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MEDIA RELEASE

BRINGING FOOD SECURITY TO REMOTE COMMUNITIES

Many remote communities have been transformed in the past two years by having a good store, the Chief Executive Officer of Outback Stores John Kop said today.

This had increased the sale of fruit and vegetables, reduced prices, seen more Aboriginal people employed in stores, and ensured reliable supplies of quality food.

The Housing of Representatives Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs is holding an inquiry into remote community stores. In a submission from Outback Stores, Mr Kop says food is an essential service, just like policing, education and health.

“However, poor performance has survived in remote communities for decades, because of the fragmented and small market, mismanagement and vested interests,” he said.

“Outback Stores uses its aggregated buying power and retail experience to give communities access to the best suppliers, and the best food at the best quality and price, effectively returning power to the communities.”

Outback Stores was established in 2006 to ensure the availability of affordable, quality food from sustainable stores in remote communities.

“We operate on a fee for service basis, returning all profits to the community,” Mr Kop said. “We are different from other mainstream retail companies in that our goals are to create strong, commercially operated stores that contribute to well-run communities and healthy lifestyles.”

Outback Stores currently manages 27 stores in the Northern Territory, Western Australia, Queensland and South Australia.

It is a private company currently fully owned by Indigenous Business Australia, with a voluntary board of senior retailers and professional company directors.

The Standing Committee's inquiry was announced by Minister Jenny Macklin. The Committee will report on the operation of local community stores in remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, with a particular focus on:

- food supply, quality, cost and competition issues;
- the effectiveness of the Outback Stores model, and other private, public and community store models; and
- the impact of these factors on the health and economic outcomes of communities.

Please find a copy of the Outback Stores submission attached. For more information on Outback Stores go to www.outbackstores.com.au

For more information on the inquiry go to

<http://www.aph.gov.au/house/committee/atsia/communitystores/index.htm>

Media inquiries

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