



# Partnership bears fruit

## Breakfast club now even healthier for indigenous kids

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Aboriginal children in a number of remote communities will be eating a guaranteed 200 pieces of fruit a year as the result of a new agreement between Red Cross and Outback Stores.

The fruit will be added to Red Cross' Good Start Breakfast Club menu in any community in which an Outback Store is located.

"Over a child's primary school years we've estimated that's around 1200 pieces of fruit they probably wouldn't have eaten," Outback Stores Wellbeing Manager Julie Croft said.

"Inadequate fruit and vegetable consumption accounts for a six per cent mortality rate among Indigenous Australians according to a study quoted in the Australian Bureau of Statistics report *The Health and Welfare of Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples (2008)*.

"Having one piece of fruit a day will provide half of a child's necessary daily fruit intake."

Red Cross has been operating breakfast programs in remote areas of the Northern Territory since 2006 and is now working with 33 communities and 13 homeland centres to achieve improved nutrition for children.

More than 102,150 nutritious breakfasts were provided in remote communities in the NT last year alone.

"The breakfasts include fruit when available but not all communities have a reliable source of good quality items and the supply can be inconsistent. By working with Outback Stores, which has as part of its business charter a commitment to maintain a reliable supply of fresh fruit and vegetables for communities, Red Cross can access a guaranteed supply of seasonal fruit every single day," Red Cross Executive Director, Northern Territory, Sharon Mulholland, said.

"For some children this will mean tasting certain fruits for the first time, such as Central Desert youngsters trying tropical fruit varieties they have never seen before."

The breakfast program partnership springs from the signing of a memorandum of understanding between the two organisations this week.

The memorandum sets out a framework for co-operation between Outback Stores and Red Cross with the aim of encouraging closer ties that will be of benefit to the communities they are both operating in.

“Both organisations are focused on health outcomes in Indigenous communities and this partnership will see the development of joint policies based on the provision of healthy food and the promotion of healthy eating patterns,” Ms Mulholland said.

“It will also encourage community participation in co-operative initiatives that will improve the availability, accessibility and affordability of healthy food.”

Outback Stores is committed to improving health outcomes in remote Indigenous communities and has introduced policies and set targets to help increase sales of fruit and vegetables.

“We look at the amount of fruit and vegetables being sold as a percentage of total food and tobacco sales at a store,” Ms Croft said.

“Fresh fruit and vegetable sales have increased from between 2 to 4 per cent on entry to a store to a company average now of 7 per cent.

“We are aiming for 10 per cent by December this year.

“This partnership could contribute significantly to us reaching our fruit and vegetable sales targets.

“It is important for children to be introduced to a wide range of fruits early to enhance their taste profile and increase the likelihood of eating a good variety throughout their lives.”

The first communities to benefit from the partnership will be Yuendumu, Imanpa, Ali Curung and Bagot.

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## **For further information contact:**

### **Outback Stores**

Julie Croft  
Wellbeing Manager, Outback Stores  
Phone: 0407 028 668

Dale Webster  
Michels Warren Munday  
Phone: (08) 8981 6445; 0448 656 668

### **Red Cross**

Sharon Mulholland  
Executive Director, Northern Territory  
(08) 8924 3900

Kate Marshall  
National Senior Media Co-ordinator  
(02) 9229 4184.

***Outback Stores is a company that manages remote stores on behalf of remote Indigenous communities. It was set up in 2006 in response to a growing need for functional and viable shops that were able to meet the health and nutritional requirements of Indigenous populations. It has been successful because it builds strong relationships with the communities it works with, resulting in stores that people can take pride in and feel part of. Outback Stores is a non-government enterprise with an independent board. Profits from the stores are returned to the community. [www.outbackstores.com.au](http://www.outbackstores.com.au)***