



## MEDIA RELEASE

### 2 December 2014

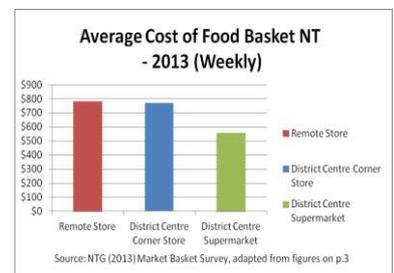
#### NT Food prices hit remote and low incomes the hardest

A new report by the Northern Territory Council of Social Service highlights that far too many Territorians face rising food bills, with the NT having the second highest weekly expenditure on food in the country.

The 6<sup>th</sup> NT *Cost of Living Report* released today also reveals that outside of Darwin, households are paying more for their food, on average, than their capital city counterparts, with the average weekly expenditure on food in Darwin being \$232 per week, while for the 'rest of the NT' it is \$256 per week.

"While there have been some recent improvements in access to fresh food in remote areas, and some price reductions for healthy foods in some areas, the reality still is that the more remote someone is, the more that they pay for their food, as highlighted by the Annual NT Market Basket survey" stated Mr. Jonathan Pilbrow, Policy Advisor, NTCOSS.

Just as concerning is that people who rely on corner stores<sup>1</sup> in urban centres are also paying a much higher price than households who shop at the larger supermarkets. Alarming, the average prices for the basket of food is virtually the same at a remote store as at a corner store in a town like Tennant Creek or Katherine. "It is more likely to be people on low incomes who shop at corner stores, as they may have fewer transport options to get to larger supermarkets."



The significant price disparity between different stores and supermarkets in the NT is a huge - adding to other cost of living pressures in the NT, such as housing and electricity". "If the NT Government can facilitate swift and decisive action through stakeholder engagement to reduce the price of fuel in Darwin, then there is an opportunity for it to do similar in relation to food", stated Mr Pilbrow.

The Cost of Living Report also revealed that food prices for Darwin households have risen higher than the national average for food prices over the past year (3.9% vs 3.5%), and higher than the CPI rise in Darwin (3.6%) and significantly higher than the general national CPI rise over the past 12 months (2.3%).

In addition, lower income earners, particularly, those reliant on income support payments, pay a larger proportion of their weekly income on food. Age Pensioners and people on unemployment/study payments spend more than 20% of their household income on food, while those in the highest income bracket, pay just over 15%. "We know that the NT has a high proportion of people on income support payments and any further rises in food costs will hit those with the least ability to pay, hardest", stated Mr Pilbrow.

The report also highlights strategies to address the high cost of food in remote areas, such as supporting initiatives for remote communities to grow their own food, and for subsidisation of healthy foods, which is already occurring in some areas of the NT.

**For media comment, contact: Jonathan Pilbrow – Policy Advisor, NTCOSS 0403 611 815**

<sup>1</sup> A corner store in the major town/city in each of the district centres was also surveyed to allow comparison of prices.

**NT Council of Social Service**

1/18 Bauhinia St Nightcliff PO Box 1128 Nightcliff NT 0814 Ph: 08 8948 2665 Fx: 08 8948 4590

Email: [admin@ntcoss.org.au](mailto:admin@ntcoss.org.au) Website: [www.ntcoss.org.au](http://www.ntcoss.org.au)

*'Growing the NT fairly'*



## MEDIA RELEASE

### 2 December 2014

#### *Report Recommendations:*

That the NT Government:

1. Commence a process for the development of a forum for addressing food pricing in the NT, to establish engagement between community, industry, research bodies and government to address price disparities between major supermarkets and remote and corner stores
2. Work towards implementation of the AMSANT Food Summit Interim Report May 2010, recommendations.
3. Work with the Australian Government, to support community garden, traditional food and farming projects in remote Indigenous communities for the local production of food and to look at arrangements for locally grown or harvested produce to be distributed through local stores (as per recommendations in the 'Everybody's Business' Report) - with reference to the Centrefarm model (including its 'Growing to Grow' proposal).
4. Address transport issues<sup>2</sup> which impact on the cost of food for households in the NT – including support of local transport solutions in regional and remote areas, which assist community members to access stores where there is greater variety and cheaper prices.<sup>3</sup>
5. Work with the Federal Government to find alternatives to its proposed budget measure which will see job seekers cut off from payments for 6 months and;
6. Work with the Federal Government in relation to increasing Newstart Payments by \$50 per week.

---

<sup>2</sup> Refer also to the Recommendations in the NTCOSS (2014) Cost of Living Update, No.3, April 2014 (Transport)

<sup>3</sup> For example, the Tennant Creek Transport service assists in transporting community members to the town supermarket, which helps reduce reliance on smaller fast food outlets or petrol stations for access to food.

**NT Council of Social Service**

**1/18 Bauhinia St Nightcliff PO Box 1128 Nightcliff NT 0814 Ph: 08 8948 2665 Fx: 08 8948 4590**

**Email: [admin@ntcoss.org.au](mailto:admin@ntcoss.org.au) Website: [www.ntcoss.org.au](http://www.ntcoss.org.au)**

*'Growing the NT fairly'*