

Indigenous urbanisation gains pace

The massive re-development of Alice Springs' town camps acknowledges increasing patterns of urbanisation of Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory, according to a leading population expert.

Speaking at this week's international population conference in Alice Springs, Associate Professor Dean Carson Principal Research Fellow with the School for Social and Policy Research, Charles Darwin University, said understanding Indigenous rural-to-urban migration was critical for urban planning.

"Our research has revealed weaknesses in the available data sources and gaps in the literature on Indigenous demography which urban development projects should rely on," Dr Carson said.

"It's critical we understand the needs and patterns of Indigenous peoples as this redevelopment is largely to meet their needs."

He argued that few demographic studies had considered Aboriginal people based on their languages or cultural affinities, but rather grouped them as an homogenous population within imposed administrative boundaries.

"We have an excellent opportunity to frame an Indigenous research agenda in the Northern Territory which addresses issues of data and scope," Dr Carson said.

"The significance of migration research, for example, is not just about how many people move, but what type of people they are, and why they travel from one place to another."

He said CDU research revealed complex systems of Indigenous mobility which provided benefits for the Northern Territory as well as created the potential for social problems.

"We need to understand the whole system of how mobility, health and economic development fit together, otherwise we risk creating more policies and projects which limit the potential of Indigenous people to thrive," he said.

Dr Carson is one of the prominent researchers tackling issues relevant to the Territory during the Australian Population Association 14th Biennial Conference, at the Alice Springs Convention Centre which runs from today (Monday June 30) until Thursday July 3.

More than 100 experts from CDU and across the globe are discussing issues surrounding demographic changes of the 21st Century with particular focus on Indigenous demography, policy responses to demographic change, and demography of Australia's northern neighbours.

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CONTACTS OVERLEAF -



Australian Population Association
14th Biennial Conference

 **2008**
Alice Springs

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About the conference

The 14th biennial conference of the Australian Population Association (<http://www.apa.org.au/>) will be held in Alice Springs from Monday 30th June to Thursday 3rd July 2008 at the Alice Springs Convention Centre.

The conference will share international perspectives on contemporary population issues. The keynote speaker program features highly respected international population experts, and a comprehensive program of concurrent sessions based on the conference themes of:

- Indigenous demography
- Policy responses to demographic change; and
- The demography of Australia's northern neighbours

For full details, including the conference program, go to www.nt.gov.au/ntt/apa2008/