



**OUTBACK**  
*Stores*

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# The story behind Outback Stores and how it operates

## **Outback Stores began trading in November, 2006.**

The company was set up at a cost of \$48.1 million by senior retailers drawn from large supermarket businesses such as Coles Myer and Woolworths, with the support of Federal Government body Indigenous Business Australia.

The concept sprang from a need to find a solution for issues that were becoming common in many Aboriginal communities – rising nutrition-related health problems, unreliable food supplies, empty shelves in stores and stores closing because of poor management and build-up of debt.

Outback Stores' role would be to form partnerships with communities by managing stores on their behalf so they become commercially successful and have reliable supplies of healthy, affordable food.

Any profits would go towards projects in the communities.

The first official Outback Store opened at Canteen Creek in May, 2007, although relief managers had gone into Imanpa in November 2006, and Ringers Soak (Kundat Djaru) in March, 2007.

In June, 2007, the Federal Government introduced its Northern Territory Emergency Response Bill to Parliament. As part of the intervention, funding became available to support shops that were badly needed in communities but were facing closure because they were not profitable.

Outback Stores was given \$29.1 million to ensure they remained open and were providing good healthy food choices for the communities.

Outback Stores now operates stores across the Northern Territory, Queensland and Western Australia.

When Outback Stores comes in to manage a community shop, it works with a store committee to develop a management agreement. This agreement includes signing up to a business structure that ensures fair distribution of profits. It also covers operational issues such as no "book up", no debt and for stores to be separately incorporated.

All store managers attend training courses in Darwin before they go out into the communities and are supported by area managers, relief managers, professional systems, proper stock control and accounts staff.

Employees are drawn from the local community and are paid award wages.

Much thought and planning goes into what is sold at the stores and nutritionists are involved in choosing the range in line with Outback Stores' mission to make a positive difference to the health of people living in remote communities.

The nutritionists follow up by monitoring the stores to make sure the right products are being sold and that they are being displayed appropriately.

The sourcing of stock is also important and Outback Stores' primary concern is that communities have reliable, affordable supplies of quality food and grocery items.

To meet this aim, it has a centralised supply to keep prices down and forms partnerships with as many local suppliers as possible.