



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF THE NORTHERN TERRITORY

No. 122

WRITTEN QUESTION

J Davis to the Minister for Health, Hon Steven Edgington MLA:

Malnutrition

- 1. Given the broad impacts malnutrition has on a person's wellbeing and the wellbeing of a society, what is the government doing to ensure nutritious food is available for people and families particularly in remote communities, and how is this being evaluated?**

The Department of Health works in partnership with the Northern Territory Primary Health Network (NT PHN) and the Aboriginal Medical Service Alliance of the Northern Territory (AMSANT), on the Healthy Well and Thriving framework (the Framework) to strengthen the health system's approach to chronic conditions.

The Framework includes a focus area of healthy eating and priority actions to strengthen food security in remote communities. NT Health has a dedicated remote public health nutritionist allocated to all communities where NT Health provide a local health service.

A key activity of the public health nutrition workforce is the NT Market Basket Survey (MBS). The MBS is a biennial survey of cost, range, quality and availability of a range of products in remote communities in the Northern Territory. The MBS is regularly used by governments and researchers to guide policy decisions for remote Indigenous food security.

Additionally, the NT Aboriginal Health Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), developed by the Northern Territory Aboriginal Health Forum, describe key health service activities across the breadth of Aboriginal Primary Health Care, enabling shared learnings to improve Aboriginal health. The KPIs contain indicators to monitor healthy birth weight and healthy childhood weight.

The Framework uses the MBS report, and the Aboriginal Health KPIs to assess, access to nutritious food choices and population-level outcomes related to food security.

NT Health is developing and implementing the NT Remote Stores Program (the Program) under the food security provisions under Part 7A of the *Food Act 2004*. The Program seeks to improve the

availability and variety of healthy food and drinks in remote areas and support the viability of remote community stores. An evaluation of the Program will be undertaken in 2026 to review the Program's contribution and effectiveness in improving food security in remote communities.

The Remote Stores Program Standards (the Standards) have been endorsed by the Minister and are about to be Gazetted, after which they will be enforceable. The Standards are based on the legislated conditions, and stores must provide a minimum range of goods, and promote healthy food and nutrition.

NT Health has completed the first round of baseline assessments of Declared Community Stores and is planning the second round of assessments against the Standards.

NT Health has been actively involved in the development and initial priority actions of the National Strategy for Food Security in Remote First Nations Communities which was launched by the National Indigenous Australians Agency (NIAA) on 5 March 2025.

NT Health worked with NIAA in the development of the Voluntary National Code of Practice for Remote Store Operations (the Code) to ensure the NT Standards and the Code were aligned and complementary.

The Code and the store Subsidy Scheme were launched by NIAA on 1 July 2025.

Stores must sign up to the Code to be able to access the Subsidy Scheme.

The Subsidy Scheme aims to reduce the costs of 30 essential items in remote stores that will assist in improving health outcomes, as well as providing cost of living relief, by reducing the cost of everyday essentials in remote communities. The NIAA has engaged the not-for-profit Commonwealth-owned company Outback Stores Pty Ltd (Outback Stores) to deliver the Scheme.