2%
Interstate	350	393	-43	24.3%
Overseas	90	Unknown	Unknown	2.9%
Total	782	609	83	45.4%

\*The absolute sum of in and out migration divided by the resident population of the region at 2011

\*\* This figure includes only overseas migration into the region or town and not out of them

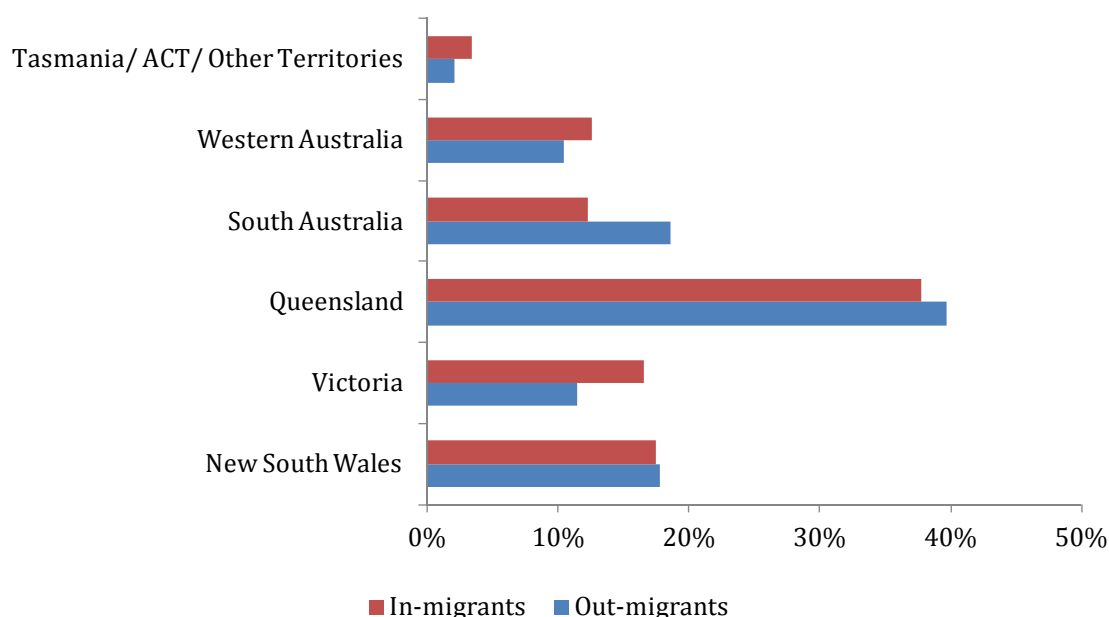
#### 3.1. Interstate migration

Between 2006 and 2011, 350 people migrated to Tennant Creek from interstate. The majority came from Queensland (38%), followed by New South Wales and Victoria, both at 17% (Figure 8) and



around half (53%) were females. Tennant Creek attracted interstate migrants aged in their 20s, early 30s and early 50s. Indigenous people made up 22% of the total interstate in-migrants to Tennant Creek. Over the same period 393 people migrated interstate from Tennant Creek, the majority of whom went to Queensland (40%), followed by South Australia (19%) and New South Wales at 18%. More females (57% of all out migrants) left, especially those in their late 20s, early 30s and 5-9 year olds. Indigenous people comprised 22% of out migrants, and were mostly aged 5-14 and 25-34 years.

**Figure 8:** Sources of interstate movers (in and out migrants), Tennant Creek 2006-2011

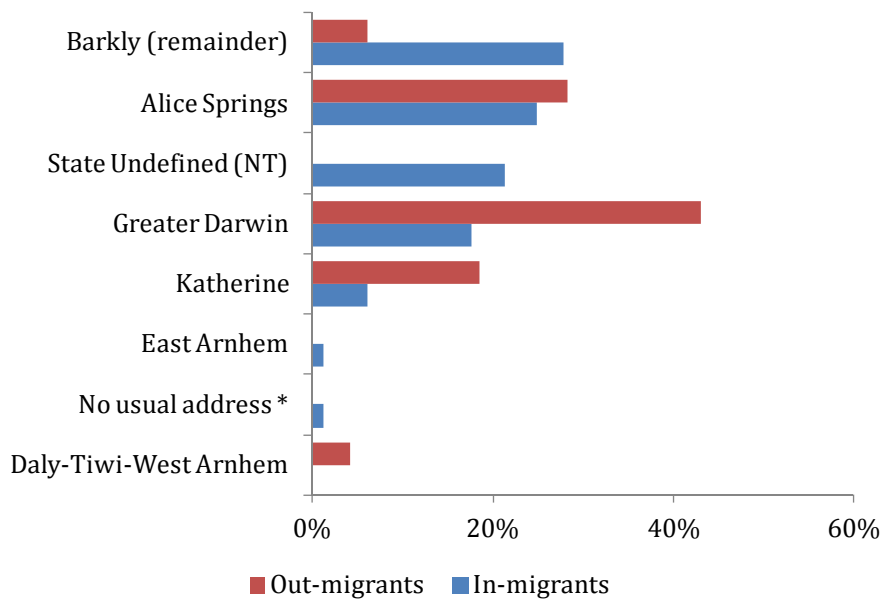


### 3.2. Intra-Territory migration

There were 342 people who migrated to Tennant Creek from within NT between 2006 and 2011, of which 52% were female and 48% male. The majority were Indigenous (60%). Indigenous people migrating in were dispersed across most aged groups other than for older age groups. Most were from the remainder of Barkly region (28%), followed by Alice Springs region (25%), undefined regions (21%), and Greater Darwin (18%) (Figure 9). There were very few migrants from the Katherine region, even less migrants from the East Arnhem region and no migrants at all from Daly-Tiwi-West Arnhem region. Between 2006 and 2011, 216 people migrated out from Tennant Creek to other regions within the NT. Of these 54% were female and 46% were male. The majority (68%) were non-Indigenous and 32% were Indigenous. Of the Indigenous emigrants, 33% were aged 5-14 years and 13% aged 25-29 years.

The most popular destinations for Tennant Creek’s out migrants were the Greater Darwin (43%), Alice Springs (28%), and the Katherine (19%) regions. There were few who moved from Tennant Creek town to elsewhere in the Barkly region and a small number who moved to the Daly-Tiwi-Western Arnhem region and none to the East Arnhem region.

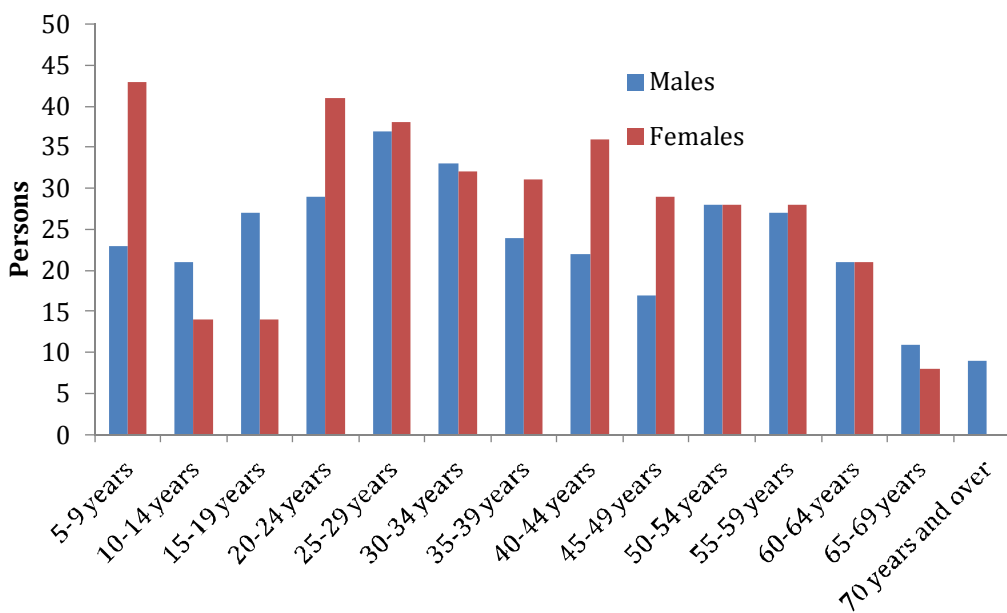
**Figure 9:** Sources of intra-territory movers, in & out migrants of Tennant Creek, 2006-2011



\* Migratory - Offshore - Shipping (NT)

Figures 10 and 11 compare the age and sex profile of movers into and out of Tennant Creek. There were more young female in-migrants aged 5-9 years but more male in-migrants aged 10-19 years. Figure 11 suggests the majority of out-migrants from Tennant Creek from 2006-2011 were females except for the 5-9, 50-54 and 65 years and over age groups.

**Figure 10:** Movers into Tennant Creek (Intra-Territory & Interstate), 2006-2011



**Figure 11:** Movers out of Tennant Creek (Intra-Territory & Interstate), 2006-2011

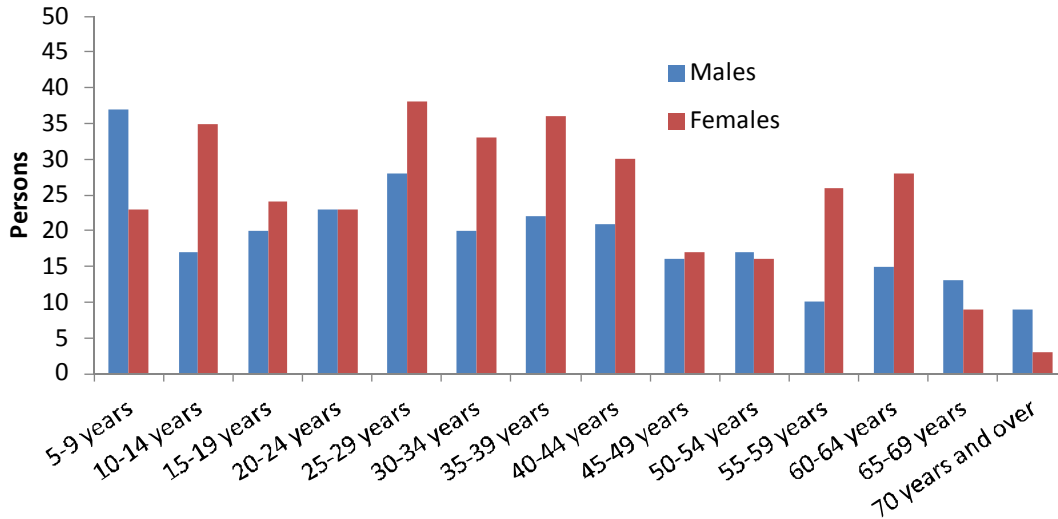
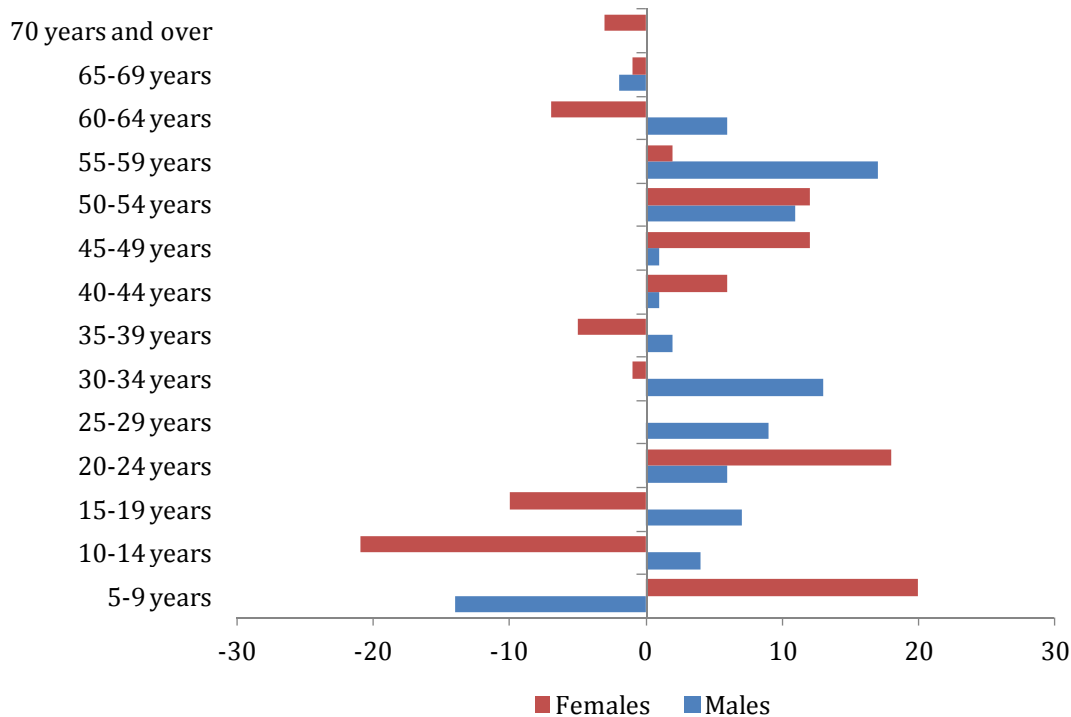


Figure 12 shows net intra-territory and interstate migration for the region (movers in minus movers out). A net positive occurred at most age groups and highest for females aged 5-9 years and 20-24 years while net male migration was highest for ages 55-59 years, and was comprised of mostly non-Indigenous males. Net migration loss was high for females aged 10-14 years and males 5-9 years.

**Figure 12:** Net Intra-Territory & Interstate migration by age & sex, Tennant Creek, 2006-2011



## 4. NEW MIGRANT COMMUNITIES

### 4.1 Overseas immigrants

Between 2006 and 2011, Tennant Creek welcomed 90 people who were born overseas to increase the overseas born proportion by 1.8% (Table 4). The majority of overseas born residents by 2011 were from the UK, New Zealand, the Philippines, and Germany (Table 5). In 2011, overseas born residents from India entered fifth spot replacing Italy as a key source.

**Table 4:** Overseas born population of Tennant Creek (not including overseas visitors)

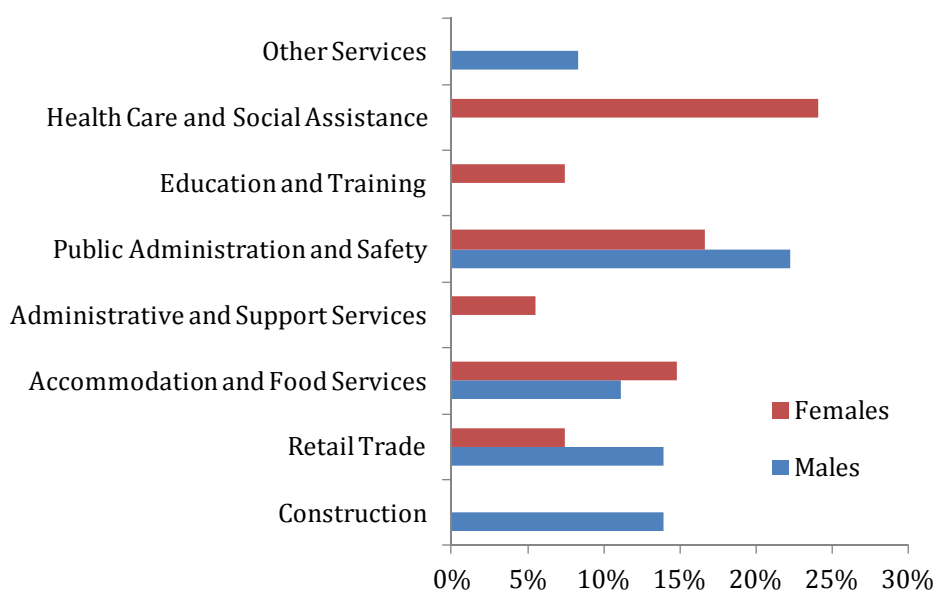
Measure	2006		2011	
	Tennant Creek			
	No.	% of total	No.	% of total
Total population	2920	100.0%	3061	100.0%
Overseas born	248	8.5%	316	10.3%
Australian born	2220	76.0%	2441	79.7%
Not stated	452	15.5%	304	9.9%
Ratio residents to o/s born	9.0		7.7	

**Table 5:** Source nations for overseas born residents

Rank	2006		2011		% of o/s born 2011
	Country	Persons	Country	Persons	
1	United Kingdom	57	United Kingdom	69	21.8%
2	New Zealand	35	New Zealand	49	15.5%
3	Philippines	26	Philippines	47	14.9%
4	Germany	17	Germany	14	4.4%
5	Italy	11	India	13	4.1%
	Top 5	146	Top 5	192	60.8%

Figure 13 shows industries of employment for Tennant Creek's new overseas born residents who arrived between 2006 and 2011. Health Care and Social Assistance was the predominant industry of employment for female overseas immigrants and Public Administration and Safety for males. Interestingly, no new male immigrants reported they were employed in the Education and Training or Health care and Social Assistance industries despite these being in the top three industries of employment in Tennant Creek (refer to the Labour Force Status section in this research brief).

**Figure 13:** Industries of employment for Tennant Creek's new overseas born immigrants, 2011



## 5. CHANGES IN HOUSING

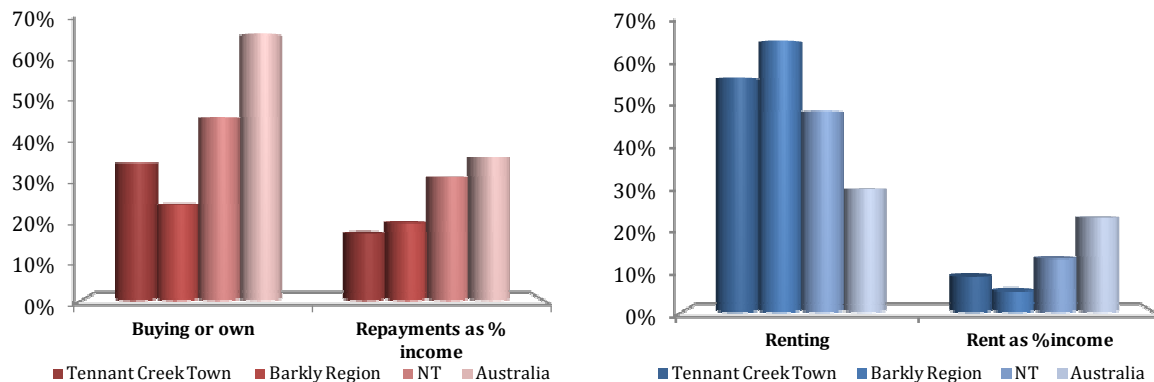
Between 2006 and 2011, the number of private dwellings in Tennant Creek increased by 34%. However 20% of these dwellings were recorded as unoccupied at the time of the 2011 Census. The number of separate houses, flats, units, or apartments decreased while semi-detached and townhouses almost quadrupled over the 5 years. Other dwelling types such as caravan/cabins, sleeping out, and improvised dwellings increased by 31% (table 6).

**Table 6:** Changing housing stock in Tennant Creek, 2006 to 2011

Type of dwelling	2006	2011	Net additions	Change 2006 to 2011
Separate house	616	613	-3	-0.5%
Semi-detached, row or terrace house, townhouse	18	69	51	283.3%
Flat, unit or apartment	117	96	-21	-17.9%
Other dwelling	42	55	13	31.0%
Unoccupied private dwellings	0	216	216	n.a.
Dwelling structure not stated	0	13	13	n.a.
<b>Total</b>	<b>793</b>	<b>1062</b>	<b>269</b>	<b>33.9%</b>

Figure 14 represents those who owned or were purchasing a property in Tennant Creek (the red chart) compared to other jurisdictions, and the blue chart is the equivalent for renters. The left side of each chart compares the proportion of the population who own or buying their dwelling or renting, while the right side of both charts compares house repayments or rent as a proportion of household income.

**Figure 14:** Households owning/ purchasing (red) or renting (blue) and repayments or rent (percentage of household income)

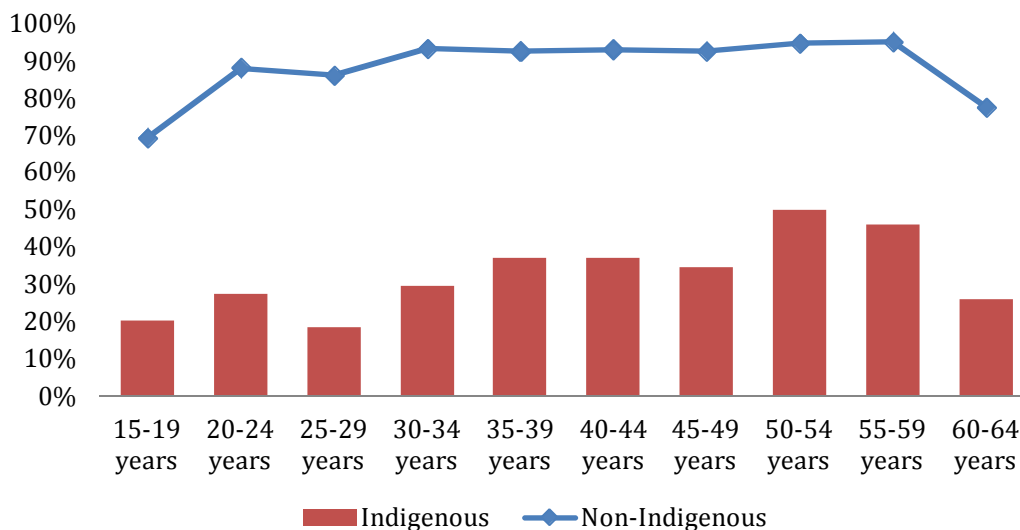


The percentage of dwellings being purchased or owned outright in Tennant Creek was lower compared to the NT and Australia as a whole but higher than in the Barkly region (Barkly region SA3). On the other hand, the percentage of people who were renting in Tennant Creek town and the Barkly region were higher than the NT as a whole and much higher than the national average. Median rents for both were relatively low and affordable as a proportion of household income.

## 6. LABOUR FORCE CHARACTERISTICS

Between ages 15 to 64 years, 31% of the Indigenous population were employed and 7% were unemployed. The rest of the Indigenous population in this age range were either not in the labour force or did not state their labour force status. This compares to 90% of non-Indigenous population (employed) and only 1% who were unemployed (Figure 15).

**Figure 15:** Tennant Creek employed resident, 2011



### 6.1 Industries of employment

The top five industries of employment in Tennant Creek for 2011 were Public Administration and Safety (24%), Health Care and Social Assistance (14%), Education and Training (12%), Wholesale/ Retail trade (9%), and Construction (8%) respectively (Figure 16).

For the remainder of Barkly, the top five industries of employment for 2011 were Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing (30%), Public Administration and Safety (27%), Education and Training (14%), Wholesale/ Retail trade (5%), and Health Care and Social Assistance (4%) respectively.

**Figure 16:** Top twelve industries of employment in Tennant Creek and remainder of Barkly, 2011

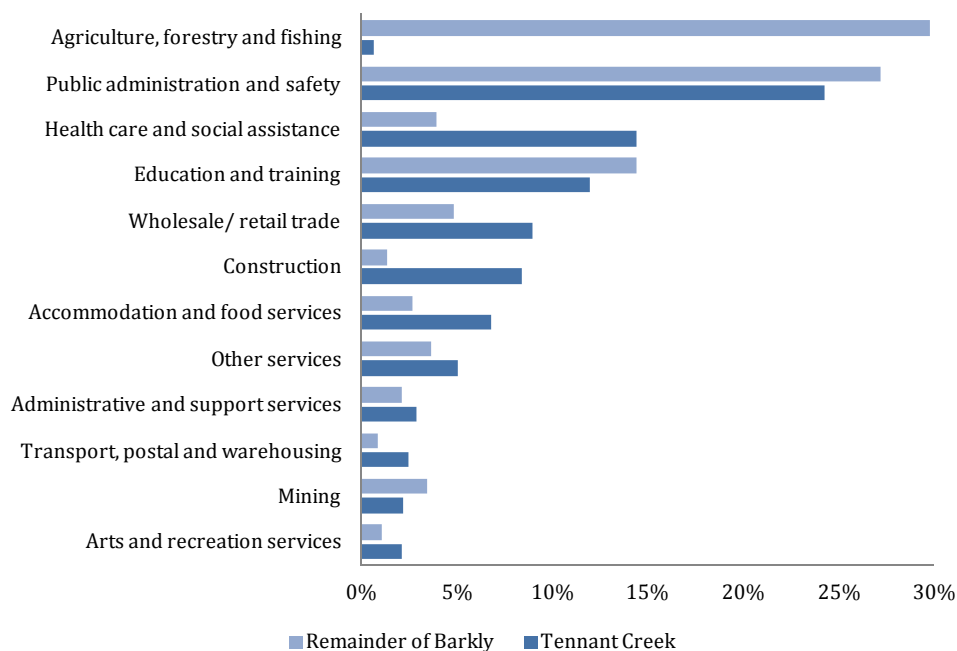
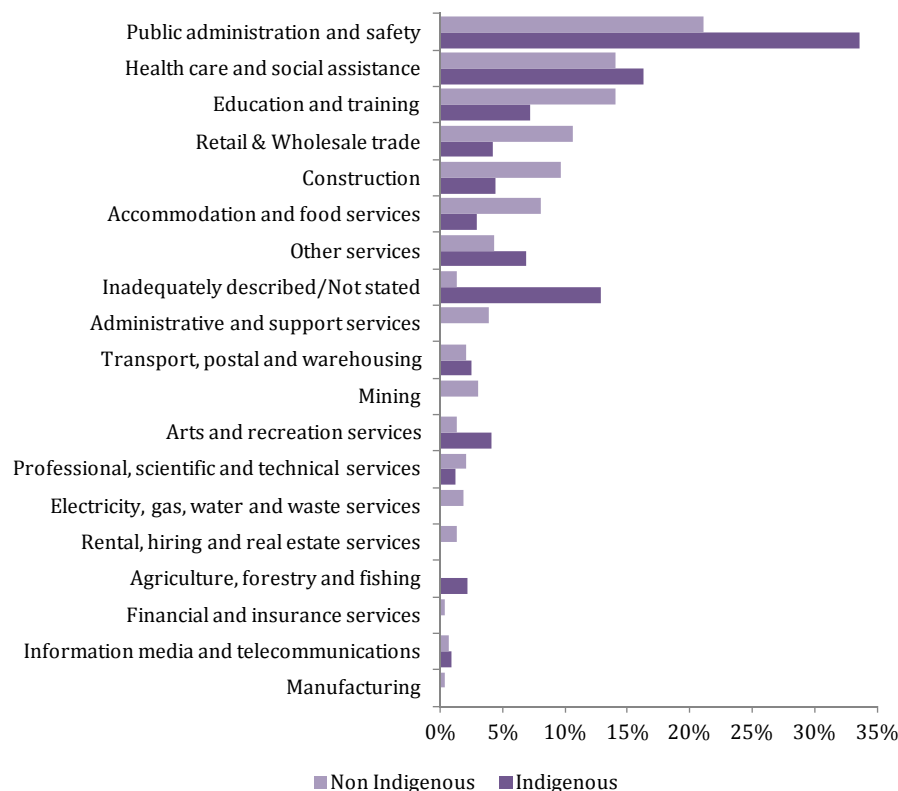




Figure 17 shows 2011 Industries of employment for Indigenous residents with Public Administration and Safety prominent (34%), along with Health Care and Social Assistance (at 16%).

**Figure 17:** Tennant Creek industries of employment by Indigenous status, 2011



## 7. EDUCATION

Tables 7 and 8 show the highest level of schooling achieved by Tennant Creek and remainder of Barkly region residents in 2011. It indicates that over the years the proportion of people who had completed year 11 or 12 has increased, particularly for Indigenous residents. However, the number of Indigenous residents in the remainder of Barkly region who did not go to school had increased.

**Table7:** Highest level of schooling for Tennant Creek town, 2006 and 2011

% of stated responses, 15-29 yrs	Tennant Creek Town			
	2006		2011	
	Indigenous	Non-Indigenous/ Not stated	Indigenous	Non-Indigenous/ Not stated
Yr 11 or 12	18%	67%	31%	76%
Yr 9-10	51%	30%	54%	22%
Yr 8 or below	30%	4%	14%	2%
Did not go to school	1%	0%	1%	0%
	100%	100%	100%	100%

**Table 8:** Highest level of schooling for the remainder of the region, 2006 and 2011

% of stated responses, 15-29 yrs	Remainder of Region			
	2006		2011	
	Indigenous	Non-Indigenous/ Not stated	Indigenous	Non-Indigenous/ Not stated
Yr 11 or 12	11%	67%	20%	85%
Yr 9-10	37%	30%	38%	15%
Yr 8 or below	49%	3%	37%	0%
Did not go to school	3%	0%	5%	0%
	100%	100%	100%	100%

Tables 9 and 10 show the highest level of post-school qualifications for Tennant Creek and the remainder of region. The proportion of people with a post-school qualification was quite low but had improved by 2011.

**Table 9:** Highest level of post-school qualifications for Tennant Creek town, 2006 and 2011

% of stated responses across all ages	Tennant Creek Town			
	2006		2011	
	Indigenous	Non-Indigenous/ Not Stated	Indigenous	Non-Indigenous/ Not Stated
Bachelor or above	1%	13%	2%	19%
Advanced diploma	3%	6%	2%	7%
Certificate	8%	19%	9%	20%
Inadequately described	1%	1%	1%	1%
Total	13%	39%	13%	48%

**Table 10:** Highest level of post-school qualifications for remainder of region, 2006 and 2011

% of stated responses across all ages	Remainder of Region			
	2006		2011	
	Indigenous	Non-Indigenous/ Not Stated	Indigenous	Non-Indigenous/ Not Stated
Bachelor or above	0%	7%	1%	15%
Advanced diploma	0%	6%	0%	9%
Certificate	3%	20%	4%	20%
Inadequately described	0%	1%	1%	1%
Total	3%	34%	6%	45%

## 8. CONCLUSION

This research brief has summarised the changing population and characteristics of Tennant Creek town and its surrounding region. Between 2006 and 2011, the population increased marginally with the town growing much faster in comparison to the surrounding region. In terms of sex ratios, Tennant Creek had a more balanced population than in Darwin and NT as a whole. The majority of workers in Tennant Creek were working in service industries while in the surrounding region agricultural and resource based industries were far more prominent.

Population turnover in Tennant Creek and its surrounding region was made up of largely interstate migration and the majority of interstate in-migrants were from Queensland while the majority of interstate out-migrants also migrated to Queensland. Intra-territory migration contributed substantially to population turnover with most in-migrants from the remainder of the Barkly region. However the majority of the intra-territory out-migrants migrated to the Darwin region. Females contributed more to both interstate and intra-Territory out migration. The number of overseas immigrants has increased over the years but is still relatively small. Meanwhile, housing in Tennant Creek was relatively more affordable than for the NT as a whole. Despite this the number of people buying or owning a property was still lower in comparison.

### References

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