Sitting down in Darwin

Yolgu women from northeast Arnhem Land and family life in the city.

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Submitted by:
Kerin Maureen Coulehan (O'Shaughnessy)
Bachelor of Arts, University of Adelaide, South Australia.
Diploma of Teaching, Adelaide College of Education, South Australia.
I hereby declare that the work herein, now submitted as a thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy of the Northern Territory University, is the result of my own investigations, and all references to ideas and work of other researchers have been specifically acknowledged. I hereby certify that the work embodied in this thesis has not already been accepted in substance for any degree, and is not being currently submitted in candidature for any other degree.

Signature:

[Signature]

Date: 31 August 1995
Acknowledgments

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Abstract

When Yolŋu women, children and family groups move to Darwin from remote communities in northeast Arnhem Land they experience altered circumstances of relations of power between two nurturant regimes, a Yolŋu system of familial governance exercised in kinship and in ceremony and state government exercised via welfare monies and community services. Both the familial and the state systems of care and control seek to govern individuals and families from the birth of infants, throughout childhood, in various marital and family circumstances, at critical times of life, including in sickness and at death and according to different orientations of movement.

Various government departments centralised in Darwin govern the remote-dwelling Yolŋu by bringing them into the city, there to be attended to especially in terms of urban health, housing and education services and then repatriated to remote communities and clan lands. It is an unintended consequence of state agency that the controlled movement of Aboriginal people to urban centres should take on a momentum of its own. This momentum is evident in the kinship dynamics of Yolŋu rural-urban mobility and in the strategies of individuals, in particular of Yolŋu women, as they set out on their own marital, migratory and urban careers.

Because the two nurturant systems do not fully recognise each other's legitimacy, it happens all too often that a Yolŋu system of familial governance and state agencies of government act at cross purposes. Yolŋu say that trying to live "both-ways, two-ways" is especially difficult in Darwin. While this Aboriginal English expression has largely been interpreted to mean two languages, two cultures, two ways of life, I suggest that it also applies to the articulation of a Yolŋu system of governance with external agents of government and the adjustment of Yolŋu life to altered circumstances, even when Yolŋu move to "sit down" (to stay, to live) in Darwin.
Orthography and other conventions

All Yolŋu matha (Yolŋu language) words have been written in italics, with the following exceptions: Yolŋu (black people, Aborigines) and Balanda (white people, Europeans), Yolŋu place names, and Yolŋu language pseudonyms because they appear frequently throughout the text and to render them in italics would be distracting. All Yolŋu expressions in Aboriginal English have been indicated by double inverted commas.

In order to maintain confidentiality, and because Yolŋu personal names are subject to etiquettes of avoidance in particular relations of kinship and after the death of the name bearer or a name-sake, all the characters in the case studies and my informants are referred to by either Yolŋu kin terms, subsection terms or by Yolŋu language pseudonyms as suggested by Yolŋu. While these terms and names are appropriately used according to Yolŋu socio-linguistic etiquette, they serve to disguise actual identities.

The orthography used throughout this thesis is consistent with the Yolŋu matha dictionary (Zorc 1986) except that where I have used Yolŋu words as pseudonyms, for example Miku, I have omitted the final glottal stop where this would normally apply as in miku' (red ochre), because in some cases the apostrophe is used to indicate the English language possessive, as in "Miku's children".

The Yolŋu language vowels i, u and a are short, e, o and å are long. The underlined consonants are retroflex and pronounced with an 'r' sound, rr is trilled and r is a continuant. The g is hard and the ŋ found in the beginning of words (e.g. gapipi) and in the middle of words (e.g. rigitj) is pronounced like the English language sound for 'ng' as in 'rung'. The ny sound as in nyoka' is pronounced like the English language sound 'ni' in 'onion' not as 'ny' in 'many'.

I am indebted for the above practical explanations on pronunciation and for the following orthographic schema to Keen (1994:xiv-xv) and Williams (1986:xvi).
Vowels:

<table>
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<th>long</th>
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<td>i</td>
<td>e</td>
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<tr>
<td>u</td>
<td>o</td>
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<tr>
<td>a</td>
<td>ä</td>
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Stops and consonants:

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<tr>
<th>bi-</th>
<th>dorso-</th>
<th>alveolar</th>
<th>post-alveolar</th>
<th>lamino- dental</th>
<th>lamino- alveolar</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>labial</td>
<td>velar</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(retroflex)</td>
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<tr>
<td>stops</td>
<td>p</td>
<td>k</td>
<td>t</td>
<td>i</td>
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<td>g</td>
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<td>d</td>
<td>dh</td>
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<tr>
<td>nasals</td>
<td>m</td>
<td>ƞ</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>nh</td>
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liquids:
- lateral: l
- flap/trill: rr
- continuant: r
- semi-vowels: y and w.

For further details on *Yolgu matha* orthography (see Christie 1993; F. Morphy 1983:12-25).
Chapter 1

Introduction
Chapter 1. Introduction

1.1 Yolŋu in clan country and in the city.

The Yolŋu are an Aboriginal people who comprise a linguistic group (Morphy F. 1977, 1988) and a cultural bloc (Berndt 1962) which share 'a similar habitus' (Keen 1994:13). Their social organisation is characterised by exogamous clans which are recruited by patrilineal descent. Yolŋu clan territories extend along the coast, islands and mainland of northeast Arnhem Land, from Cape Stuart and east of the Liverpool River to the Gulf of Carpentaria and south to Blue Mud Bay and the Walker River. Although the Yolŋu are significantly found in populations on islands along the northeast coast of Arnhem Land, they are socially and culturally distinct from the Aboriginal people of Groote Eylandt and Bickerton Island.

Within the broad designation of Arnhem Landers, the Yolŋu are linguistically and in some ways socially and culturally distinct from Aboriginal people from central and western and even from other east Arnhem Land groups. Even so, Keen (1994:4-7) argues that in the 1970s the Yolŋu were not a 'bounded community' and there was social interaction, including marriage and sometimes ceremonial co-operation with other Aboriginal groups. This has been the case with neighbouring people to the west, especially with the Burarra and other language speakers at Maningrida and in the Cape Stuart area and with Aboriginal groups in the south-east and at Numbulwar.

Though the Yolŋu still travel about their clan lands for economic, social and ceremonial purposes, they are now largely a settled people in the five major communities of Yirrkala, Gapuwiyak, Galiwin'ku, Milingimbi and Ramingining and in numerous smaller homeland centres dispersed throughout clan lands. These Yolŋu communities are geographically and administratively remote from Darwin, the capital city of the Northern Territory, and are largely serviced from the capital by air and sea transport and by radio-telecommunications. Although there are road links between Yolŋu mainland communities and Darwin, they are rough and seasonally unreliable, especially beyond Ramingining (see maps 1 & 2).

In the 1990s, there are opportunities for Yolŋu to interact and intermarry with neighbouring groups of Aboriginal people in Arnhem Land and for Yolŋu women to marry Balanda (white people) who come to work and stay for a time in Yolŋu communities. Moreover, when Yolŋu move to Darwin and other urban centres, their social contacts widen and so do Yolŋu women's opportunities for sexual-marital relations with Balanda, who form the urban majority, with urban Aborigines, Aboriginal people in town and from further afield and more exceptionally with Torres Strait Islanders, Maoris.
and men of other ethnic origins in Darwin.

Despite historical and ongoing forces for change it is apparent that the Yolŋu in remote communities and those who come to Darwin have retained a distinctively Yolŋu way of life. For example, Yolŋu social organisation continues to be based on moiety, subsection and classificatory kinship and clan and country affiliations. The Yolŋu speak Yolŋu-matha (Yolŋu languages) as their first language and participate in a complex ceremonial life. I am interested in the extent to which Yolŋu maintain their distinct social and cultural identity when they leave their remote communities and lands and move to Darwin, the capital city of the Northern Territory.

The word *Yolŋu* means literally person, human, black person, Aboriginal and more specifically the Yolŋu people of northeast Arnhem Land (Zorc 1986:284). As a collective name for the Aboriginal people of northeast Arnhem Land, Yolŋu has come to replace the names which earlier ethnographers used, including *Murngin* (Warner 1937), *Wulamba* (Berndt 1955) and *Miwuyt* (Shapiro 1969). Later ethnographers, principally Keen (1978, 1994), Morphy (1977, 1991), Reid (1983) and Williams (1986, 1987) have used the term Yolŋu, by which name the Aboriginal people of northeast Arnhem Land describe themselves and are now commonly known.


To various extents, this literature has examined not only the traditional features but also the social changes in Yolŋu life since contact with Balanda. In particular, Berndt (1962) documented an adjustment movement in northeast Arnhem Land in the 1950s, when some Yolŋu leaders sought to shape the direction, content and speed of social change. None of these studies has a particular focus on women, children and family life as has some research among neighbouring groups of Aboriginal people in Arnhem Land, (most notably Burbank 1980, 1987, 1988b & 1990; Cowlishaw 1978, 1979 & 1982; Hamilton 1981b, 1984). Burbank, Cowlishaw, and Hamilton have, in their separate ways, suggested that as well as introduced forces for change, there are differences of interest internal to Aboriginal society, and they focused on relations between the sexes, on marriage and the socialisation of children.

The present thesis explores how external forces for change act upon stresses
Map 1. Yolgu clan 'country' in Arnhem Land (adapted from Keen 1994:77)

Approximate area to which Yolgu languages are affiliated.
Chapter 1. Introduction

internal to Yolŋu society and how this conjunction of forces is implicated in the movement of Yolŋu women, children and family groups to Darwin. In particular, I investigate how Yolŋu respond to the stresses and changes that affect marriage, the residential unit, and the rearing of children in times of rapid change and in the city.

Although the Yolŋu are an encapsulated minority people within the Northern Territory and the Australian nation, they are a majority people in their own remote communities and clan lands. Under the terms of the Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act (1976) and the Commonwealth government policy of self-determination for Aboriginal people, the Yolŋu are recognised as indigenous landowners with limited powers of local self-government in their own communities and clan lands. Even so, their status as a remote-dwelling Aboriginal minority, who are largely dependents of the welfare state, predominantly shapes Yolŋu and Balanda relations of power. Government agency via sponsored travel and accommodation schemes, the centralisation of comprehensive services in the city and the provision of social security incomes and subsidies, is a major force in the transience and migration of Yolŋu to Darwin.

Since the 1970s, when welfare mechanisms of government escalated in remote Aboriginal communities and rural-urban mobility became increasingly possible, the Yolŋu have found it easier and more attractive to travel to Darwin. In the city they seek better health, housing, education and employment prospects, as well as more personal autonomy in their sexual-marital lives and socio-economic circumstances and more recreational opportunities, including drinking alcohol.

The Yolŋu move to Darwin for transient purposes and to settle more permanently, and their status as an indigenous landowning and locally self-governing people in northeast Arnhem Land counts for little in the city. The Yolŋu experience new dimensions of their subordinate and encapsulated status as they come into more direct contact with the private sector of the economy and bureaucracies of government. In the city, Yolŋu must negotiate their way in English and with strangers, whether they interact with mainstream urban services or with Aboriginal liaison structures.

When the Yolŋu move between their remote communities and clan lands to Darwin, they do not simply relinquish their cultural inheritance as they arrive nor do they merely bring with them some distinctive cultural appearances. While they experience new dimensions of government via urban bureaucracies and services, the Yolŋu continue to be 'governed' by Yolŋu social organisation and ceremonial life as they move through and settle in Darwin. As they try to obtain the benefits of citizenship in the city, the Yolŋu also try to maintain for themselves, and develop for their children, their indigenous rights
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in their remote communities and clan lands and to a distinctively Yolŋu way of life in Darwin.

The Yolŋu endeavour to balance "two-ways, the Yolŋu-way and the Balanda-way" of life in their remote communities and clan lands, but when they come to Darwin, they find that the Balanda way is more dominant and more pervasive. External forces in the form of government agencies are concentrated in Darwin, and Yolŋu social organisation and ceremonial life are attenuated outside Yolŋu clan lands and in urban centres. Yolŋu women in Darwin not only try to find a balance of "two-ways, both ways" but attempt to negotiate their own way now as they are governed by the benefits and the constraints of both the Yolŋu way and the Balanda way of life. The Yolŋu also find that life in the city, in certain respects, offers more opportunities for personal autonomy than are possible or permissible in remote communities. To this extent, I argue that there are three major forces which influence the movement of Yolŋu to and from Darwin and the migration of Yolŋu to the city: the agency of the welfare state, Yolŋu social organisation and ceremonial life, and individual Yolŋu who make decisions and set out on their own life journeys.

1.1.1 The field and the method.

I encountered the Yolŋu facing these dilemmas of city life in Darwin after I had already lived among them in a Yolŋu community in northeast Arnhem Land. In 1974 I was employed as a teacher-librarian to help implement the Commonwealth Library Grant at a local Aboriginal school in a remote Yolŋu community in northeast Arnhem Land. During my six months stay there a senior Yolŋu woman befriended me and gave me a subsection name and a Yolŋu personal name. She became my Yolŋu māri (mother's mother) when she 'adopted' me according to the Yolŋu classificatory kinship system as her gutharra (daughter's child). My māri reached across the divide of generation and of culture to foster in me, a Balanda, at the time young and single, an interest in learning about the "Yolŋu way" of life. This interest did not abate when I left the remote community, and eventually led me to postgraduate research among Yolŋu who moved to and from their remote communities and Darwin.

My māri had been a senior wife in a polygynous marriage in her own community but she was a widow when she migrated to the city in the mid 1980s and set up household in a Housing Commission house in Palmerston, a satellite town of Darwin. It was this circumstance which shaped my decision to undertake fieldwork within the Yolŋu kinship network to which she introduced me and which spans Darwin and Yolŋu communities in
northeast Arnhem Land. This kinship network extends between urban and remote-dwelling kin with the density and frequency of links clustering most on the Yolŋu communities of Galiwin'ku, Milingimbi and Ramingining and their respective smaller homeland communities. Yolŋu from Gapuwiyak, Yirrkala and homeland centres in the most easterly part of northeast Arnhem Land are least numerous, and kinship links to these easterly communities are least developed among Yolŋu in Darwin.¹

The Yolŋu tend towards a division of sociality and of ceremonial life into gender and purpose specific groups, so as a woman with children of my own, I spent most of my fieldwork in the company of Yolŋu women and children. The most intensive period of my fieldwork was between February 1988 and January 1990 and in mid 1991, when I was again invited by Yolŋu kin in Darwin to attend ceremonies in a remote community in northeast Arnhem Land. As an "adopted" member of the kinship system and a Balanda with local knowledge and resources in the city, I was made welcome in the extensive kinship network to which my märi had introduced me.

From the outset, I made my research purposes clear but this did not detract from, and indeed was facilitated by, the fact that I was regarded as an "adopted" member of an extended family, and was known more widely in Yolŋu kinship networks by my subsection name. In locating myself as kin as well as participant observer and author, I do not pretend that I stepped 'outside' of the overall framework of relations of power between Yolŋu and Balanda.²

For the most part, however, I did not intervene between and on behalf of Yolŋu in their interactions with urban bureaucracies, for example with hospital, hostel and housing authorities. I learnt to sit on the floor and on the ground with Yolŋu kin groups, in parks and on foreshores, in and outside of urban buildings, and otherwise kept in company with Yolŋu, so that my presence as a Balanda did not cause me to be singled out as an interpreter or broker between Yolŋu kin and Balanda and Aboriginal liaison personnel, who were agents of government, church and the private sector in Darwin.

When and where possible I helped Yolŋu kin, especially with transport, moving belongings to vacate a house after a death, taking women and children hunting in

¹ The low incidence of interaction with Yolŋu from the more easterly clan lands within this kinship network may be explained by Yolŋu informants who say they marry to the west and have few affinal connections with Yolŋu to the east. Moreover, eastern clans largely look to the mining town of Nhulunbuy for urban amenities and services and in consequence are less numerous in Darwin.

² See Myers (1986b) for a discussion of the 'politics of representation', and Marcus (1990:3-16) for a critique of the position of the author and the 'problems of power in creating ethnographic texts', in relation to anthropological discourse and Australian Aborigines. For a wider discussion of the relations of power between the one who represents the Other and of the presence of the ethnographer/author in the research and in the text see Said (1988, 1989) and Fabian (1990).
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Darwin's estuarine and bush environs, meeting kin at the airport, visiting kin in hostels and suburban housing or in hospital, finding and taking messages to women in alcohol-drinking camps; in fact, with innumerable tasks as a driver for "the families".

Mobility and access to resources are of key importance to the Yolŋu in Darwin, but apart from my transport services, it was as important, if not more so, that I should "sit down" and "keep company" with Yolŋu women in everyday and happy times as well as in times of crisis and distress. Most importantly, I participated in mourning and in funeral rituals and travelled to a remote community for ceremonies and to visit kin and country.

In response to invitations I made four trips to accompany kin when they flew home for funeral rituals and to visit kin and country during the mid-year and end of year school holidays. These visits allowed me to participate in some of the same activities as do urban-dwelling kin when they stay with their rural-dwelling kin, renew their attachment to their clan lands and participate in ceremonies. Then in July 1991, at the request of a Yolŋu married couple who have lived (and he has worked) in Darwin for many years, I again visited a remote community to document the "finish up" of the circumcision ceremonies for their eldest boy, a lad of about ten at the time, who had lived for much of his childhood with his parents in Darwin.

Yolŋu kin have been generous in their efforts to involve me in their lives, to invite me into their homes and to participate in their activities and in those aspects of ceremonial life which are open to women. My participation in this kinship network is of long standing so that I have insights into the lives of particular kin which exceed the limited period of my fieldwork and which in fact spans twenty years of contact with Yolŋu. Unless otherwise stated, however, my field research was largely confined to the years 1988-91, except that the quantitative data on Yolŋu movements to the public hospital and various campuses and Yolŋu residence in hostels and public rental housing were obtained in 1993. A few postscripts on recent developments in the lives of Yolŋu in Darwin have also been added.

While it is true to say that I spent most of my time in the company of female kin and their children, the presence and influence of Yolŋu males is quite strong in my data. This is in large measure due to the fact that I participated in Yolŋu ceremonial life and to the influence of male kin beyond their roles in and explanations about ceremony. My close japipi (mother's brothers) were keen to discuss with me their more general concerns about their womenfolk and women's children in Darwin as well as their more specific kinship responsibilities, in particular for their sisters and sisters' children who lived in the city.
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A case study approach afforded me the best opportunity to follow the lives of Yolŋu as individuals and as family groups and the longer-term processes of Yolŋu rural-urban mobility and urban migration. This method also allowed me to explore in some contextual depth the three factors that predominantly shape the movement of Yolŋu to Darwin, namely the interventions of welfare government, the dynamics of Yolŋu social organisation and ceremonial life and the agency of Yolŋu women themselves, as they make choices in life and move to live in Darwin.

Sometimes the explicit commentary of individual Yolŋu is offered, but more often a Yolŋu point of view is intrinsic to the stories as they unfold within the case studies and chapter by chapter. For purposes of confidentiality and because Yolŋu avoid the use of personal names in certain circumstances, Yolŋu as individuals in case studies and those contributing opinions and explanations are identified by either kinship terms, subsection names or Yolŋu language pseudonyms. The Yolŋu use kin terms, subsection names, pseudonyms (often totemic names), and personal names interchangeably in every day conversation, so my usage is not inconsistent with theirs.

Some individuals feature in several chapters at different times in their lives so there is a sense of urban life trajectories as well as the longer rhythms of rural-urban mobility. There are also additional data about other individuals who have made similar decisions for themselves and their children and experienced similar circumstances, so that generalisations and predictions can be made about the wider Yolŋu experience of urban transience and migration and of life in Darwin.

Much existing statistical information does not sufficiently disaggregate the Yolŋu from other Aboriginal people in Darwin, but wherever I have been able to obtain quantitative data which do so, I have included them so as to set the Yolŋu in the wider contexts of rural-urban mobility and urban settlement of Aboriginal people in the city. For example, I have given considerable attention to where the Yolŋu are situated in comparison with other Aboriginal people in Darwin in terms of Aboriginal special purpose leases, Aboriginal hostels, and in terms of mainstream housing.

In the wider Aboriginal population in Darwin the Yolŋu are a small but socially and culturally distinct minority of Aboriginal people, who move to and live in Darwin for transient purposes as well as to settle more permanently. The Yolŋu with whom I interacted were a small but significant part of all the Yolŋu who moved through and lived in Darwin during the years 1988-93. During that time and in my capacity as 'adoptive' kin and accepted participant in this kinship network of Yolŋu migrants and transients in Darwin I became familiar with some 186 Yolŋu kin. Of this number, 22 adult males, 37
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adult females and 38 children aged 15 years and under were migrants to Darwin as determined by my criteria of permanent urban residence as distinct from urban transience. The remainder, 29 adult males, 30 adult females and 30 children aged 15 years and under are recorded by me as having short-term residence in Darwin and transient status.³

These numbers are based on my interaction within a Yolŋu kinship group and do not represent a complete census of Yolŋu in hospital beds, on residential campuses, in hostel rooms, in suburban houses and flats or in camps in and around Darwin during my fieldwork. I did, however, obtain numerical data for Yolŋu in hostels, Housing Commission housing, on urban campuses and in urban employment in 1993.

A participant observation approach from within a kinship network, rather than a survey and statistical method was chosen because I was interested in the social and cultural dimensions of rural-urban transience and migration and the experience of life in Darwin from a Yolŋu perspective. For this reason, my data concentrate not so much on the incidence of, but the processes by which Yolŋu engage (or disengage) with urban services during the everyday and the exceptional events in their lives.

1.2 The theory and literature.

1.2.1 Rural urban mobility.

The movement of Yolŋu to Darwin produced a very different picture than that depicted by Sansom (1980) of Aboriginal people who were moving to the fringe camps of Darwin in the 1970s. Sansom was predominantly interested in Aboriginal men who came from the more immediate hinterland of Darwin to urban fringe camps and pursued an alcohol-drinking style, whereas Yolŋu women, children and family groups come from more remote country and on the whole have pursued a sober lifestyle in residential campuses, hostels and in suburban housing.

Sansom (1980:7) found that the Aboriginal fringe-dwellers were not well integrated into urban institutions, whereas Yolŋu women, children and family groups move to Darwin precisely so as to access urban institutions providing health, housing and education services, and a number of Yolŋu hold urban employment. For example, my *māri* moved to live in Darwin in order to be close to one of her sons and his young family. Her son had been able to transfer into urban employment and had moved his wife

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³ The criteria I used to distinguish between Yolŋu who were transients in the city and those who were migrants included length of residence, type of residence, address for receipt of Social Security cheques and integration into urban life by means of housing, schools and employment. I also noted that some Yolŋu were permanently resident in Darwin even though they were itinerant and not well integrated into urban life by means of urban housing and other services.
and children to the city when the youngest child was found to have a continuing need for specialist medical and hospital services.

While she had come to the city in response to the obligations of kinship, namely to help her son and his wife in caring for her grandchildren, at the same time märi exercised her autonomy as a widow with a pension income and the ability to move to the city and set up a household in her own right. As a pensioner with two dependents, a young adult but still single daughter and one of her son's children, she qualified for, and after a waiting period, obtained rental housing from the Housing Commission, an agency of the Northern Territory Department of Lands, Housing and Local Government. The household my märi set up and the life she led drew my attention to the challenge all Yolŋu face when they decide to "sit down" (to stay, to live) in Darwin; that is, how to obtain what the city has to offer without losing their cultural inheritance in kin, country and ceremony.

While Yolŋu women's households in Darwin are similar in some respects to Aboriginal matrifocal households in Alice Springs in the 1970s as described by Collman (1979, 1988), there are important differences. Collman characterises Aboriginal women as choosing between two types of domestic economy, one based on marriage and the intermittent incomes, mobility and country orientation of Aboriginal men, who were employed in the pastoral industry and had traditional responsibilities in land, and the other based on women's sexual-marital autonomy, care of children, reliable welfare incomes and a focus on a settled way of life and the opportunities and services available to women and children in the urban centre. While Yolŋu women, children and married families have chosen to live in Darwin to obtain urban opportunities and services, an adequate explanation of their rural-urban and urban-rural movements must be sought beyond a purely economic one in the dynamics of Yolŋu social and ceremonial life and with reference to the decisions and actions of individuals.

The historical and economic circumstances of the pastoral industry which shaped the lives of Aboriginal people elsewhere in the Northern Territory and which set up the oscillation between employed-time in the country and lay-off time in town (Sansom 1980; Collman 1988) have not applied to the Yolŋu to any extent. The history of northeast Arnhem Land as an Aboriginal Reserve and more recently as Aboriginal land together with the natural features and remoteness of Yolŋu clan lands, has largely insulated the Yolŋu from earlier patterns of labour-related mobility experienced by other Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory and elsewhere in Australia. When Yolŋu men as husbands, fathers, household heads and bread-winners are missing from Yolŋu
matrifocal households in Darwin, this is not because of the rhythms of private industries. Yolŋu women and children have not had to move to Darwin to obtain a more settled lifestyle or more reliable incomes, as they are settled and in receipt of reliable incomes, predominantly pension incomes, but also wage-salary and community development and employment programme (CDEP) incomes, in their own remote communities.

Even so, Collman's argument that Aboriginal women and children became integrated into urban life via women's welfare incomes and access to urban housing in ways that marginalised Aboriginal men (Collman 1979:379-397; 1988:105-125) seemed to be a useful starting point for my analysis of how Yolŋu women and children came to live in matrifocal family units in Aboriginal hostel rooms and in Housing Commission flats and houses in Darwin. I decided to investigate the agency of the welfare state in bringing Yolŋu women, children and family groups to Darwin and in promoting the motives and providing the means for Yolŋu to settle in the city.

While government policy is that Aborigines should enjoy the full rights of citizenship within their own remote communities, the political and economic realities are that the State provides services most comprehensively for citizens in the city. In response to the centralisation of specialist and comprehensive services and higher standards of living in urban centres, Yolŋu and other remote-dwelling Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory have come to circulate through and migrate to urban centres and to Darwin, the capital.

In the Northern Territory, government departments target remote-dwelling Aboriginal women and children as people in special need of the more comprehensive health and education services which are only available in urban centres, in Darwin, and in exceptional cases, in southern capital cities. Centralised government provides a limited range and standard of services to remote areas and to Aboriginal communities, and schemes are in place to circulate remote-dwelling people through urban centres, there to be serviced and then duly returned to their remote communities. The fact that practically every remote-dwelling Aboriginal woman in the Territory will at some time in her life be sponsored to travel to an urban centre, at least to give birth and to access antenatal care in an urban hospital, is illustrative both of the extent of government sponsorship of rural-urban mobility and of government intervention in the lives of remote-dwelling Aboriginal people. The bureaucratic schemes which sponsor remote-dwelling people in the Northern Territory to move to urban centres to access urban services are described in Chapter 4, where evidence is given of the numbers of Yolŋu moving under the auspices of these schemes to Darwin.
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Government schemes that sponsor remote-dwelling people to move to major urban centres include medical evacuation, patient assisted travel and accommodation, inter-hospital transfers within the Territory and inter-state, sponsored travel to and board at various residential campuses for secondary and higher education, for theological and community development courses and for occupational training. Because the Yolŋu are remote-dwelling people, these services typically entail not simply commuter-type travel but require a component of urban residence for the duration of treatment, semester, conference or the like. The schemes that sponsor rural-urban travel are circular in nature and are designed to 'repatriate' Aboriginal clients to their communities of origin and clan lands.

Although legal processes do bring remote-dwelling Aborigines to Darwin, I have not researched these institutional dimensions of Yolŋu mobility (cf. Gale 1972:227-242; Gale & Wundersitz 1986 on Aborigines, the police and the courts in Adelaide). Here I am concerned with what I call the nurturant rather than the policing powers of government, with one important exception, that is, the role of the Office of the Coroner. For the Yolŋu not only experience the urban management of death, because the seriously ill are hospitalised in Nhulunbuy and Darwin, but they are also subject to the urban conduct of coronial inquiries, autopsies and certification of death. Again, departmental procedures exist to repatriate the deceased for burial in communities of origin.

The Yolŋu have responded to their experience of the urbanisation of death by developing ritual sequences for use in Darwin and Nhulunbuy, where the appropriate rituals ensure the spiritual dimensions of the repatriation of deceased kin, even as various government departments take responsibility for the physical repatriation of the deceased for burial by kin on clan land. How the Yolŋu have extended their social organisation and ceremonial life to respond to and shape rural-urban mobility and to meet the exigencies of life and of death in the city became a major focus of my research.

From the time of birth, throughout life, and at death various government departments centralised in Darwin govern the remote-dwelling Yolŋu by bringing them into the city, there to be attended to and later returned to remote communities and clan lands. Yolŋu women, children and family groups become familiar with the city and its services by means of government sponsored schemes to bring them into Darwin to the hospital, to school, to various campuses for further education and occupational training in Darwin and the nearby educational village of Batchelor and to accommodate them for the duration of treatment, course or the like. While various government departments shape the process of familiarisation with the city, raise expectations about standards of living,
especially in terms of health, housing and education, the centralised State does not deliver comparable services or standards of living in remote Aboriginal communities. It is an unintended consequence of State agency that the controlled movement of Aboriginal people to urban centres should take on a momentum of its own.4

This momentum is evident to the extent that Yolŋu social organisation and ceremonial life have adjusted to new circumstances and extended to the city but is also apparent in the strategies of individuals, in particular of Yolŋu women, as they move to Darwin for transient purposes and to settle more permanently.

After sponsored introductions to the city and to urban services, some Yolŋu women decide to move to Darwin on their own initiative, both to access the better standards of living there and to exercise greater personal autonomy. I wanted to know to what extent social and marital change preceded and continued to shape the trajectories of Yolŋu women and children as they moved to live in the city. While the welfare state ostensibly upholds the value and integrity of the family, welfare measures also provide the stimulus and means for Yolŋu women and children to move to the city and to settle there independent of Yolŋu men as spouses and fathers.5

1.2.2 Women and children, social change and cultural transmission.

In investigating the agency of government in bringing about social change, I had also to discern the operation of differences of interest within Yolŋu society, especially between men and women but also between the generations and close and wider kin in response to introduced ideas, new opportunities, and to the interventions of the welfare state. I needed to reconsider the cultural background and the 'integration' of Yolŋu society as documented in the field by Warner in the late 1920s and in published form in 1937 (Warner 1969).

Warner describes the Murngin (i.e. Yolŋu) as 'a complete and well-organised society' (1969:10-11) based on the organising principle of a dichotomy between men as sacred and superordinate and women as profane and subordinate (1969:384). Warner's fieldwork in the early years of contact with whites and of settlement at missions provided little evidence of the potential for dissension within this order or of marital change among the Murngin. Even by the mid 1970s, when the impact of social change and welfare

4 Gilbert & Gilbert (1989:178) say that, 'the normative effects of social welfare policies are difficult to gauge because they often appear as unanticipated consequences. These policies are ordinarily designed to meet pressing needs, not to mould social norms'.

5 One of the 'consistent ambiguities' of the Welfare State is evident in the contradiction between an ideology of the family and policies and services directed to individuals (Taylor-Gooby 1985:115).
intervention was escalating, Keen (1978:18-19) finds 'no dramatic differences between the generations' in marriage practices. More recently, Keen (1994:298) describes the 1970s as a time in which 'the most significant of changes' in Yolŋu communities was 'the provision of alternatives to which the individual could turn'. Certainly from this time onwards, some Yolŋu women responded to the alternatives offered by introduced ideas about marriage and new economic means and opportunities for women by moving to Darwin to exercise more personal autonomy in their lives.

The Yolŋu system of "promised" (arranged) and polygynous marriage has undergone radical changes which have accelerated over the past twenty years. Among the Yolŋu today, features of marital change include the decline of polygyny and rise of monogamy as a norm, the phenomenon of various forms of single womanhood, evident when Yolŋu women live outside Yolŋu marriage as widows, estranged wives, unmarried mothers, single girls, career women, and women who marry inter-ethnically and migrate outside clan lands to urban centres, especially to Darwin.

For example, my mâiri was a widow and her daughter a single adult when they moved to Darwin and in their separate ways both women were indications of marital change among the Yolŋu. Formerly in eastern Arnhem Land and elsewhere in northern Australia, Aboriginal females were noted as never having single status (Hamilton 1984:76; Goodale 1980:226-229). Among the Yolŋu, females were betrothed before or at birth and reassigned in marriage by an aging husband or consequent upon his death (Warner 1969:63-85, 49-52). In the 1980s, however, Burbank (1980, 1987, 1988a, 1988b, 1990) finds strong evidence of marital change and of single womanhood among Aboriginal women in southeast Arnhem Land.

Burbank (1987:232) notes that cultural definitions of 'correct' marriage continued to be salient. When the ideal is stronger than the practice and the social sanctions and constraints are still in force to uphold the norm of 'correct' relations of marriage, there is potential for far-reaching social conflict. Burbank argues that conflicts between men and women, the older and younger generations, and between close and wider kin in southeast Arnhem Land were significantly traced to sexual-marital issues.

Williams (1987:126-129) says that in the early 1970s among the Yolŋu in northeast Arnhem Land disputes about sexual-marital relations were pre-eminent in a category defined by Yolŋu as "little trouble", that is as Yolŋu business rather than as a matter for Balanda authorities, specifically the police and the courts. Sanctions such as ostracism, gossip, argument, and certain ritual disciplines including violence which did not attract the intervention of the police, continued to be applied in disputes over sexual-
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When conflicts are not readily resolved and the rebels are so discomfited by pressures and sanctions that they conform, then movement to the city for a break or to live more permanently becomes an attractive option. In the 1980s, Burbank (1988) documents Aboriginal women in southeast Arnhem Land tending to reject Aboriginal marriage, and some were choosing to leave remote communities, migrate to Darwin and marry white men. Aboriginal women who chose those courses of action were described as 'stepping out' of an Aboriginal system of marriage (Burbank 1988:111-12). This is not to say that Aboriginal women placed themselves and found their children placed outside of an Aboriginal system of social organisation when they moved to urban centres and married inter-ethnically.

While I was interested in whether Yolŋu women moved to Darwin the better to exercise personal choice in their sexual-marital lives, I also wanted to find out whether and to what extent their lives and that of their children were still influenced by rights and obligations in kin, country and ceremony. For example, were there specific relations of kinship and particular mechanisms of social and ceremonial life that were activated so that Yolŋu women and their children were not 'lost' and followed only the Balanda way in the city?

Following from this, it was important to investigate the more long-term effects on the affiliation and socialisation of the children of Yolŋu women as children grew up in urban households based on Yolŋu marriage, Yolŋu women's matrifocal households and on inter-ethnic marriages. Collman (1988:119-25) found that the extent to which Aboriginal women in Alice Springs committed themselves to men as husbands and as fathers of their children was signalled in the naming and filiation of children and in the way in which kinship was reckoned. In Aboriginal women's matrifocal households in Alice Springs, Collman found that the father-child link and patronymics were often suppressed. Something else was happening among Yolŋu women in Darwin: they were co-operating with senior Yolŋu men and other kin in northeast Arnhem Land to establish socially determined patrilateral links to kin and country. These links were initially established by the bestowal of names on infants who were born outside Yolŋu marriage and in the city.

The Yolŋu have a strong cultural emphasis on patrilineal clan descent as well as on matrilateral rights in clan and land (Williams 1986:47-56), but in circumstances where children were born outside Yolŋu marriage, whether of full Yolŋu descent or of mixed-
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descent, one might expect that Yolŋu women and their children would rely solely on matrikin for support and on matrifilial links to remote communities and to clan lands. Yet Yolŋu women who were unmarried mothers or married to non-Yolŋu spouses in Darwin consistently said that both their infants of full Yolŋu descent and of mixed-descent received Yolŋu personal names from riggitj (place sacred to particular people), bestowed by Yolŋu men who stood in close classificatory relations to the children as māri'mu (father's father), bāpa (father) or from classificatory female patrikin.

As the Yolŋu men confirmed what I had been told, I began to see that naming and affiliation traced from the genitor might be suppressed or at least subtended by socially defined patrikin. The Yolŋu personal names bestowed on infants, whatever their descent and whatever their mothers' marital status and urban circumstances, reflected both socially determined patrilifial and actual matrifilial links to deceased ancestors, living kin and clan country.

Yolŋu marriage was often not the organising principle that shaped the lives of Yolŋu women and their children in Darwin, yet the wider relations of kinship and clan membership continued to uphold and to shape the Yolŋu way of life in circumstances of social and marital change and in the city. When Yolŋu women and their children did not have acknowledged and interactive Yolŋu husbands and fathers respectively, there seemed to be mechanisms of kinship and of recruitment to clan which adjusted to the lack of ties by marriage, substituted for the missing relationships and paths of affiliation and mitigated against disjunctions in Yolŋu social organisation. I decided to focus on the mechanisms and transformations of the Yolŋu system of social organisation that worked to align Yolŋu women and children in Darwin with kin, clan and country in northeast Arnhem Land.

Although the initial ties were made by the bestowal of Yolŋu personal names in infancy, these ties would need to be further developed throughout childhood if the children of Yolŋu women in Darwin were to "grow up the Yolŋu way" and develop their rights and responsibilities in kin, country and in ceremonial life. It was therefore necessary to investigate the strategies of Yolŋu parents, of Yolŋu women as single mothers, as wives in inter-ethnic marriages, and the relations of kinship which were activated so as to claim to raise children the Yolŋu way as they lived in the city. It was also important to determine to what extent return visits and reverse migration to remote communities were strategies in the Yolŋu way of "growing up" the children of Yolŋu women in Darwin. These then were some of the questions I hoped to resolve about social change and cultural transformation among Yolŋu family groups as they moved between
their remote communities and Darwin and as they came to live more permanently in the city.

Then, just as I was to begin my field work, in February 1988, my māri died suddenly. In the mortuary rituals which began in Darwin and were to conclude in her home community, I gained my first real insights into that complex of Yolŋu social organisation and ceremonial life which binds widely dispersed kin together in their obligations in kin, country and ceremony. Yolŋu kin temporarily broke from their separate purposes in the city and gathered together from dispersed residences in order to "smoke" houses and vehicles to release them from the dangers of death and to perform the mortuary rituals beside the "coffin plane", which was chartered to repatriate the deceased from Darwin for funeral ceremonies and burial among kin and in clan lands.

It seemed to me that the mortuary rituals of "smoking" houses and vehicles and especially the rituals of repatriation held beside the "coffin plane" indicated a major adjustment of Yolŋu to life in Darwin. These mortuary rituals which were held in Darwin enabled urban-dwelling kin to fulfil some of their responsibilities in kinship and ceremony while in the city. At the same time, the further obligation of the principal mourners to return to remote communities for the funeral ceremonies and burial punctuated and challenged their urban lives and reinforced ties to kin and country.

Following the death of my māri and my participation in the mortuary rituals in Darwin and in the funeral ceremonies in her remote community of origin, I was drawn more into interaction with her surviving family and the wider kinship network which spans Yolŋu who live in Darwin and kin in remote communities. During the years of my fieldwork, I was to learn more about the importance of death and of other critical events and processes in the lives of Yolŋu as individuals and as families. At these critical times, Yolŋu social order is most apparent in attempts to reinforce norms and values and to realign individuals and family groups in terms of kin, clan and country.

The bestowal of names from clan country on infants and the mortuary rituals to start the return journey of deceased kin for funeral ceremonies and burial in remote communities seemed to be important extensions of Yolŋu social organisation and ceremonial life into the city. Bestowal of names from country on the children of urban-dwelling Yolŋu women and conduct of mortuary rituals in Darwin and the return to remote communities for funeral ceremonies and burials, are mechanisms at the extremes of life which secure for Yolŋu and their children in Darwin a rightful place among kin and in clan lands in northeast Arnhem Land.

In mechanisms of ceremonial life and social organisation, in the way rights and
obligations in kin, clan and land are maintained for Yolŋu women and developed for their children, I saw that Yolŋu men figured prominently. Not perhaps as the powerful leaders and polygynous husbands as in earlier descriptions (Warner 1969; Keen 1978 & 1982), but as kinsmen and clansmen who were still influential in the lives of Yolŋu women and children even when they lived socially separate and geographically distant. Though Yolŋu men might be 'missing' from women's matrifocal households in hostels and the suburbs, in their roles in ceremonial life and in social organisation Yolŋu men appeared to be responsible for Yolŋu women and their children, if not in marriage then at least in kinship and in ceremony, and in ensuring social and cultural reproduction in times of change and in the city.

1.2.3 Government of the families and through the family.

In the mid to late 1970s, Keen (1978:4-14) describes senior Yolŋu men in northeast Arnhem Land who had the powers and sanctions to operate a 'system of social control or government' which was founded on 'a strong relationship' between gurrutu (kinship) and mądajin' (religious law). Keen (1978, 1982) argues that the twin mechanisms of the kinship system and of religious law constitute a Yolŋu social order or government and he identifies the marriage system and rituals of male initiation as key institutions by which senior Yolŋu men exercised social control over women and youth. Initially, Keen depicts stability in Yolŋu marriage (1978:18-19), but later and on further evidence, he draws attention more to the impact of social change (Keen 1994:85). The extent of marital change among the Yolŋu, as I observed it in the late 1980s and early 1990s has led me to examine how kinship and religious law, and more particularly ceremonial practice, have been adjusted to fit new circumstances, so as to align women and children with kin, clan and country even as they live in Darwin and as often as not outside the framework of Yolŋu marriage.

When Yolŋu women and children move to live in Darwin, separate from Yolŋu men as spouses and fathers, it might be expected that not only the Yolŋu system of marriage but also the practice of ritually inducting boys into male ceremonial life would be threatened. It is necessary to take account of whether or not Yolŋu women's sons were sent to kin in remote communities in time to prepare for and be initiated in circumcision rituals held in remote communities.

If Yolŋu customs of marriage and of initiation are to various extents threatened by social change and urban migration, then perhaps the kinship system and ceremonial life in general, rather than the particular elaborations of marriage and of initiation ritual,
would provide a firmer base from which to examine how Yolŋu social organisation adjusts to circumstances of change and extends to Yolŋu women and their children in Darwin. For the Yolŋu it is the coupling of the kinship system with religious law and ceremonial practice that provides an argument that a Yolŋu system of nurturance and of pastoral power amounts to a system of governance.

Both Myers (1986) and Keen (1989) note an Aboriginal emphasis on nurturance in a domestic sense over kin as dependants and also in a wider social and cultural sense, such that an Aboriginal system of nurturance includes socialisation, cultural transmission and care of country. Hiatt's work (1962, 1965) led an earlier inquiry into Aboriginal kinship as a system of rights and obligations and the debate about whether Aboriginal social organisation constitutes a system of government. Keen (1989) re-examines this earlier debate and suggests that an emphasis on powers and institutions of authority is too closely associated with Western conceptions of government to be an appropriate framework for analysis. He argues that Aboriginal nurturance in the widest sense constitutes 'Aboriginal governance', a term which he decides to employ as distinct from 'government' and its associations with institutions of the State.6

An Aboriginal system of governance as with a welfare system of government is based on 'control as care' (cf. Keen 1989:27). Williams (1987) uses governance more in a generic sense for forms of political control, subsets of which include familial or clan structures of authority as compared with institutions of state government. She documents 'Two Laws' and the articulation of Yolŋu and white jurisdictions in the management of disputes in a Yolŋu community in northeast Arnhem Land (Williams 1987). While my interest is in nurturant rather than in politico-jural powers, I am also interested in how care and control go hand in hand.

I am also indebted to Foucault for his analysis of relations of power, definition of 'government' and for his perspectives on the role of the State in selectively appropriating responsibility for the material well-being of dependent citizens in a division of pastoral powers between the State, the Church and the Family (Foucault 1986). Donzelot (1979:48-95) contributes insights into 'government of families' and 'government through the family' in terms of relations of power within the 'clannish' family and the intervention of the State in family life via 'assistance' and 'a liberalization of intra-familial relationships'. Donzelot (1979:58-95) emphasises that women and children are targeted for care and control by both systems of 'government', that of families and of state because

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6 The term governance has come to be used in Australian and Canadian contexts to distinguish native people's systems of social order and organisation in interaction with nation-state forms of government (Keen 1989, 1994:298; cf. Cozzetto 1990; Jull 1994).
of their roles in social reproduction, cultural transmission and social change.

Following the above theoretical leads, I explore the relations of power between two nurturant regimes, a Yolŋu system of familial governance exercised in kinship and in ceremony and a State government exercised via welfare monies and community services, as experienced by Yolŋu women, children and family groups in Darwin. Yolŋu governance and welfare State government both exercise nurturant control over the individual and the family and intervene according to differences of interest within the family, between the sexes, the generations and close and wider kin to create dependence upon and loyalty to the wider social order, in the one instance as kin and clan, in the other as citizen and nation.

The two systems of nurturant powers, namely Yolŋu governance by kinship and ceremony and welfare State government by monies and services, seek to care for and to realign Yolŋu in terms of their respective solidarities and norms and values. The difficulty is that the one does not fully recognise or acknowledge the legitimacy of the other system and so the Yolŋu familial form of governance and state agencies of government are all too often acting at cross purposes. The miscommunication and lack of understanding that result when the two systems coincide but do not co-operate and when one denies the other legitimacy and the means to be fully effective, are all too readily, and unhelpfully, attributed to irreconcilable differences between Yolŋu and Balanda cultures.

In Australia, opinions of administrators vary as to why Aboriginal people including the Yolŋu 'fail' to achieve the full benefits of citizenship. While all levels of government, federal, state or territory, municipal and Aboriginal agencies of government officially recognise and act upon a policy of self-determination for Aboriginal people, in reality there tends to be confusion as to whether the problem is the failure of appropriate service delivery and of good government, or the failure of Aboriginal people to be governed and to make good citizens.⁷

Aboriginalists have argued that 'welfare colonialism' (Beckett 1988) and the shortcomings of the 'administrative imagination' (Rowse 1992) must take responsibility for the failure of many Aboriginal people to achieve even the basic standards of living, let alone the full benefits of citizenship. These approaches fall short of arguing that some

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⁷ When the Welfare State experiences 'problems of legitimacy' (Habermas 1976) and 'cannot guarantee the cultural values necessary to underpin its policies' (Taylor-Gooby 1985:8) administrators are apt to blame the recalcitrance of minority groups, the 'failure' of individuals and families to internalise dominant norms and values and 'irreconcilable differences' between cultures.
Aboriginal people, such as the Yolŋu, have a viable system of social organisation and of ceremonial life that constitutes a system of governance in uneasy articulation with external government. In their own communities and clan lands in northeast Arnhem Land, the Yolŋu have gained limited autonomy as an indigenous landowning people within the terms of the Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act (1976) and limited self-government in local town councils and community services, under the aegis of government policies of self-determination and the like for Aboriginal people. Yolŋu who are employed in local government and community services in northeast Arnhem Land are agents of kin, clan and community and of external government and an emergent interface between a Yolŋu system of governance and the bureaucracies of government. Even though Yolŋu exercise some measure of self-government via town councils and community services in their own communities, it is beginning to be acknowledged that this is an overlay of introduced forms of government superimposed on a pre-existing and continuing system of indigenous governance (cf. HRSCAA 1990:1:1).

In their own remote communities, Yolŋu women have come to predominate both as clients and in paid employment in local health clinics, schools and other community services, which are largely conducted by known kin and in Yolŋu languages. However, when Yolŋu women, children and family groups come to Darwin they must access mainstream and Aboriginal liaison services administered by strangers and in the English language. To that extent, the Yolŋu experience a reduction in their ability to be self-determining in the city and become discouraged and disadvantaged in terms of access to the very urban services which drew them to Darwin. In particular, Yolŋu women lose the important roles they played as agents of local government and agents of familial governance, which they exercised in Yolŋu communities in northeast Arnhem Land in local schools, health clinics, women’s resource centres and the like.

Despite the erosion of their rights to self-determination and the attenuation of Yolŋu governance when they move to Darwin as migrants and transients, I argue that the Yolŋu are 'governed' both by the welfare state via the provision of monies and services and by a Yolŋu system of governance exercised through kinship and ceremony. Yolŋu describe their predicament as living "both-ways, two-ways, the Yolŋu-way and the

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1 In a Marxist sense, anthropologists have described the 'articulation' of the relations and mode of production within Aboriginal society (e.g., Godelier 1984) and the 'articulation' of distinct social formations with the world capitalist system, often in terms of relations between the rural periphery and the urban centre (e.g., Carrier & Carrier 1989 on the Manus and the State in Melanesia). Here, I describe a Yolŋu system of governance, based in clan lands and attenuated by extension to the city, in articulation with agencies of the Welfare State, which are concentrated in the city and attenuated by extension into remote areas.
Chapter 1. Introduction

Balanda-way". While this Aboriginal English expression has largely been interpreted to mean two languages, two cultures, two ways of life, the Yolŋu and the Balanda (cf. Harris 1990), I suggest that for the Yolŋu "two-ways, both-ways" refers to the articulation of a Yolŋu system of governance with external agents of government and the adjustment of Yolŋu life to altered circumstances. I further argue that Yolŋu governance attempts to care for, provide services to, uphold and transmit norms and values, retain and develop group cohesion and otherwise 'govern' kin and compatriots even in the most testing circumstances of social change when Yolŋu move to "sit down" in Darwin.

1.3 The pattern and content of chapters.

The logic of patterning the ethnographic chapters on life-cycle events emerged as I became involved in the everyday as well as the more exceptional circumstances in the lives of Yolŋu women and children in Darwin. It also appeared that government welfare interventions and Yolŋu kinship responses and ceremonial rites of passage coincided at the same critical times and along much the same 'inherent lines of cleavage' (cf. Gluckman 1970:58) within Yolŋu family life as both social orders sought to effect separations, shape dependencies and solidarities and to reproduce the respective norms and values of the Yolŋu-way and the Balanda-way.

Gluckman (1970:58) says of African tribal societies that, 'customs, taboos and ceremonies' drive 'wedges into the family along inherent lines of cleavage', the better to create loyalty to and solidarity of wider kinship society and other customs cement these wider loyalties and solidarities. Chapters five through nine focus on women and marital change, the affiliation and socialisation of children, the rearing and initiation of boys, crises in health and in urban households and death and mortuary rituals among the Yolŋu in Darwin; and I explore how Yolŋu 'customs, taboos and ceremonies' (Gluckman 1970:58) effect separations and cement solidarities.

Bureaucratic, monetary and service components of government by the welfare state impinge upon Yolŋu at critical moments in the life cycle of individuals and the domestic cycle of families and intervene within the family and wider Yolŋu society. Chapters five through nine describe the Yolŋu experience of government interventions, which offer alternatives in life, alter relations between the sexes, the generations, close and wider kin and promote individual rights, smaller family forms and dependence on the state.

Chapter 2 reviews the literature on rural-urban mobility, relations of power between people of the periphery and urban centred agencies and institutions of
government, relations of power within the clan-family and between the family and the state. In particular, I note the relevance of Myers (1986) and Keen (1989) on Aboriginal nurturance and Aboriginal governance to my study, and of Donzelot (1979) on government by and through the family, and Foucault (1986) on relations of power and the limits of government. I acknowledge Yol̵u metaphors of and arguments for "two-ways, both-ways", that is more balanced relations of power and reciprocity between Yol̵u and Balanda.

In this chapter, I review the relevance of comparative literature on African and Melanesian contexts as well as sources on Aboriginal Australia, to elucidate how external forces, the dynamics of kinship and individual choices and actions shape population mobility between the country and the city. In particular, I examine the significance of marriage and marital change, affiliation and socialisation of children and obligations in kinship and in ceremony in shaping movements and maintaining links between kin in country and in town.

Chapter 3 is an historical overview which traces the influence of introduced goods, money and services on Yol̵u patterns of settlement, mobility and cross-cultural interaction. Yol̵u initiatives to exert some control over the direction, speed and content of social change in their own communities are highlighted and contrasted with Yol̵u dependence upon the centralisation in Darwin of more comprehensive services, especially health, housing and education. Remote-dwelling Aboriginal women and children such as the Yol̵u are seen to be particularly targeted by government schemes to circulate them through urban centres, ostensibly for urban services to satisfy their needs and return them to their remote communities. It is suggested that individuals with plans of their own and the dynamics of Yol̵u social and ceremonial life add momentum, other dimensions and different goals beyond those set in train by government-sponsored patterns of rural-urban mobility.

Chapter 4 describes how government sponsored travel and accommodation schemes, education and training strategies and Aboriginal and public rental accommodation and housing services in large measure shape the movement of Yol̵u women, children and family groups to Darwin. Additional data on Yol̵u and Aboriginal Hostels Limited accommodation and Housing Commission housing in Darwin is given in tables and charts in Appendixes I and II.
Chapter 5 investigates the extent to which Yolŋu women seek and achieve more personal autonomy in their sexual-marital lives and in their socio-economic circumstances in Darwin. The ability of Yolŋu women to be able to go "my own way now" in the city is argued to be not just a matter of women's choice in sexual-marital relations, but their ability to manoeuvre within the constraints of both the Yolŋu way and the Balanda way. In Darwin, Yolŋu women are seen to be constrained by obligations in kinship and in ceremony as much as by new circumstances of life in the city.

Chapter 6 concerns the naming and affiliation of the children of Yolŋu women in Darwin. Yolŋu women themselves and their concerned kin in remote communities are seen to take steps to secure for children both patrilateral and matrilateral ties to kin and country and to provide children, whether of full Yolŋu descent or of mixed-descent, whether brought up within or outside of Yolŋu marriage, with relations and opportunities that foster the Yolŋu way of "growing up" children.

Chapter 7 looks at the implications for Yolŋu in Darwin of raising their young sons in the city in terms of the Yolŋu way of socialisation and ritual initiation of boys. Yolŋu parents, Yolŋu women as single mothers and in inter-ethnic marriages are seen to face alternatives in the circumcision of their sons, whether to opt for the convenience of surgical procedures in Darwin hospital or for dhapi’ (ritual circumcision) in a remote community and clan lands. My analysis explores the marital and urban circumstances under which Yolŋu in Darwin decide to send their boys to remote communities in time to prepare for and to take part in dhapi’ ceremonies or find that the convenience of the urban hospital procedure outweighs the cultural imperative for their sons to be ritually circumcised.

Chapter 8 investigates how Yolŋu households in Darwin struggle to cope with the task of housing and helping groups of kin who come to Darwin for purposes as diverse as to accompany a patient to hospital, attend a popular music concert or go on a drinking binge. When remote-dwelling kin come to the city for various and sometimes incompatible purposes that coincide to over-expend and overburden Yolŋu households in the suburbs, the viability of well established households is seen to be threatened. Some genealogies of Yolŋu suburban households and case studies reveal how Yolŋu social organisation patterns the way in which urban households extend and contract, particularly when remote-dwelling kin come to Darwin to "keep company" with kin who are seriously ill and hospitalised. The overcrowding of Yolŋu households in the suburbs is seen to be exacerbated when Yolŋu have to rely upon kinship services, in default of urban services and at times of crisis in health and in housing.
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Chapter 9 is about Yolŋu and Balanda ways of managing death. Because acute and specialist hospital care in the Top End of the Territory is centralised in Darwin, it happens that many Yolŋu die away from kin and country in the city's public hospital. Moreover, when Yolŋu die in remote communities, the circumstances of death may need to be determined by medical autopsy and coronial inquiry, and so it is that the Yolŋu dead may be removed to the city for coronial purposes. The Yolŋu are seen to have responded to these government interventions by adapting sequences of mortuary rituals to start in the city, to initiate the ceremonial dimensions of the return of their deceased for funeral ceremonies and burial among kin and in clan lands.

Yolŋu who are based at Nungalinya College as employed staff, students and their families on campus, form an interface between urban bureaucracies and bereaved individuals, families and wider kin. They provide the core group for Yolŋu in Darwin to gather around so as to perform the rituals to "smoke" houses and vehicles in the suburbs and to "farewell the coffin plane", chartered to repatriate deceased for funeral ceremonies and burial in Yolŋu communities and clan lands. It is argued that the mortuary rituals which Yolŋu perform in Darwin are important in the development of a distinctive Yolŋu identity in the city, just as the cultural imperative to complete the funeral ceremonies and burial within clan lands is an important mechanism for the maintenance of ties to kin, clan and country.

In Chapter 10, I argue that although the Yolŋu have gained limited means for self-government and self-representation within and in respect of their own remote communities and clan lands, they experience an erosion of these gains when they move to Darwin for transient purposes and to settle there.

In northeast Arnhem Land, the Yolŋu are significantly able to conduct both local community services and local government in their own languages and to some extent according to their own criteria. My argument is that even though Yolŋu women have come to predominate in employment in local community services in northeast Arnhem Land, where they can speak for themselves and work for "all the families" (wider kin), they are typically unable to transfer within employment or obtain and retain equivalent employment in Darwin. When they come to the city, Yolŋu women, children and family groups have to deal with urban services which are conducted in English and by strangers. Data suggests that all too frequently Yolŋu experience alienation from the very services which attracted them to the city and are frustrated in their aim for better life chances in Darwin.

On the other hand, when Yolŋu women decide to reverse migrate after living
long-term in the city, they themselves, their urban reared children and in some cases their non-Yolŋu spouses find it difficult to re-integrate, or to integrate for the first time, in Yolŋu remote communities. Evidence will show that this is not only a matter of fitting into Yolŋu social and ceremonial life in remote communities, but also involves competition for limited resources such as local housing and employment and the approval of local Yolŋu clan and community leaders and town councils. The latter can exercise powers of permission and of prohibition so as to govern, to an extent, the movement and alcohol drinking habits of strangers who would enter, live and work in Yolŋu remote communities.

In Chapter 11, I summarise the difficulties which Yolŋu women experience as they attempt to balance "two-ways, both-ways" in Darwin. They seek more personal autonomy, new opportunities and higher standards of living in Darwin and yet to maintain for themselves and develop for their children a distinct cultural identity in town and ties to kin and country.

In particular, I review the evidence which reveals the extent to which the Yolŋu are experiencing difficulties in accessing the very urban services of health, housing and education which drew them to Darwin in the first place. At the same time, I conclude that despite these difficulties many Yolŋu women, children and family groups are integrating into city life, by means of urban health, housing and to an extent education services, more rarely by urban employment and in some cases within inter-ethnic marriages.

I discuss the possible directions policy initiatives and urban agencies of government might take to help Aboriginal people from remote communities, such as the Yolŋu, make the most of urban services, whether they have transient, long-term or permanent purposes in the city, and to enable them to represent themselves in urban community services. I conclude that Yolŋu lack the means in Darwin to develop a more contractual relationship between Yolŋu familial services to and governance over kin and departmental services to and government of citizens.

Finally, I make some predictions about the momentum of Yolŋu rural-urban mobility and of settlement in the city based on the evidence of my own research and recent medical and health department reports. The latter outline the present and future responses of centralised health services to the high rates of Aboriginal morbidity and mortality in remote Aboriginal communities.

That the movement of Yolŋu and other Aboriginal groups from remote communities to urban hospitals and health services has been escalating, and is anticipated to do so in the foreseeable future, has important implications for Aboriginal transient
accommodation and permanent housing services and indeed, for other urban community services. Moreover, the more idiosyncratic and kinship dynamics of Aboriginal rural-urban mobility, while less governable in a bureaucratic sense, are predictable in terms of Aboriginal governance and can be expected to increase Aboriginal mobility to urban centres and the capital. In particular, as Yolŋu become familiar with the city and family groups become established in urban housing, they provide an incentive and a resource for other kin to set out on similar life trajectories by moving to "sit down" in Darwin.
Chapter 2

Both ways
Chapter 2. *Both ways*.

2.1 Introduction: Metaphors for and dynamics of interaction.

As a people of the coast and estuarine river systems of northeast Arnhem Land it is perhaps not surprising that the Yolŋu explain their aspirations for "both ways, two ways" in cross-cultural interaction and inter-ethnic relations in metaphors of the meeting of salt water and fresh water. When the salt water tide and the fresh water spring meet there is turbulence and brackish water is formed, but ultimately the two waters remain distinct (Marika-Mununggirritj et al. 1990:12; Yunupingu 1991:98-106, 1994:8-9).

Yolŋu who have a Western tertiary education espouse the cultural basis for a philosophy of "both ways" in which relations of power between Yolŋu and Balanda are metaphorically like the meeting of the salt and fresh waters.

There is always a dynamic interaction of knowledge traditions. Fresh water from the land, bubbling up in fresh water springs to make waterholes, and salt water from the sea are interacting with each other with the energy of the tide and the energy of the bubbling spring....In this way the Dhuwa and Yirritja sides of Yolŋu life work together. And in this way Balanda and Yolŋu traditions can work together. There must be balance, if not either one will be stronger and will harm the other (Marika-Mununggirritj 1990:12).

Yolŋu have used this metaphor specifically in relation to Balanda and government agency in local community schools and other educational contexts, but also to apply to relations of power between Yolŋu and Balanda more generally (Marika-Mununggirritj et al. 1990; Yunupingu 1991:98-106). The metaphor of the meeting and mixing of the salt and fresh waters has deep significance within Yolŋu society and it has also been picked up by Yolŋu and used as an analogy of between society relations, specifically between Yolŋu and Balanda.

Elsewhere in Australia, ethnographic and theoretical perspectives have argued for and against a more divisive, dichotomous perspective on the nature of relations between Aborigines and non-Aboriginal Australians. Aboriginalists have argued about the relevance of theories and concepts of social closure and of an 'Aboriginal domain' (Trigger 1986, 1988, 1992; Rowse contra 1992), and about 'world-views' (Bain 1979; Christie 1987) and 'culture domain separation' (Harris 1990; McConvell contra 1991) and concepts of Aboriginality as 'culture of resistance' (Morris 1989, 1992) and as 'oppositional culture' (Cowlishaw 1989, 1992; Rowse contra 1990).
I have considered these perspectives but ultimately rejected them in favour of the argument that power 'is less a confrontation between two adversaries...than a question of government' (Foucault 1986:221). Foucault (1986:225) says that,

> Every power relationship implies, at least in potentia, a strategy of struggle, in which the two forces are not superimposed, do not lose their specific nature, or do not finally become confused. Each constitutes for the other a kind of permanent limit, a point of possible reversal.

Foucault (1973:326-27) describes the 'Other' as an 'unavoidable duality' 'an insistent double': This concept of double taken together with Foucault's understandings of the potential limitations in relations of power is like what Yolŋu envisage in "two-ways, both-ways" exchange between Yolŋu and Balanda cultures and knowledge traditions, where each remains distinct and neither overwhelms the other.

Following the theoretical lead of Foucault, I have sought to understand the dynamics of relations of power between Yolŋu and Balanda, between senior Yolŋu men and Yolŋu women and children and between the latter's experience of indigenous rights and responsibilities centred in remote communities and clan lands and those of citizens concentrated in Darwin. This thesis is concerned with the dynamics of relations of power and mechanisms of governance among the Yolŋu and between Yolŋu and Balanda as experienced by Yolŋu women, children and family groups as they move between their communities of origin and Darwin. The major issues addressed cluster around the three broad topics; relations of power and mechanisms of governance, women, children and social change, and rural-urban mobility and urban migration.

2.2 Relations of power and mechanisms of governance.

2.2.1 Family, church and state.

Foucault (1986:221) argues that,

> 'Government' did not refer only to political structures or to the management of states; rather it designated the way in which the conduct of individuals or of groups might be directed: the government of children, of souls, of communities, of families, of the sick.

In modern societies, 'power' is about the management of 'life' (Foucault 1979:143). Following Foucault, McHoul and Grace (1993:61) suggest that 'all forms of government' take responsibility for 'life processes'. In the West, there has been an historical division of responsibilities between the church, the state and the family in the 'government' of individuals and family groups and of such life processes as birth, death, marriage and raising children and caring for the sick and aged. Foucault (1986:213-215) describes the evolution of pastoral power in the Western world into a power dichotomy in which
Chapter 2. Both Ways

spiritual functions were largely left to the Church while temporal well-being became increasingly the province of the Welfare State.¹

Foucault (1986:213-15) identifies the Welfare State as a form of pastoral power, which exercises nurturant care over citizens by providing for their basic material needs. In Western liberal democracies, the Welfare State has historically taken responsibility for the more secular dimensions of nurturance, thereby leaving the family and the Church some measure of autonomy.²

This division of interests and of powers between the secular and the sacred, the material and the spiritual is not so readily separated in Yolŋu society, where responsibilities in social and in ceremonial life are more inter-dependent. The fact that the Welfare State has pre-determined limits with emphasis on the material rather than the moral and spiritual has allowed Aboriginal people, including the Yolŋu, a measure of autonomy in some dimensions of social organisation and of ceremonial life.

Sutton (1990:59) suggests that because the dominant cultural order undervalues much of Aboriginal life, including ceremonial life, these arenas of Aboriginal life enjoy a degree of freedom from direct intervention. This is not due to the 'apparent triviality' of these Aboriginal arenas of autonomy (cf. Rowse 1992:20f) but rather is evidence of the Western tendency to maintain a separation between spiritual and material spheres of interest. For the Yolŋu, life is not divided up in quite this way and a Yolŋu system of governance is concerned with the spiritual and material well-being of the individual and the group and operates in social and ceremonial life.

Agents of the State are not interested, for example, in contemporary Yolŋu funeral rituals but are concerned with every detail of the management of sickness, death and the altered circumstances which these entail for immediate kin. In this way, the Yolŋu exercise relative autonomy in their mourning and mortuary rituals, which address the spiritual and social reintegration of the kin group after the death of kin, while the State is

¹ In northeast Arnhem Land the Yolŋu first experienced the pastoral powers of Christian missions and after World War II, the increasing interventions of the Welfare State. Since the mid 1970s, a policy of self-determination for Aboriginal people officially came to shape relations of power between Aboriginal groups and the State. Even so, Aboriginal people, including the Yolŋu, are among the most socio-economically dependent of citizenry so that relations with the State are still largely shaped by government provision of welfare via monies and services.

² More recently in the literature on the welfare functions of the State the appellation of welfare has been replaced by the more euphemistic title of the 'Enabling State'. The literature on the welfare or enabling State attests that when it is politically and economically expedient to do so the State will devolve responsibility for nurturant services upon family life, church and voluntary organisations (Friedman, Gilbert & Sherer 1987; Gilbert & Gilbert 1989).
Chapter 2. Both Ways

concerned with medical services, death certification, pensions and other bureaucratic and welfare responses which determine the relations of the individual to the State.

These interventions are an indirect challenge to the integration of Yolŋu life, in which a system of governance by kinship and ceremony is exercised over the whole, the body and the soul, the individual and the group. Yolŋu funeral ceremonies are but one example of how Yolŋu social organisation, religious law and ceremonial practice have survived and constitute a continuing indigenous system of pastoral power and of familial governance in articulation with welfare mechanisms of government (see Ch. 9).

Foucault (1986:221) states that historically the concept of 'government', did not only cover the legitimately constituted forms of political or economic subjugation, but also modes of action, more or less considered and calculated, which were destined to act upon the possibilities of action of other people. To govern, in this sense, is to structure the possible field of action of others.

Keen (1989:34-38) acknowledges the influence of Foucault in his preference for an 'action concept' in his analysis of an Aboriginal system of governance. Keen suggests that 'control action' is manifest in 'decision making and the framing of values and norms' and in 'processes through which goals and action-plans are realised'. A 'control action' concept of relations of power and mechanisms of governance includes not only the more direct methods of 'influence, persuasion, manipulation, command and coercion' but the more indirect, long-term effects of processes of socialisation (Keen 1989:34-38).

For example, the State has little interest in the ritual initiation of Yolŋu boys in itself but every interest in the health and education of children and youth. In this way, Yolŋu initiation ceremonies and the processes of socialisation, cultural transmission and social integration which they entail are not overtly challenged, but are indirectly undermined by dominant ideology and State intervention in the form of school agendas and health services (see Ch. 7). These vehicles of dominant cultural norms and values constrain traditional practice, offer alternative courses of action, advance different goals for the maturing child and have the potential to alter relations between children and adults within Yolŋu kin and clan-based society.

While Foucault admits that socialisation must be included in any serious analysis of relations of power and systems of government, Habermas (1987:286-93) criticises Foucault for not giving language and other systems of communication sufficient prominence in his theory of relations of power. Habermas (1987:299) proposes a theory of 'communicative action as the medium through which the lifeworld as a whole is reproduced'. In the sense of Habermas, for the Yolŋu to be empowered, to be self-determining as a socially and culturally distinct Aboriginal people the Yolŋu 'lifeworld'
must reproduce itself by means of 'the propagation of cultural traditions, the integration of groups by norms and values, and the socialisation of succeeding generations' (Habermas 1987:299). Habermas argues that language is an important 'mechanism for social integration' (1987:287) and crucial to the reproduction of the 'life world' (1987:299).

Despite the intrusions of the Balanda-way and the interventions of government in family life, the Yolŋu have in large measure retained the ability to reproduce the Yolŋu-way or 'life world' in their own communities in northeast Arnhem Land. There, Yolŋu social and ceremonial life and even introduced contexts of local self-government and local community services and in particular schooling, are largely conducted in Yolŋu languages and by Yolŋu kin.

By contrast, when Yolŋu come to Darwin to seek the life chances offered by more comprehensive services in the city, especially those of health, housing and education, they must communicate their needs in English and to strangers (see Ch. 10). These altered circumstances are in large measure responsible for the disempowerment of Yolŋu in terms of their access to the very services which lead them to the city, and their ability to balance the Yolŋu dimensions of "both ways", as they experience the concentration of external government and the pervasiveness of the Balanda way in Darwin.

While Foucault is criticised for depicting the power of the State as 'essentially negative and preventive' and of having underestimated the 'material inducements' of government (Wolin 1988:182-84), Donzelot (1979:90) draws attention to the 'enticements' of the State. It is the socio-economic alternatives, the nurturant dimensions of government manifest not simply in the direct welfare of Social Security monies but in the provision of schools, higher educational and occupational opportunities, health services and housing, which are the means by which government acts upon the potential for differences within the Yolŋu family and wider kin and clan.

2.2.2 Government by and through the family.

In his analysis of the 'government' of 'clannish' working class families in France to make them approximate the norm of bourgeois families, Donzelot (1979:48-96) identifies the protagonists as on the one hand 'government of families' and on the other 'government through the family'. For my purposes, the mechanisms of 'government through the family' exerted by the Welfare State are the provision of welfare monies and community services, which provide alternative means and services and suggest alternative norms, values and goals than those offered within a Yolŋu system of familial
Donzelot is criticized for and identified with the 'revisionist' and 'social control' school of thought, which portrays the family as a passive subject of government intervention, but others counter these criticisms (see Wigman 1990: 257-59). While Donzelot (1979:85-95) suggests that working class and other subordinate groups relate perforce to the State as dependents, even then there is room for resistance to, subversion of or contract with agencies of government.

In Australia, Aboriginal people have been described as resisting and subverting colonial processes and welfare measures (see Reynolds 1981; Morris 1985, 1989; Cowlishaw 1989, 1992a). Reynolds (1981) argues that Aboriginal people both resisted and collaborated with whites; and McGrath (1987) emphasizes that some Aboriginal groups reached an accommodation with whites and their own particular circumstances of domination and encapsulation.

Yet Donzelot (1979:90) argues that there are alternatives to acceptance of or resistance to welfare interventions, and that 'better organised' families have the potential to form contractual relations with the State, so as to retain more autonomy and to restrict external interventions in family life. My argument is that within their own communities in northeast Arnhem Land, Yolŋu who are both kin and agents of local government and local community services, are an interface between familial and bureaucratic forms of governance, and they play an important part in the emergence of more contractual relations between the 'clannish' Yolŋu family and the State (cf. Donzelot 1979:90-93).

In northeast Arnhem Land, Yolŋu women have come to predominate as employed personnel in local community services of health, schooling, and other resource services and to play a role in local self-government. As both kin and agents of departments of health, education, social security and the like, Yolŋu women are an important interface between the family and the State and make a major contribution towards the emergence of a more contractual relationship between a Yolŋu familial system of governance and agencies of state government. When they come to Darwin as migrants and transients, where they lack direct representation in urban services, there is little or no opportunity for Yolŋu women to contribute to a more contractual relationship between the family and the State, between a Yolŋu system of familial governance and urban bureaucracies of government (see Ch. 10).

It is insufficient, however, to consider the Yolŋu experience of social change and of rural-urban mobility only in terms of external relations of power between Yolŋu and...
Balanda social orders and systems of governance. Donzelot (1979:90) emphasises that the 'social architectonics' of the State act upon the 'conflicts or differences of potential' within the 'clannish' working class family in France. From a different and African context, Gluckman (1970:58) argues that mechanisms internal to 'tribal' society such as 'customs, taboos and ceremonies' likewise act upon inherent lines of 'cleavage' within the family.

My argument is that an analysis of external interventions cannot be separated from that of internal relations of power and mechanisms of governance. External interventions as well as 'customs, taboos and ceremonies', which are mechanisms within Yolŋu society, both act upon inherent lines of 'cleavage' within the family at critical times of life to forge separations, shape dependencies and create new forms of solidarity.

Donzelot (1979:90) suggests that there are 'differences of potential' within the family that are targeted by agents of the State and acted upon in the form of benefits as well as constraints. These strategies of government are designed to bring about social change, the emancipation of women and youth from patriarchal authority, the erosion of the 'clannish' family in favour of more individual autonomy, smaller family forms and dependence on the State. Donzelot (1979:94) argues that social engineering is possible because the State is able 'to couple an exterior intervention with conflicts or differences of potential within the family'.

The Welfare State encourages smaller family units, 'to achieve a greater family autonomy in relation to the blocks of dependence or networks of solidarity' which shape familial social orders (Donzelot 1979:57-58). The State's policies and agencies particularly offer women and children more autonomy from 'patriarchal authority', but largely in exchange for dependence on the State.

Whereas Foucault is criticised for the limitations of his analysis of relations of power in light of post-colonialist concerns (Said 1988:9-10) and feminist questions (Sawicki 1988), Donzelot draws attention to internal as well as external relations of power and systems of government. He identifies age and gender as dimensions of relations of power within the family and says that agents of the State intervene in the family by acting upon these differences. Although Foucault and feminists are both interested in relations of power in the spheres of sexuality and personal life, feminists accuse Foucault of not addressing the issue of male domination per se and of speaking of power, 'as if it subjugated everyone equally' (Sawicki 1988:161). There are strong arguments which suggest that State power reaches its fullest expression over subordinate
minorities, the socio-economically disadvantaged and in particular over women and children within these categories.

Donzelot (1979:58) identifies women and children as the primary targets of State intervention because they are susceptible to 'the possibility of increased autonomy within the family in opposition to patriarchal authority'. He also emphasises that women and children are targeted both by mechanisms of 'government of families' and by agents of the State as women and children embody the future of social reproduction and cultural transmission as well as the potential for social change (Donzelot 1979:46).

2.3 Differences of interest within an 'integrated' society.

To understand the relations of power between Yolŋu and Balanda and the articulation of their respective systems of governance, it is useful to re-examine the classic model of an 'integrated' Murngin (Yolŋu) society as observed by Warner in the late 1920s and first documented in published form in 1937; Warner (1969) depicts Murngin society as being based on a dichotomy of politico-jural and domestic domains and asymmetry in relations of power by sex and age. On the other hand, Fortes (1969:98-122) gives an early insight into the tensions within 'integration' in Aboriginal society when he suggests that while 'the familial domain and the politico-jural domain are minimally differentiated' they constitute potential lines of dissonance among Australian Aborigines.

Female anthropologists and writers influenced by Marxist, feminist and post-structuralist perspectives, however divergent, have all argued against a structural-functional model of the integration of Aboriginal society. Bern (1979) and Rose (1987) apply a Marxist perspective to gendered relations and activities within separate Aboriginal groups in Arnhem Land. Collier and Rosaldo (1988:306) denounce Warner's application of 'Durkheimian dualities' and offer a feminist re-interpretation of sexual asymmetry among the Murngin (Yolŋu). When applied to Aboriginal contexts, a dichotomous model of gender relations is seen to be 'Eurocentric' (Larbalestier 1990:154). Socialist-feminist arguments suggest that post contact forces of colonialism, capitalism and Western masculinism have shaped inequalities between the sexes rather more than structural differentiation within Aboriginal society (eg. Rosaldo 1974; Rosaldo and Lamphere 1974; Leacock 1978; Bell 1982; Collier and Rosaldo 1988).

Feminist perspectives, which argue that Western constructions of relations of power were superimposed on relations between the sexes among Aboriginal people (Bell 1983) are found to be wanting, however, when efforts to foreground Aboriginal women
and a women's realm result in reversing the emphasis and losing sight of what Aboriginal men are doing (Hamilton 1986:7-11 on Bell 1983). A feminist focus on women, children and domestic activities tends to marginalise the public domain (Yeatman 1987) with for example an emphasis on social rather than ceremonial life. With this in mind, I resolved to keep Yolŋu men and their roles and responsibilities in kinship and in ceremony in view, even when they lived socially and geographically separate from Yolŋu women and children in Darwin.

Whether in remote communities, rural towns or in the cities, social change is said to have 'radically undermined...the gender ascription of the differentiation of social life into public and domestic domains' among Aboriginal groups (Yeatman 1984:36). In rural and settled Australia and in the absence of traditional and introduced avenues for men and youth to achieve a sense of purpose and acquire status, Aboriginal men have been drawn into the company of women and children and dependence on women and old people for pension monies, for social and moral support (Finlayson 1989).

Yet I would argue that it is important to note that while generalisation across Aboriginal groups has value it is also imperative to keep differences between Aboriginal groups in perspective, even between groups within a region and in similar remote, rural or urban contexts. For example, it is my contention that senior Yolŋu men together with "all the families" (wider kin) continue to exercise care and control over Yolŋu women and their children even when they live outside of Yolŋu marriage and in Darwin.

What then is the cultural background and the contemporary situation of gender and age related relations of power among the Yolŋu? For if external forces and mechanisms internal to Yolŋu social organisation both act upon the 'conflicts or differences of potential' (Donzelot 1979:90) within the family, wider kin and clan, it is essential to understand differentiation within Yolŋu society.

Aboriginalists of whatever persuasion have identified gender dimensions of relations of power among Aboriginal people in general (see various authors in Gale ed. 1986; Merlan 1988, 1992). In Northern Australia and Arnhem Land in particular and compared with other parts of Aboriginal Australia, the ways in which females were married and socialised (Goodale 1980; Cowlishaw 1978, 1979, 1982; Hamilton 1981), and incorporated into male dominated ceremonial life (Hamilton 1984:76; Keen 1994:244-54) were found to allow females autonomy and group co-operation within but not separate from an overall framework of male domination (Hamilton 1986:8).

Aboriginal women in Arnhem Land were seen to lack a more autonomous woman's
space, such as was evident in separate women's ceremony and women's camps in Central Australia (Hamilton 1984:76; see also Bell 1983).

2.3.1 Marriage and initiation, gender and generation.

Among some Aboriginal groups in northern Australia, polygynous marriage was a major component of social organisation, especially among the Tiwi of Bathurst and Melville Islands and the Yolŋu of northeast Arnhem Land. Before and during early contact, Tiwi and Yolŋu women and girls were never single because they were betrothed before or at birth and reassigned in marriage after the death of a husband. Women's group strength lay within marriage as co-wives in polygynous hearthholds where, at least from the women's point of view, the most senior wife was 'boss' as she exercised authority over junior wives and children (Goodale 1980: 226-229; cf Warner 1969:63-81).³

From as early as the 1930s, social change saw the demise of traditional patterns of bestowal and of gerontocratic polygyny among the Tiwi as missionaries of the Catholic Church systematically set out to introduce monogamous marriage and marital choice between partners of similar age (Hart & Pilling 1960:105-112). Social changes in the late 1950s and early 1960s including intensification of settlement, the introduction of 'old age security' monies, new opportunities for senior men to attain power and prestige and for young women and girls to aspire to education and employment, had more fully brought about marital change among the Tiwi (Goodale 1988:126).

Under conditions of settlement and social change, senior Tiwi men yielded their rights to many wives but even in monogamous marriages a number of senior Tiwi males continued to exercise sway over large extended families, including over their sister's and younger brother's families, their own children and their families and via 'adopting' children (Hart & Pilling 1960:109-111; see also Hart, Pilling & Goodale 1988:117-120).

Although the Tiwi had both patrilineal and matrilineal rights in land, the father-child relationship was the paramount principle of local organisation until social changes brought about an increased emphasis on matrilineal ties to kin and country (Hart, Pilling & Goodale 1988: 120-121). In the 1980s, Goodale documents that a 'swing back to patriliny had begun to reassert itself, following the return to Tiwi ownership and control of the lands of both islands through federal legislation in 1976' (Goodale in Hart, Pilling & Goodale 1988:121, fn.3).

In the 1990s, Robinson (1994:1) argues that the Tiwi continue to adjust so as, to preserve fundamental patterns of relationship in a context of change, to preserve patterns of familial and childhood dependence, of dependence on and between women, and forms of sociality based on these. He argues that it was not just external forces but also internally generated 'adaptive strategies' which led to the decline of Tiwi institutions of bestowal, polygyny and male initiation in favour of more 'informal arrangements' (Robinson 1992a: 556 ff., 1992b:48-50, 1994).

Formerly, Tiwi youth had a prolonged bachelorhood which was organised within the framework of male initiation and the system of marriage, and while today Tiwi youth attempt to reconstitute bachelorhood in school, sporting and recreational peer groups, there is a social void when introduced opportunities for education, employment and sporting achievement fail to fill the gap between boyhood and manhood, bachelorhood and marriage and to re-orient the youth from his natal family to wider kin, including future affines (Robinson 1992a:556 ff.). Robinson (1992a) found that violence to people and property, self-injury and suicide as well as alcohol abuse and sexual adventuring were signs that Tiwi youth were experiencing the trauma of social change, as they tried to orient themselves within the family and wider kinship community as well as to the alternatives offered but not so readily delivered by the white Australian way of life. By comparison, young Tiwi women and girls manifest their 'crises in orientation' in rebellious sexual relations and in single maternity (Robinson 1994:12).

Similarly, among the Yolŋu, women and youth exhibit the signs of frustration and confusion in having to negotiate their own way under the pressures of two systems of governance which offer alternative goals and paths to achievement. Similar pressures, although not exactly the same modes of expression, were also evident in the 1990s among the Yolŋu in northeast Arnhem Land.4

There are major differences between the Yolŋu and the Tiwi. From research undertaken in the late 1970s and more recently, Keen (1978:1-14, 1994:85-87 & 189:191) describes senior Yolŋu men as still having the powers and sanctions to 'govern' women and youth, specifically within the institutions of marriage and initiation respectively, and that older women were also partners with senior men in upholding Rom (law, culture, right way). Even so, Keen (1994:87) suggests that 'age-related polygyny was not in the

4 A social malaise, evident in petrol sniffing, kava-drinking, vandalism in remote communities and of alcohol abuse associated with trips to and life in urban centres, suggests that Yolŋu adolescents and adults are experiencing the turmoil of social change and the frustrations of adjusting to life under two disparate regimes, the Yolŋu and the Balanda. Recently, there have also been suicides of young people including that of young women in Yolŋu communities (Franca Tamasari, pers. com.).
interests of women' and that social changes which escalated in the 1970s provided Yolŋu women of all ages with alternatives in and to Yolŋu marriage and limited the sanctions available to men over women.

On the other hand, Yolŋu still practiced male initiation and boys and young men entered into ritual peer groups and social and ceremonial roles which provided them with a life time framework for male behaviour and achievement (cf. Keen 1994:190). As I will argue in Chapter 5, the Yolŋu and senior Yolŋu men in particular have strategies to "mind" Yolŋu women who live outside of Yolŋu marriage and in Darwin. The Yolŋu also uphold patrilineal as well as matrilineal ties to and rights in kin and country, even for children born outside of Yolŋu marriage to single mothers, in inter-ethnic marriages and for the children of Yolŋu women who have moved to live in the city (see Chapters 6 & 7).

2.3.2 Women, social change and mobility.

Yolŋu women and girls have yielded the solidarity they formerly exercised as co-wives in large polygynous family groups in favour of monogamous Yolŋu marriages, autonomy outside of marriage and in some cases by marrying inter-ethnically. Social changes have gone some way towards 'emancipating' Yolŋu women from bestowal in marriage, polygynous marriage and re-assignment in marriage when widowed. Wage and pension incomes provide women with limited means for more personal autonomy and matrifocal households provide a base for women to combine and to co-operate outside the constraints of marriage.

In the 1980s and among an Aboriginal group in southeast Arnhem Land, Burbank (1980, 1987 & 1988) found evidence of new categories of single womanhood. New forms of group solidarity were emerging for both sexes in school peer groups and for women as teachers, health workers and the like in local employment contexts and in households headed by women and based on women's pensions and child support subsidies. Introduced payments and opportunities provided the means for widows not to remarry, for wives to separate from husbands and for women and girls to delay marriage indefinitely, whether as unmarried mothers on supporting parent pensions or in favour of educational and employment careers.

At the same time the social pressures to marry the 'correct way' still applied, 'wrong side' unions were not condoned and incurred sanctions, disputes over sexual-marital matters caused tensions and violence within communities in southeast Arnhem Land (Burbank 1980 & 1987; cf. Robinson 1994:23). In northeast Arnhem Land, mari (arguing, fighting, trouble) was also significantly over women, youth and sexual-marital
concerns. Trouble of this order called for Yolŋu mechanisms of dispute management to contain 'little trouble', a matter for a kin-defined jurisdiction and to prevent escalation into 'big trouble', a matter for the police and the courts (Williams 1987:141-154).

One mechanism to break-up affairs which were culturally defined as illicit or otherwise not condoned was for one of the main protagonists to move away and stay with kin living elsewhere in another Aboriginal community or in an urban centre (Burbank 1988:104; see Williams 1987 on voluntary and imposed exile among the Yolŋu). Burbank (1988:111-112) suggests that some women chose to migrate to urban centres and marry white men in order to escape the pressures and sanctions within the local kinship community. Keen (1994:299) notes that employment careers, relations with white men and movement to urban centres offered Yolŋu women 'the opportunity of escape from Yolŋu power-structures'.

Burbank (1980, 1990) argues that ritualised sanctions activated in the context of disputes relating to women, youth and sexual-marital matters, continued to be mechanisms of social control in an Aboriginal community in southeast Arnhem Land, while there were new forms of 'domestic' violence, often associated with alcohol consumption (Burbank 1980:60). Violence, whether legitimate within Aboriginal law or new forms of violence which lacked cultural foundations, was a matter of dispute between the sexes and the generations within Aboriginal groups and between Aborigines and white authorities (Bolger 1991; Cummings 1993).

Burbank (1988) says that disputes over sexual-marital concerns divided an Aboriginal community and evoked different attitudes and responses between men and women, the younger and older generations, close and wider kin and according to the circumstances involved. Yet the position of senior Aboriginal women, as co-custodians of Aboriginal law, was seen to be compromised to the extent that older women had embraced new opportunities outside of marriage and exercised more personal autonomy as estranged wives and widows in receipt of pension incomes (cf. Tonkinson 1990:135-6; see also Dussart 1992).

Senior Yolŋu men acting in their own interests, as well as in terms of familial governance and sometimes as agents of introduced local government, were in a position to impose sanctions on Yolŋu women for their own independent stance or their support of that of others in matters of personal autonomy and sexual-marital relations (Williams 1987:102). They could monitor and sometimes restrict the movement of Yolŋu women, children and youth within a local community and as they exited and re-entered remote
communities, and sanctions on freedom of movement were particularly likely to be incurred in disputes over sexual-marital concerns (cf. Williams 1987:96-102).

Collman (1979a, 1979b, 1988) describes the choices he saw Aboriginal women making, as they moved with their children to the fringe camps of Alice Springs and into urban housing, as primarily economic choices and only secondarily as women making decisions about their personal autonomy and sexual-marital lives. Collman argues that Aboriginal women in Alice Springs were setting up urban households which were matrifocal (cf. Hannerz 1969:76) in that men as women's husbands and children's fathers were marginal or missing altogether. Aboriginal women's matrifocal households provided a socio-economic base when various types of marital unions including customary, modern 'de facto' and inter-ethnic relations broke up or proved unreliable. Welfare mechanisms of government provided Aboriginal women with pension incomes and access to urban housing in ways which 'privileged' women with dependent children and at the same time 'marginalised' Aboriginal men (Collman 1988:105-125).

Again, there are similarities and differences to be seen between Collman's Central Australian data and my research among the Yolŋu in Darwin. Similar to Aboriginal women in Alice Springs, Yolŋu women are in receipt of the monetary means to be more personally autonomous outside of traditional forms of marriage and movement to the city puts distance between them and the full weight of familial pressures and constraints. Moreover, urban housing could be obtained in women's own right and not by familial allocation.

The major difference, however, is that while Yolŋu men as husbands of Yolŋu women and father's of women's children are missing from women's matrifocal and inter-ethnic marriage based households in Darwin, Yolŋu men are not 'marginal' but profoundly significant in the lives of Yolŋu women and their children. I argue that Yolŋu men adjust their social and ceremonial responsibilities to new circumstances, including marital change and urban migration, and they continue to exercise care and control over Yolŋu women and their children who live outside of Yolŋu marriage and in some cases in inter-ethnic marriage-based households in Darwin.

2.4 Women and "the families": contributions and constraints.
2.4.1 Women as mediators.

That there have been gendered differences in Aboriginal responses to new ideas and socio-economic change, as evident in Aboriginal women's engagement with whites and with introduced opportunities, has been much debated. Bell (1983:46) argues that
European male chauvinism and paternalism eroded Aboriginal women's former independence by defining women as 'feeders and breeders', confining them to new forms of domesticity and making them welfare dependents of the State. On the other hand, Aboriginal women could and did exercise personal choice in sexual relations, especially in extra marital affairs and they were not inevitably exploited by both their own menfolk and white men when they engaged in sexual-marital relations with the latter (Bell 1983:98). Merlan (1988:30) suggests that there were 'indigenous antecedents' to the new ways in which women's sexuality forged wider social ties and she was interested in the role of women in 'the articulation of Aboriginal and European social relations'.

Yolŋu women have long played an ambivalent role in mediating relations between clans via exogamous marriage and between Yolŋu and strangers. Women's ambiguous potential in sexual-marital relations is also reflected in Yolŋu socio-linguistic etiquette and relations of avoidance. Yolŋu women and girls must marry out of their natal group and their brothers attest to this fact when they address their sisters as *wakingu* (without kin) (Warner 1969:55-56). Yet even though they are called *wakingu* by their brothers and in the hearing of their brothers, Yolŋu women do not lose their kin and clan affiliations when they marry a man of another clan, move to live in his clan country and bear him children (Warner 1969:99-102).

In the same way, Yolŋu women who move to live in Darwin, interact with strangers and marry inter-ethnically do not lose their claims to kin and country for themselves and for their children. Moreover, when Yolŋu women move between town and country, open up new relationships between Yolŋu, Balanda and other Aboriginal groups and obtain access to new resources and opportunities in Darwin, they do so as much for wider kin as for themselves and their own children.

On the other hand, Aboriginal women and their children tend to be divided from their menfolk in circumstances of social change and of urban life, particularly when women receive pension incomes and urban housing because of and subject to their status as widows, estranged wives and single mothers (cf. Collman 1988:105-125). Grimshaw (1984:94) presents an Aboriginal women's point of view, as not wanting to be divided by a feminist discourse or by government agency from their menfolk in a struggle for better life chances and for more balanced relations of power between Aborigines and white Australia. Grimshaw argues that race relations, whether in rural or urban areas, were more fundamental to the Aboriginal experience of inequalities in life than were relations between the sexes within Aboriginal society. Even so, social change and urban life had
'intensified both the challenges and opportunities for self-help and cohesive effort' by Aboriginal women (Grimshaw 1984:94).

Grimshaw (1989) and Edmunds (1990) draw attention to Aboriginal women's agency in introduced forums, especially in local Aboriginal community and urban community services of health, education, child-care and women's resource and crisis centres, as a transformation of women's roles in governance of the family, wider kin and community. In the rural towns of Roebourne, Western Australia and Tennant Creek in the Northern Territory, Aboriginal women were active in various Aboriginal service and resource organisations as well as in the policing and peace-making dimensions of Aboriginal governance (Edmunds 1989, 1990). Aboriginal women took up these roles as an extension of their own responsibilities in care and control of individuals, families and wider kin and often because Aboriginal men were unfit to do so or had otherwise abrogated their responsibilities.

In the main, Yolŋu men are not unfit for their responsibilities in social and ceremonial life and they have extended their contributions in a familial system of governance to Yolŋu in Darwin. Although Yolŋu men have come to represent Yolŋu and wider Aboriginal interests in urban centres and particularly in Darwin, they have largely focused on Aboriginal land related issues, from their constituencies in remote communities and from a male perspective.5

These Yolŋu spokesmen have typically not been in a position to take up issues which are relevant to Yolŋu women, children and family groups in Darwin, such as matters of housing, schooling and health services. While at a kinship level Yolŋu men are seen to exercise their interests in the well being of their womenfolk and children in Darwin, the structures of representation which they fill are arguably not geared to represent Yolŋu urban needs and interests, nor specifically the urban interests of women and children. On the other hand, my data show that Yolŋu men have prominent roles in ordering the ties of Yolŋu women and their children to kin and country and Yolŋu men are major players in the extension of a system of Yolŋu governance by kinship and ceremony to 'govern' kin even as they live in the city.

5 For example, the Member for Arnhem in the Legislative Assembly of the Northern Territory and the Chairman of the Northern Land Council are positions which have been held by Yolŋu men over a period of several terms of office. In other arenas such as the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC), the Arnhem Land Progress Association (ALPA) and the Uniting Church of Australia, Northern Synod, it is Yolŋu men who predominantly come to Darwin to represent their people, largely construed as their people in remote communities and clan lands.
For their own part, Yolŋu women have come to take prominent roles in paid employment in local services in remote communities where they are an interface between family, wider kin and agencies of the State. While Yolŋu women are able to work for "all the families" in their employment roles in local schools, health clinics, resource centres and the like in their remote communities, my evidence suggests that when they move to Darwin they typically lose this form of women's agency at the interface between Yolŋu and Balanda and between a Yolŋu system of governance and community agencies of government.

As agents and clients of local community services and local government in remote communities, Yolŋu women have to a limited extent recovered their rightful role in nurturance of "all the families", which would otherwise be more completely usurped by Balanda systems of care, for example of children in schools, of the sick in hospitals, of families in housing. Even so, Balanda systems of care and control still predominate in Yolŋu remote communities and intrude into Yolŋu family life so that Yolŋu women, children and family groups find themselves compelled and attracted to Darwin by such urban services and opportunities as hospital and other health care, schooling, further education and training, family housing and the like.

When they move to Darwin, Yolŋu women, children and family groups have to seek urban services in English and from strangers. As Habermas (1987:238-265) has argued, relations of power are inextricably related to systems of knowledge and of communication. My argument is that Yolŋu women's inability to be able to speak for themselves and to work for their families in Darwin disempowers them, causes Yolŋu family groups to be alienated from the very services which attracted them to the city, denies Yolŋu women a place in the development of more balanced, more contractual relations (in the sense of Donzelot 1979: 82-95) between the family and the state, between a Yolŋu system of governance and urban agencies of government.

Yolŋu women and family groups in Darwin carry a major share of the burden of looking after kin in everyday and crises circumstances and largely in default of urban services. While Yolŋu women in Darwin contribute in this way to family and wider kin, a further issue to be considered is whether women's independent stance, taken at one point in life, by migration to town and in some cases in inter-ethnic relationships, incurs kinship sanctions including obstacles to women's return to communities of origin.
2.4.2 Familial constraints on women's mobility.

I am interested in the predicament of Yolŋu women who have migrated to Darwin, married Balanda and other Aboriginal men and raised their children in town, in terms of their ability to re-instate themselves and instate their non-Yolŋu husbands and urban reared children in their remote communities of origin. Keen (1994:100) describes a Yolŋu woman as 'exceptional' when after years of absence she returned to her remote community, came to the forefront of community affairs in the 1980s, while at the same time she succeeded in introducing her Balanda husband and young adult and adolescent children of mixed descent into permanent residence and local employment. This woman was able to do so because of her own personality and because she had the 'same wagarr ancestor' as the local landowning group (Keen 1994:100).

Not all Yolŋu who live in or who return to the major Yolŋu communities are so well affiliated with the local landowning groups. Because the early missions had drawn various clans from their own estates to settle at mission depots located in the estates of particular clans, many Yolŋu came to live in the major Yolŋu communities (former missions) on the land of clans other than their own (Keen 1978:17-18). The movement away from the five major Yolŋu communities to smaller homeland centres has in part overcome this problem, but many Yolŋu have only known life in the major communities yet are not strongly affiliated with the immediate country or the local landowning groups.

Among the Kuku-Yalanji at Bloomfield River and Wujalwujal in north Queensland, Anderson (1988:15) argues that inequalities were shaped by 'internal and local forces' as well as by external forces. First mission and later State interventions had caused Aboriginal people to be gathered into settlements in which some were fortunate to be the local landowning and managing groups while others, who were displaced from their own clan lands, had lesser rights in the local community and on the clan lands of others. Anderson (1988:16) also emphasises that local ownership and management of land and resources had always counted for more than the rights of 'visitors or guests, regardless of close linguistic and cultural ties and a shared history'. The latter had lesser claims to limited resources such as housing, vehicles, or to representation on local councils and in local employment in Aboriginal communities.6

Beckett (1985:111) describes one extreme view held by some Islanders of the Torres Strait that those who have migrated to the mainland and lived for many years in

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6 Aboriginalists have taken various positions as to whether competition and inequalities were introduced to or inherent in Aboriginal social formations or whether external interventions acted upon internal tendencies towards differential access to power, knowledge and resources in terms of age, sex and close and more distant relatedness (cf. Hamilton 1987; Bern 1987; Anderson 1988).
the towns and cities of northern Australia, were ex-Islanders. This view held that migrants 'had forfeited all rights to their ancestral communities' and if this opinion were pursued to its logical end, there was the potential for mainland and urban-dwelling Islanders and their children to be dispossessed.

There are useful comparisons to be made between the Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander contexts and the early Canadian experience. In Canada, Indian women had their status as Indian revoked by the federal government when they married non-native men and migrated away from band lands. In 1985, Bill C-31 an amendment to the Indian Act, was passed to abolish previous sexual discrimination and to return to Indian women and their children the status which had previously been denied them by federal law (Jamieson 1986). Since then, reinstated women have found that their mixed-descent children and grandchildren do not have equal status before the law. When Indian women return with or without non-native spouses to their band communities and lands, they and their children and grandchildren are not always welcomed. In some circumstances, bylaws are invoked by local self-governing bands to exclude the reinstated whose return to band communities and lands is seen to pose a strain on already limited local resources and to be a threat to the integrity of band membership (Paul 1990; Joseph 1991:65-79).

There are implications for the Australian situation and in particular for the Northern Territory, where introduced laws of permission and prohibition provide Aboriginal community leaders and town councils with new, although limited, powers to control strangers who would enter, live and work in Aboriginal communities (see Chapter 10). There is the potential of Yolŋu clan and community leaders in northeast Arnhem Land to utilise the 'permit' system and the provisions of the 'dry areas' legislation to 'govern' Yolŋu women by effectively exiling them to Darwin, Nhulunbuy and elsewhere because their non-Yolŋu sexual-marital partners and alcohol-drinking lifestyles are not welcome in Yolŋu communities and clan lands.

Recently, the relationship of indigenous peoples of the 'northern hinterlands' to their various nation-states, including Australia, Canada, Alaska and Norway, has undergone rapid changes with different directions and outcomes (see Jull 1993a, 1993b, 1994). In Australia, the *Mabo* decision of June 1992 opened up new possibilities for Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders who had hitherto been denied recognition of their indigenous rights and status in terms of first British and later of Australian law. One year later, in June 1993, the historic Nunavut Act recognised and provided for the self-government of the lands and resources of the Inuit, the indigenous people of the islands.
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and mainland of Nunavut in Canada's Northwest Territories. The Inuit have been described as,

matter-of-factly resuming control of a region which they barely lost in two or three decades of great material change and attempted social engineering by a white welfare-style of administration (Jull 1994:106).

In Australia, recent political changes of this order have prompted Aboriginal spokesmen to ask, "Why shouldn't the Torres Strait Islanders govern themselves, why shouldn't Arnhem Landers govern themselves?" (Dodson 1993). This is a powerful plea. However, the warnings of Beckett (1985:111) that Islanders, who have migrated from the Torres Strait to urban centres on the mainland, may be disenfranchised of their rights in their island homelands is a matter to be considered in any decision-making on indigenous self-government.

One of the principles for which indigenous peoples living in their own territories within liberal democratic nations argue for is that they exercise their indigenous rights not only to land and resources but to manage their own disputes, 'often including family law matters' by 'traditional' or customary law rather than by European law (Jull 1993b:21). There is the potential for the rights of women, children and of youth in terms of internationally defined human rights and nationally defined rights of citizenship to take a back seat to the indigenous rights of senior men in indigenous self-governing communities and lands.

In the dynamics of Yolŋu and Balanda interaction, the issues to be resolved include internal as well as external differentials in relations of power, the articulation of two systems of care and control, the rights of citizenship and indigenous rights and the Yolŋu expectation that they can balance "both-ways", the Yolŋu way and the Balanda way and access the 'best of both worlds', in urban centres as well as in remote communities and clan lands.

2.5 Comparative data and the Yolŋu experience.

In Australian contexts, researchers have been obliged to take account of the Welfare State and its agency in the movement and settlement of Aboriginal people. The early literature reveals that Aboriginal people moved to the cities for complex reasons but analysis has tended to concentrate on the external forces and, in particular, on the significance of urban services, health, education, housing, welfare and correctional services, in bringing Aborigines to town and holding them there (Gale 1972, 1981; Gale & Wundersitz 1986; Smith & Biddle 1975; Beasley 1975).
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Gale (1981:283-304) recognises that Aboriginal kinship provides the organisational framework which links rural and urban-dwelling kin. She draws attention to the interaction of two modes of social organisation, namely government via social-welfare measures and urban community services which compel and attract Aboriginal clients to the city, and Aboriginal kinship which shapes the ongoing nature of rural-urban mobility and is transformed in order to meet the contingencies of life in the city (Gale 1972).

The rural-urban movement and urban migration of Aborigines in south-eastern Australia has been widely documented since the 1960s (Barwick 1962, 1963; Gale 1972, 1981; Smith & Biddle 1975; Beasley 1975; Burnley & Routh 1985; Gray 1989). In the main, these studies reflect theoretical orientations in demography, urban geography and sociology and have focused on the urban context rather than on the rural-urban field of Aboriginal social organisation. Barwick was an exception in that her anthropological perspective drew attention to the country affiliations of Aborigines in Melbourne and to kinship as an Aboriginal social organisation, which resisted the assimilationist pressures of the times and of the city (Barwick 1962, 1963).

Research into contemporary patterns of population mobility among Aborigines in the Northern Territory has tended to follow the national trend in that demographers and geographers advance the utility of statistical data (Taylor 1990:15-17, 1991) and mobility models (Young & Doohan 1989; Young 1990:186-196). Evidence gained throughout Australia and also that which is specific to the Northern Territory suggests that urban housing (Gray 1989:133) and urban services in general (Young & Doohan 1989:158-84; Taylor 1990:10) promote Aborigines' voluntary movement from remote and rural communities to urban centres. These studies highlight the role of urban community services as agents of government which, intentionally or not, shape the movement and settlement of Aboriginal people.

In an analysis of Aboriginal migration to the large Australian cities (Darwin did not qualify as a major urban centre) and using census data from the first half of the 1980s, Alan Gray (1989) identifies the significance of single status, life and domestic cycle developments, the socialisation of children, as well as aspirations for jobs and higher standards of living, in shaping Aboriginal strategies of rural-urban mobility. He argues that stereotypes of Aborigines as either wholly urban or wholly rural or remote-dwelling are false given the incidence of movement between town and country (Gray 1989:122-144).
In much the same way, the African literature of the 1960s and 1970s suggests that rural areas and the urban centre constitute 'a single field of relations' (Parkin 1975:3), of people, ideas, and resources which belie the efforts of tribal leaders and of external agents of church and government to keep them separate. The African literature goes beyond vague generalisations about kinship links between rural and urban-dwelling kin (a fault of much of the Australian material), to examine the relevance of polygynous marriage and patrilineal descent systems in extending and maintaining these links.

Polygyny and patrilineal descent likewise still play an important part in Yolŋu social organisation, and indeed in that of other Aboriginal groups in northern Australia. Similarly, comparative evidence from Melanesia and the Islands of the Torres Strait provide insights into the significance of marriage, the socialisation of children, ceremonial life, and especially burial practices, in maintaining ties between remote and urban dwelling kin. This comparative literature helps to identify the complex of factors, including external forces, kin-based influences and personal decisions, that shape the movement of individuals and family groups between country and city. I turn now to a brief overview of the relevant African and Melanesian literature.

Mitchell (1969), Epstein (1969) and others explore the nature of social networks which interconnect rural and urban-dwelling kin in African contexts. These studies emphasise the characteristics of the network linkages between rural village and urban centre. Mitchell (1987:7) developed a 'situational analysis' method so as to focus on the social and cultural details of urban social networks.

Marxist interpretations have emphasised historical change, the relations of class and the wider political and economic order in which rural-urban movements and urbanisation are situated (Castells 1976:60-84). Macro analyses which focus on external forces of a political and economic nature largely fail to address the social, cultural and idiosyncratic dimensions of rural-urban migration. In his analysis of circulatory migration in Rhodesia, Garbett (1975:113-125) concludes that earlier models of mobility were too reliant upon external determinants and too little cognisant of social and cultural as well as of personal factors. Garbett's decision model inter-relates micro and macro-level processes and 'the concept of an individual exercising strategic choices' (Garbett 1975:113-25). The decision model of mobility theory emphasises multicausal influences, which include life cycle, domestic cycle and other familial factors as well as autonomous decision-making (du Toit 1990:312-13). The push-pull model of movement away from rural constraints to the opportunities on offer in urban centres was expanded upon with an emphasis on individual strategies to seek more personal autonomy in the city. The actions
of individuals were seen to be constrained by the ramifications of their own past
decisions, by the complex of external conditions and by the internal dynamics of family
life and wider social organisation.

The literature on rural-urban mobility among Melanesian peoples emphasises not
so much decisions as actual strategies of mobility. The multidimensional characteristics
of population movement are explored in theories of bi- and multi-locality (Ryan 1985),
chain, circular and reverse migration models (Chapman and Prothero 1985; Prothero and
Chapman 1985). Another theoretical focus is on the journey itself, the origin, staging
points, destination and the 'rural-urban continuum' of transience and migration (du Toit
1990:308).

Melanesian sources also focus on the nature of kinship relations and
responsibilities as they develop and are transformed over time and distance (see Chapman
and Prothero 1985). Wider kinship responsibilities in ancestral land, in economic, social
and ceremonial life as well as more intimate responsibilities towards spouses, children,
the sick, the aged and the dead entail culturally prescribed responses which link rural and

These are the 'disconcerting ties' which bind Hageners, predominantly men, in
Port Moresby to kin and communities of origin in the highlands of Papua New Guinea
(Strathern 1985: 360-76). Among the Hageners, it is mainly men who migrated to urban
centres for wage employment and marriage arrangements and wives in remote
communities were the 'road ' by which men maintain their links with land and within
inter-marrying clans (Strathern 1987:278). Children are also links to country and are sent
back to country in order to maintain those links for their parents and to develop them for
themselves. For example, Chambri who have migrated to the town of Wewak in Papua
New Guinea send their children to their rural homes in order to develop their cultural
roots (Gewertz and Errington 1991:116).

While there are similarities there are also differences in the situation among the
Yolŋu in Darwin. By and large Yolŋu men remain in country and only circulate through
the city for limited purposes. Among the Yolŋu, the major volume of urban transience
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While there are similarities there are also differences in the situation among the Yolnu in Darwin. By and large Yolnu men remain in country and only circulate through the city for limited purposes. Among the Yolnu, the major volume of urban transience and migration is that of women and children and Yolnu women in suburban housing provide the pathway to circulate people, ideas and goods between remote communities and Darwin. Yolnu women, including those who live outside of Yolnu marriage and in the city, take measures to retain for themselves and to develop for their urban-reared, often mixed descent children, ties to remote-dwelling kin and clan lands by travelling home to visit kin and participate in ceremonies.
2.5.1 Marital change and migration: women as wives and as sisters.

There are similarities between the Torres Strait Islander and the Yolŋu experiences of marital change, for example in the incidence of single adults who defer marriage indefinitely, live in sibling households or with their parents, and of girls and women who are unmarried mothers (cf. Fitzpatrick 1980:9; Beckett 1961:17). I have found evidence of these changes among the Yolŋu in remote communities (cf. Burbank 1988, 1994:119) and in my observations of Yolŋu in Darwin.

Beckett (1961, 1985) describes social change and decline in traditional marriage among the Islanders of the Torres Straits. Fitzpatrick (1980:13) links the history of permanent and seasonal labour migration of Islander men to mainland Australia with the decline not only of traditional patterns of marriage but of marriage in any form on Mabuiag Island.

The Torres Strait Islander culture emphasises strong incest and exogamy rules, as do the Yolŋu of northeast Arnhem Land. When marriageable males migrated from the Torres Strait to find work on the mainland and settle in urban centres, the number of eligible bachelors was depleted in their island communities. There was not a concomitant relaxation of marriage laws as elders reacted with 'a further tightening of restrictions... precipitating the cessation of marriage' (McConvell 1989:3). By 1980, 'half the Islander population was living on the mainland' (Sharp 1993:9-10; see also Beckett 1987:176-180, 201-207; Lui 1993:1-2).

By contrast, the impact of social change and especially of rural-urban transience and migration on Yolŋu in northeast Arnhem Land has not so far posed an obvious threat to gender demographics and to marriage per se in Yolŋu remote communities. Firstly, the Yolŋu do not have a history or a significant volume of male labour migration, such as might pose an immediate threat to the demography of remote communities, to marriage alliances between clans and to Yolŋu norms of marriage. Secondly, the main volume of Yolŋu moving to Darwin for transient purposes and to settle more permanently is that of Yolŋu women, children and family groups and their movements are not typically shaped by the labour market but are mostly funded by social security incomes and government subsidised rural-urban travel and urban accommodation and housing. Thirdly, my evidence and that of Burbank (1988:111-112) and Keen (1994:299) suggest that Aboriginal women from Arnhem Land are moving to Darwin and other urban centres not because marriage has ceased in their remote communities but rather to avoid for a time or to indefinitely escape locally arranged marriages and to opt for alternatives, sometimes in marriage and other times in autonomy outside of marriage.
Migration to the mainland has been a primary factor in the decline of marriage in the Torres Straits (Fitzpatrick 1980:13; McConvell 1989). In contrast, my data suggest that it is the pace and direction of social and marital change in remote Yolŋu communities which precedes, and in many cases precipitates, the migration of Yolŋu women to Darwin. From research in the late 1970s and early 1980s, Burbank (1988:11-12) drew attention to the fact that some Aboriginal women in southeast Arnhem Land were deciding to 'step completely out' of the constraints of an indigenous system of marriage by moving to Darwin and marrying white men (cf. Keen 1994:299).

Although Yolŋu women have opted for marital change within their remote communities, familial pressures continue to bear on them to comply with marital and wider kinship expectations of them, which in turn prompts some Yolŋu women to move to Darwin and other urban centres, the better to exercise more personal autonomy and maintain inter-ethnic marriages.

In African contexts, men and women from tribal societies and rural communities move in and out of monogamous and polygynous marriages and high rates of conjugal separation may operate without a concomitant dissolution of marriage ties (Parkin & Nyamwaya 1987:11-13). The African data also highlight cultural contexts where there were strong ties between brothers and sisters and women had continuing rights in land. Social change and women's access to independent incomes, to education and their ability to 'articulate more effectively the rights of their children', were all factors in the maintenance of marriage ties despite conjugal separation and without divorce (Parkin & Nyamwaya 1987:12-13).

In much the same way, my evidence suggests that Yolŋu women in remote communities and in Darwin may be estranged from and in the case of women in town, live widely separated from their Yolŋu husbands in monogamous and polygynous marriages without their marital ties being severed. Even when Yolŋu women deny that they are married in a connubial sense, they are still galay (wife category) to men who are their dhunway (husband category). Case data presented in Chapter 5 illustrate that Yolŋu women who have personal attributes which include forceful personalities, strong ties to remote communities and lands, active and affectionate relations with remote-dwelling kin, especially brothers, and who have achieved extra skills via Western education and in employment, are able to maintain their own rights and to develop those of their children in remote communities and clan lands, even though they have chosen to live outside of Yolŋu marriage and in Darwin.
Since the 1970s, African studies have tended to focus on the impact of the market economy and of state government on gendered relations and marriage but, more recently, there has been a resurgence of interest in the internal dynamics of local kinship and marriage systems in circumstances of social change. For example, Hakansson (1994:516-539) compares the various trajectories of change in marriage and in relations between the sexes among the Gusii and the Luyia, two patrilineal societies in East Africa which have been experiencing similar conditions of social change. Polygyny was in decline and the incidence of single women as unmarried mothers and estranged wives was on the increase, yet there were marked differences between the Luyia and the Gusii in the status and life trajectories of women and their children outside of marriage.

Gusii women were wholly 'detachable' (cf. Strathem 1987) from their natal clan in marriage and had little claim on their own kin and clan resources when their marital relations failed. By contrast, women among the Luyia retained their natal clan identity for life and continued to make claim on natal kin, especially fathers and brothers, and on their own clan lands and resources. Among the Luyia, women's rights as daughters and sisters were 'constitutive' whereas their rights as wives were contingent and negotiable (Hakansson 1994:517). Luyia social organisation, as with the Yolŋu, emphasised 'both patri and matrifiliation as a source of social identity' (Hakansson 1994:532).

In Melanesian contexts, women have been described as 'detachable' in marriage (Strathem 1987:283). On the other hand, in societies where 'the "one blood" brother-sister relationship is not terminated or changed in any way by the sister's marriage' (Goodale 1981:294), women are not detached from kin and land when they marry and move away.

To some extent, Yolŋu women detach themselves from kin, clan and country when they migrate to Darwin, live autonomous of Yolŋu marriage and marry inter-ethnically. Yolŋu women do not, however, lose their kin, clan and country affiliations when they marry and move to their Yolŋu husband's clan land, nor do they necessarily when they marry non-Yolŋu men and move to the city.

Where the African data and my findings differ is in the significance of polygyny in urban contexts. Parkin (1978:7-11) and Parkin and Nyamwaya (1987:11-13) suggest that in markedly patrilineal descent systems, African men have been able to extend polygynous marriages to include wives 'in town' as well as wives 'in country'. In modern African circumstances, polygyny takes covert as well as more traditional and public forms (Karanja 1987:257-58). Parkin and Nyamwaya (1987:11-12) conclude that polygyny takes many forms and 'one form is that which straddles town and country'.
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Parkin and Nyamwaya (1987:7-11) argue that in central and eastern African cities, for example when the Luo moved from their tribal estates to Nairobi and men had wives and children in the rural village as well as in the city, that it was polygyny and unilineal, patrilineal descent rather than the 'optativity' of kinship, which provided the framework for the Luo to maintain and develop their links to country and their distinct identity in the city.

The literature on the movement of Aborigines to country towns, urban centres and capital cities has not provided evidence that Aboriginal men have been able to extend their options in marriage by having wives in the city as well as in the country. On the contrary, the evidence is that Aboriginal men have diminished opportunities in marriage in the city, though not necessarily in sexual encounters, whereas Aboriginal women are more able to exercise personal and marital autonomy and maintain inter-ethnic sexual-marital relations in urban centres than in Aboriginal communities (cf. Gale 1972:154).

While patrilineal descent may play a role in maintaining urban-rural relations among the Yolŋu (more than is the case for other Aboriginal groups), polygyny is not in itself a feature of Yolŋu movement to the city. I argue that Yolŋu men are more able to extend their interests in Yolŋu women's children than they are able to maintain or develop actual sexual-marital relations with Yolŋu women who have chosen to live more personally autonomous lives in Darwin.

2.5.2 Patrilineages and relations of kinship.

Returning to the African context, Parkin (1978: 7-10) suggests that strong patrilineal descent systems well entrenched in remote lands have the capacity to extend social organisation to encompass kin who have moved to the city and to enable them to retain their ties to country. This seemed to be a line of argument more relevant to the Yolŋu in Darwin than did Parkin's and other African data which pointed to polygynous marriage as a framework for social organisation which spans town and country.

Parkin (1975:39) argues that male control over the out-marriage of their women and/or their claims to paternal and patrilineal interests in women's children helped to perpetuate social group distinctiveness over time and in new circumstances, including movement from the country into towns and cities. In a comparative study of the Mijikenda, Kikuyu, and the Luo of Kenya, Parkin (1980) identifies differences in the degree to which a wife is incorporated into her husband's group depending on the nature of her ties to her own kin and country. He also argues that where rights in children and
rights in wives are distinct, then women have an ambiguous status as producers of children both for their own natal group and for their husbands' lineages (Parkin 1980).

Burbank and Chisholm (1989a:7-8) suggest of Aboriginal men in a southeast Arnhem Land community that their interests in women as wives, real and potential, reflects men's interests in 'the survival or longevity of family or lineage' and men's 'wealth' counted in children as much if not more than it did in wives. Keen (1978:34) says that manipulation of the 'finding' experience and of spiritual if not actual conception is a Yolngu mechanism of recruitment of children into patri-determined clan membership and country of affiliation. Keen (1978:375) mentions this type of patrifilial recruitment as a ploy of clans in decline.

Shapiro (1979:46; 1981:34) notes that the Miwuyt (i.e., Yolngu) held the ideal that children had both a 'father's path' and a 'mother's path' of affiliation. He said that in circumstances where children were born outside of the culturally 'correct' relations of marriage, they were assigned 'to the moiety opposite the mother' (Shapiro 1979:36; 1981:15) rather than by an actual application of the principle of patrilineal descent. In this way children were always assigned to the 'correct' moiety, as though their father had been of a 'correct' marital relationship to their mother. Men were also adept at manipulating the 'finding' experience in which they lay claim to paternity over women's children even when the place and the circumstances of births had to be fictionally aligned to accord with men's patrilineal interests (Shapiro 1979:18-19).7

In the 1990s, the Yolngu employ relations of kinship and other mechanisms of affiliation to align children to kin and country even when the sexual-marital relations of the children's Yolngu mothers fail to establish Yolngu patrifilial links. My evidence suggests that senior Yolngu men and female kin in northeast Arnhem Land bestow Yolngu personal names on the children born to unmarried Yolngu mothers and to inter-ethnically married Yolngu women in Darwin, so as to signal the actual matrifiliation and the socially determined patrifiliation of children with kin and country (see Ch 6).

By comparison with my data on Yolngu moving to Darwin, the literature on Aboriginal Australia has to date predominantly emphasised the significance of matrifocal relations of kinship in Aboriginal rural-urban mobility patterns and urban Aboriginal households. For example, among the Nyungar, a mixed-descent Aboriginal people of south-west Western Australia, a region which has been long and comparatively densely settled by whites, Birdsell (1988) identifies relations of matrifocality and those of the

7 Turner (1974:94) notes that Aborigines on the mainland of east Arnhem Land, 'reorganise their terminological relationships directly in accordance with the ideal, regardless of the 'rules' by which kin terms are actually assigned or the 'meaning' of the terms'.
sibling-cousin set as being of primary significance in the transmission of Nyungar norms and values over the generations and in circumstances of rural-urban mobility. Matriarchs dispensed resources, monitored sexual-marital unions and supervised the rearing of children. Apical ancestors were women, and senior women were seen as central authority figures and heads of households and networks of kin. In the course of exercising their influence and responsibilities in kinship, these senior women moved about within the wider kinship network of "all one family" (Birdsall 1988:139). Birdsall does not fully account for the place of men in Nyungar kinship networks where they were apparently marginal to Nyungar women's households (cf. Collman 1988). In Perth, Nyungar had mothers, aunts, siblings, cousins and 'grannies' who exercised important kinship responsibilities in nurturance of individuals and families. The 'granny' relationship, defined by relations between the first and the third generation, suggested that both maternal and paternal grandparents of both sexes had important responsibilities in the care and socialisation of children (Toussaint 1987:153; 1992:21).

2.5.3 Ceremonial life and repatriation of the dead.

There are also important roles of a ritualised nature, especially male roles, which marked the identity and group cohesion of Aborigines in rural towns and major cities. Toussaint (1992:24) discusses the importance of funerals and of cultural prohibitions on the suburban house of the recently deceased in the maintenance of Nyungar identity among mixed-descent Aborigines in Perth. Cowlishaw (1989:236) notes the attention that Aborigines in rural towns in New South Wales gave to attending the funerals of kin and that such occasions were important markers of the survival of Aboriginal identity 'in opposition' to white Australia. Gray (1976:149) describes the gathering of 'friends and relations' and the performance of rituals after a death among rural and town-based Aborigines in Carnarvon, Western Australia.

While the Islanders of the Torres Strait learnt to bury their dead according to Christian rites, they developed a new form of ritual, that of the tombstone unveiling held in their remote island communities, but when they moved to towns on the mainland they began to bury their dead there, away from their ancestral lands (Sharp 1993:10, 113). Even so the Islanders have 'formed themselves into identifiable communities' in Townsville, Cairns and elsewhere on the mainland as they maintain links with the Strait by means of visits home, significantly for 'burials, tombstone unveilings, weddings and recreational purposes' (Sharp 1993:10).
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In African contexts, ceremonial links between city and remote villages and tribal lands were also important in both the development and the erosion of ethnic identity in the urban context and of rural-urban solidarities. Funerals provided important links to ancestors and ancestral land but the more external agents including mining corporations, municipal authorities and Christian churches took responsibility away from kin and countrymen for the rituals of burying their dead, the weaker 'ethnic associations' became in the city (Southall 1975:272; see also Mayer 1961).

The Yolŋu cultural imperative to take care and control of their dead with funeral ceremonies and burials in remote communities and clan lands sits at odds with government management of death, specifically the agencies of urban centred hospital and colonial authorities, which bring the very ill and the dead into town. However, government bureaucratic schemes (and to an extent church encouragement) have helped with the material means for Aboriginal people, including the Yolŋu, to repatriate their dead for burials in remote communities. For their part, the Yolŋu have adjusted sequences of mortuary ritual to be performed in Nhulunbuy and Darwin so as to start the ritual and spiritual dimensions of the return of their dead (see Ch. 9). In this context of the repatriation of the dead, agencies of the State (and of the Uniting Church) act in concert with Yolŋu kin based organisation and ceremonial life.

2.6 Conclusions.

Yolŋu mobility is not all one way but rather "both ways" in direction and in terms of systems of care and control. At strategic moments in the life-cycle of individuals and the domestic cycle of families, a Yolŋu system of governance and agencies of government, each in their separate ways, act to 'govern' individuals and family groups, to transmit norms and values and to shape life trajectories, including the 'ebb and flow' of movement between town and country.

The argument I develop is that Yolŋu women, children and family groups make choices in life, set out on journeys of transience and migration to the city and initiate the directions their lives will take within the parameters set by the benefits and constraints of two systems of care and control, the one a familial system of governance by kinship and ceremony, the other a state system of government via monies and services.

The following chapter outlines the history of Yolŋu movement into Darwin: how they came into contact with Balanda (white people), were encapsulated within the nation-state, became citizens largely dependent on welfare mechanisms of government and how Yolŋu, especially women and children, came to move to Darwin as migrants and
transients. The concentration of higher standards of living and more comprehensive services in urban centres and particularly in capital cities are major features in the movement of Aboriginal people between country and town. State agency via monies, assisted travel and accommodation schemes and subsidised urban services are seen to offer alternatives, influence choices in life and shape the movement of Yolŋu women, children and family groups to Darwin.
Chapter 3

Ebb and flow
Chapter 3. *Ebb and flow*

3.1 Introduction.

Aborigines in Arnhem Land have a contact history which is remarkable for the duration and diversity of relations with strangers including Macassans in the trepang industry, Japanese pearlers, European frontiersmen and with missionaries and government personnel (Berndt and Berndt 1954:v). The Yolŋu of northeast Arnhem Land have had a long history of coming to terms with strangers, though not always peacefully (cf. Dewar 1992). In the main, however, the Yolŋu have worked at more harmonious, balanced relations between themselves and the 'Other', as they have sought to retain their own cultural integrity in circumstances of cross-cultural interaction and of social change. Berndt (1962:14) describes northeast Arnhem Landers as, 'inward-looking in terms of traditional integrity, outward-looking beyond the confines of linguistic unit and clan territory (and) cross-cultural in dimension'.

My experience in northeast Arnhem Land and in Darwin leads me to endorse Berndt's earlier appraisal of Yolŋu in terms of their efforts to embrace social change whilst maintaining their cultural heritage. Yet historically, Church and State administrators have devised policies to circumscribe their mobility and to control the content and direction of social change among the Yolŋu.

Over the years, Church and government policies have changed from protectionism to assimilationism, later to self-determination for Aboriginal people, and most recently to reconciliation between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Australia. This chapter explores the ways in which Church and increasingly State policies and interventions have shaped social change among the Yolŋu in northeast Arnhem Land and the movement of Yolŋu women, children and family groups from their remote communities to Darwin. In particular, Yolŋu women and children are seen to be a 'target' (cf. Donzelot 1979) of government interventions and to be identified as especially in need of 'care' in matters of health, education and welfare.

A major focus in this chapter is how urban agencies of government bring the Yolŋu and other remote-dwelling Aboriginal people to Darwin and other urban centres, there to service their needs and then repatriate them to their remote communities and lands. As discussed in detail in Chapters 5 to 10, the dynamics of Yolŋu kinship, ceremonial life, and of individual Yolŋu women's marital and migratory careers also shape the ebb and flow of Yolŋu as they move to and from their remote communities and Darwin. The contemporary situation in which Yolŋu move to and from Darwin and settle more permanently in the city and suburbs can only be understood within the historical
framework of government policies and Yolŋu initiatives to seek and to shape new paths for themselves.

3.2 Early Contact.

3.2.1 Macassans, myth and inter-ethnic relations.

The oral traditions of Arnhem Land Aborigines provides evidence of a long period of social contact with peoples of the Indonesian region, who visited the Australian coast in the course of marine exploitation and long before the period of colonisation by Europeans (Berndt and Berndt 1954:i-v). In more recent and historically documented times, Aboriginal people who lived in Arnhem Land and elsewhere along the northern coast of Australia encountered the seasonal visits of large fleets of Macassan praus and their crews, who harvested trepang and other marine products and camped at many sites along the coastline in order to process the trepang (Macknight 1976; Mulvaney 1989). The Aboriginal people of Arnhem Land engaged in trade, provided labour and entered into social relations with Macassans and individuals voyaged aboard the praus along the Australian coast and some visited and possibly migrated to the distant lands of the Macassans (Mulvaney 1989:27).

In this way, Arnhem Landers formed prolonged and intensive relations with Macassans which brought about social and cultural transformations but arguably did not constitute an assault upon the autonomy of the Aboriginal people involved (Macknight 1976; Mulvaney 1989:26-28). Swain (1993:175-75) says that Arnhem Landers came to terms with the Macassans by incorporating 'symbols of Indonesian culture within Aboriginal spiritual classifications' which thereby 'allowed for more intimate exchanges with the traders'. The Yoŋu of northeast Arnhem Land 'most fully developed' the containment of Macassans and things Macassan in the moiety schema and in beliefs about and rituals for the dead (Swain 1993:177).

Yet relations between Aborigines in Arnhem Land and the Macassans were ambiguous, as revealed in myth, where the totemic dog encounters the Macassans and rejects them, their goods and technology, while the people themselves entered into relations of exchange, including inter-marriage (Berndt 1989; Maddock 1988; McIntosh 1992, 1994a, 1994b:86-87, 1995:117-148). While at an 'outside' level of meaning the totemic dog rejects the Macassans and all they have to offer, yet an 'inside' version for more restricted telling, the totemic dog is female and she takes no sacred objects with her when she meets, accepts goods from and possibly mates with the Macassans (McIntosh 1994a).
McIntosh (1994a:80) argues that the myth provides the Yolŋu with a 'mandate' for cross-cultural relations and inter-ethnic marriage without the loss of the integrity of Yolŋu Rom (law, culture, right way). Berndt (1989:417) and McIntosh (1994a:81) suggest that the continuing currency of the myth in northeast Arnhem Land, long after the end of visits by Macassans to Yolŋu shores, may be understood in terms of the relevance of the myth to contemporary relations between Yolŋu and Balanda.¹

In Yolŋu languages the dog is sometimes referred to as wakingu (without kin) (McIntosh 1992:9) as is a woman by her brother or in the hearing of her brother (Warner 1969:55-56). Yet even though they are described as wakingu, Yolŋu women do not lose their kin and clan affiliations when they marry a man of another clan, move to live in his clan country and bear him children (Warner 1969:99-102). Just as the totemic dog has an ambiguous role in mediating relations between Yolŋu clans and between Yolŋu and strangers, so too do Yolŋu women in clan exogamous marriage and when they marry inter-ethnically and move to live in Darwin.

The demise of the trepang trade and of Macassan contact with Aboriginal people of Arnhem Land was not so much due to a break down in relations between Aborigines of Arnhem Land and the Macassans, as to the growing Balanda presence and the imposition of government regulations on Macassan activities in the region (Macknight 1976:100-127; Swain 1993:177).

### 3.2.2 Hostilities and protectionism: missions and reserve.

Later contacts with Japanese pearlers and European frontiersmen were noted for relations of hostility (Dewar 1992). By the 1930s, the Arnhem Land coast had attracted large fleets of Japanese luggers in the pearling and other marine commodities trade, and European frontiersmen had begun to penetrate the remote coast and hinterland of Arnhem Land in quest of marine products, in the crocodile and buffalo-shooting industries and in early mining and pastoral endeavours. The Yolŋu people resisted these incursions and the exploitation of their shores, their lands and their women by these strangers in a series of violent responses (Dewar 1992:38-60).

The situation deteriorated in 1932, when a Japanese crew were fatally speared when they went ashore at Caledon Bay on the Gulf of Carpentaria. Again, in 1933, Yolŋu fatally speared a police officer and attacked the rest of the police party which had been sent to arrest the clansmen involved in the earlier killing of the Japanese. The subsequent

trial and its outcome brought the nature of Yolŋu grievances and the deterioration of relations of contact to nation-wide public attention (Berndt and Berndt 1954; Dewar 1992). In consequence, a division of responsibilities was worked out between the Church and the State, such that the missionary presence would be increased in northeast Arnhem Land and the State would reinforce the separate status of and restrict access to Arnhem Land as an Aboriginal Reserve.

The Methodist Overseas Mission (MOM) had already established missions in the region at South Goulburn Island in 1916 and Elcho Island in 1922, which subsequently relocated to Milingimbi in 1923. The Methodists offered to establish another mission in the northeast corner of Arnhem Land in the region of the recent hostilities and the Reverend Chaseling chose the sight for Yirrkala in November 1935. While the Church of England opened missions elsewhere in Arnhem Land, the Methodist missions formed a chain of settlements along the islands and the mainland coast. Early missionary objectives were to monitor Aboriginal people’s contact with non-Aboriginal strangers, to pacify and settle the Aborigines and to introduce them to Christianity (Hedrick 1973:55; Dewar 1989, 1992).

The Northern Territory Administration supported the missionary presence and government intervention was initially confined to the declaration of the Arnhem Land Aboriginal Reserve, which originally encompassed some 31,200 square miles of mainland and islands along the coast. The missions were charged with the actual task to 'govern' (in the sense of Foucault 1986:221) in that they exercised surveillance, persuaded and constrained Aborigines to be pacified and to settle at missions, where goods and services were to be provided and new ideas, norms and values were to be inculcated.

The Yolŋu experienced the largely benevolent but none the less coercive circumscription of their former autonomy when they were attracted to missions, where the delivery of goods and services bound the Yolŋu to locales and aggregations not of their choosing and to relations of dependence on Balanda. From the outset, the missionaries provided health care which attracted the Yolŋu to missions where their ailments were often dramatically alleviated. The contact experience and settlement life generated further need for Western medical aid when introduced epidemics such as those of influenza, measles and the like, meant the Yolŋu experienced illness for which they had little immunity (Shepherdson 1981:16).

While Yolŋu moved into missions to have access to medical aid, medical teams also made forays into remote parts of Yolŋu clan lands to identify sufferers of tuberculosis, leprosy and yaws and to encourage people to move to missions for
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treatment. In these early years, nursing staff on the missions used to treat Yolŋu locally for medical conditions which were subsequently to be organised by medical evacuation to public hospitals in Gove and Darwin, when mission hospitals were closed in favour of more centralised hospital services (Kettle 1991:126-202, 332-342).

The Methodists introduced schooling and some technical education for adults in the 1930s, and with education came new ideas and aspirations. Missionaries set out to pacify the men, emancipate the women, nurture the children and bring about social change (Dewar 1992:19). Missions provided a haven and alternative ways to resolve conflicts among the Yolŋu themselves and between them and neighbouring Aboriginal groups (see Keen 1994:22-24). Missionaries suggested new ideas and intervened in matters of marital and family life, and in the earlier mission era more women than men chose to live at the missions, 'perhaps in order to escape oppression by men' (Keen 1994:26-27).

The missionaries sought to 'emancipate' Yolŋu women from such traditional marriage practices as infant bestowal and gerontocratic polygyny (Dewar 1989:82, 1992:19). Women were encouraged to avoid marriages not of their choosing and to aspire to monogamous marriage. The Methodists did not make as direct an assault on the indigenous system of marriage by contrast with the mission experience elsewhere (cf. Turner 1974:60-65; Hart & Pilling 1960:107-109; Goodale 1971:11; Hart, Pilling & Goodale 1988:116) and the system of 'promised' marriage and of polygyny persisted in northeast Arnhem Land.

In the late 1930s, the Chief Protector of Aborigines, Dr Cook, criticised missions for arousing in Aboriginal people expectations which could only be fulfilled by movement to urban centres and thereby into contact with the mixed-ethnic population (Dewar 1989:122). These initiatives were seen by Cook to endanger the major purpose of mission stations, that is to control the nature of interaction between remote-dwelling Aboriginal people and other ethnics and to confine full-descent, 'tribal' people to mission and government settlements within Aboriginal Reserves.

3.2.3 Separation, settlement and segregation.

From the outset, protectionist policy and practice were concerned with separating Aboriginal people including Arnhem Landers, from the perceived ills of unregulated social, sexual and economic relations with non-Aboriginal persons. This was not so easily effected for the Aboriginal people of western Arnhem Land where the Reserve abutted European territorial interests and settlement. However, protectionism ensured that the
Yolnu in northeast Arnhem Land were largely constrained to interact with missionaries and government officials, while they were 'protected' from more autonomous relations with whites, Asians or other Aborigines and largely confined within the Arnhem Land Reserve.

The whole of the Northern Territory was administered by South Australia until the Commonwealth (i.e. federal) government took over in 1911. Under the Aboriginals Ordinance amendments of 1911 and 1918, the Chief Protector of Aborigines had wide powers over Aborigines. From 1939, the Director of the Natives Affairs Branch had enormous power over where Aborigines were to live, were allowed to move, with whom and under what conditions they were able to interact and marry. Aboriginal people were 'settled' in government and mission settlements within Aboriginal Reserves, attached to pastoral properties or restricted by curfew and residence to compounds in the urban centres of Darwin and Alice Springs. Special provision was made to separate Aboriginal children of mixed-descent from their full descent mothers and wider kin, to limit the incidence of miscegenation and even to monitor marriage between Aborigines of full and mixed-descent (Cummings 1990).

Relative to other Aborigines with different circumstances of contact history, the Yolnu experienced comparatively minimal dislocation during the protectionist era. Even so, the Yolnu found themselves increasingly tied to missions as places where goods and services were delivered and where new ideas and opportunities were presented. These introduced patterns of settlement did not correspond well with former Yolnu clan aggregations, so inevitably some clans were dislocated from their own clan areas and came to settle at missions and within country to which other Yolnu clans were more strongly affiliated (Keen 1978:17-18).

While the long period of contact between Macassans and the Yolnu had resulted in sexual-marital relations and a significant mixed-descent component in the population (Berndt and Berndt 1954), the missionary presence, the declaration of Arnhem Land as a Reserve and protectionist policy, in combination, served to limit the opportunities the Yolnu had for inter-ethnic sexual-marital relations and to minimise further miscegenation.

The Aborigines Act of 1910 expressly prohibited sexual-marital association between Aboriginal people and other ethnics, whilst the later Aboriginal Ordinances permitted few marital exemptions. Baldwin Spencer, an anthropologist and at one stage Protector of Aborigines in the Northern Territory, and J.W. Bleakley, the Chief Protector of Aborigines in Queensland, favoured the segregation of mixed-descent Aboriginal
people from whites and other ethnics, advocated their protection within mission centres and urban institutions and influenced the development of these segregationist strategies on Reserves and in urban centres in the Northern Territory (Cole 1979: 122-123; Cummings 1990:17-27). The Anglican Church Missionary Society (CMS) and the Methodist Overseas Mission (MOM) were agents for protectionist, segregationist policy on missions within the Arnhem Land Reserve.

Even when the war years drew Aborigines from western Arnhem Land to army camps along the Stuart Highway and the airforce took over mission airstrips in northeast Arnhem Land, Yolŋu women were still largely isolated and 'protected' from sexual-marital relations with military personnel, predominantly white men. During the war years, military priorities determined the movement, settlement and inter-ethnic contacts of Aboriginal people in the northern defence zone (Powell 1988).

3.3 World War II and the post war period.

3.3.1 Wartime, urban 'drift' and repatriation.

The Japanese threat during World War II led to a reversal of the Native Affairs Branch policy of concentrating Aboriginal people into Aboriginal rural settlements and urban compounds. Arnhem Land was a front-line war zone and mission airstrips were commandeered by the RAAF and missions in northeast Arnhem Land were strafed and bombed by the Japanese. For reasons of security, the Yolŋu were encouraged to resume their subsistence autonomy and to disperse from the mission settlements to which they had been so recently attracted. The Army recruited the anthropologist Donald Thomson to organise Arnhem Land Aborigines, including the Yolŋu, into coast-watch and patrol activities and to spread propaganda among the Aboriginal population to counter the potential of the Japanese in this remote region (Powell 1988:250-51).

Aborigines from western Arnhem Land and to a much lesser extent people from further east were attracted to the military encampments in Darwin and Katherine and those in between along the Stuart Highway (Berndt 1954; Powell 1988:248). This movement was in large part determined by the labour needs of the defence forces (Powell 1988:257) and the war years significantly changed relations between Aboriginal people and the white society in the Northern Territory. As a result of the massive influx of white military personnel, the population ratio of Europeans and other ethnics to Aboriginal people reversed and new conditions of interaction were necessary. Aboriginal people in military camps had better conditions of housing, improved access to health services, increased training and employment opportunities and more remuneration for employment.
than they had hitherto experienced. The expectations of Aboriginal people were raised in respect of the provision of services by and relations with white Australians (Powell 1982: 217; 1988:257).

The Yolŋu of northeast Arnhem Land were not as involved in the wartime and immediate post-war movement to Darwin and Katherine as were western Arnhem Landers, yet they were not indifferent to the attractions of urban life. In the 1950s, people from as far northeast as Milingimbi were overcoming the distances and paucity of modern transport in the region by walking overland, travelling down the coast in canoe parties and coming in on mission boats (Berndt 1954:29). These journeys were early initiatives of Arnhem Land people, including Yolŋu, to find out about life in Darwin.

In 1949, the Director of the Native Affairs Branch gave limited support to the establishment of a trading station at Maningrida on the Liverpool River, in order to provide locally some of the goods which were attracting Arnhem Landers into Darwin. At the same time, the Director took the opportunity to repatriate a number of Gunavidji from central Arnhem Land who had been attracted to Darwin and apparently lacked the means to return to their homelands. In order to stem the flow of Aborigines from Arnhem Land into Darwin and to complete the near encirclement of the Arnhem Land Reserve by missions, the government settlement of Maningrida was established in 1957 under the control of the Welfare Branch (Doolan 1989: 1-3).

This post-war movement of Aborigines from remote country and from Aboriginal Reserves to urban centres was considered highly undesirable by white administrators and the urban populace and was typically described as 'drift', thereby denying the rationality of Aboriginal movement to towns. These Aboriginal people posed a nuisance to white administrators in Darwin and put pressure on urban services and in particular upon the already inadequate housing and health services for Aboriginal people at Bagot and Berrimah (Wells 1995).

Urban administrators wanted so-called 'tribal' Aborigines in town to return to their lands of origin and to mission settlements and pastoral properties. They began to facilitate the removal of the remains of deceased Aborigines for burial in remote clan country. This practice was designed to counter the 'drift' of Aboriginal people into Darwin and to encourage those already there to accept sponsored passage home, in order to bury their dead in their own clan lands and with appropriate funeral ceremonies (see Kettle 1991:65-66). Ŋarritj, a senior Yolŋu man and clan and community leader in northeast Arnhem Land, believed that his own father was instrumental in the development of an administrative policy to repatriate deceased Yolŋu for rituals and burial in Yolŋu clan
lands. He said that his father, then a renowned Yolŋu leader but now long deceased, had "worried" because a close kinsman had died and been buried in Darwin. Jarritj was convinced that his father had agitated so much that mission personnel and authorities in Darwin allowed the remains to be exhumed and arrangements made for their return to kin and clan for funeral ceremonies and re-burial. Aboriginal people and urban administrators had different but coincidental reasons for promoting the repatriation of deceased kin and 'countrymen'.

The immediate post war era was one in which the repatriation of prisoners of war, the remains of the war dead and repatriation services, hospital care and the like for ex-service men and women was a matter of administrative parlance and policy in Australia. From this earlier context, in response to Aboriginal insistence and in light of a growing administrative awareness of Aboriginal people's attachment to 'country', there evolved in the Northern Territory and elsewhere in Australia, the present policy of repatriation of Aborigines living and dead from urban places of institutional care and custody. The workings of this administrative policy in Darwin in articulation with Yolŋu responsibilities to their dead is discussed in detail in Chapter 9.

3.3.2 Assimilationist policy and an 'adjustment movement'.

While a 'new deal' for Aboriginal people, the McEwen Memorandum, named after the then Minister for the Interior, was announced as early as 1937, it was not thoroughly implemented in the Northern Territory until after the war years. The assimilation policy of the Commonwealth began in effect with the appointment in 1951 of Paul Hasluck, Minister for the Territories, and the implementation of the Welfare Ordinance of 1953.

Whilst Aboriginal people of full-descent and in certain instances those of mixed-descent were entitled to citizenship, they were in the interim to be treated as wards in need of guardianship and 'tutelage' (cf. Donzelot 1979:82-90). The difference in emphasis from that of the former policy of protectionism was evident in the greater emphasis on tutelage and on social change. The young were seen as most amenable to social change and social-welfare measures were directed at the family as the natural institution for cultural transmission and hence the targeted avenue for social change.

Mission and government settlements on Aboriginal Reserves were no longer to be refuges from alien contact but rather centres for enlightened training for Aboriginal people to prepare them to take their place among the Australian citizenry. Yet the avowed aim of citizenship rights for Aboriginal people was ill-served by the development of a welfare regime for the 'policing' (cf. Donzelot 1979) of the most private, domestic aspects
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of family life among Aborigines.

The Welfare Ordinance of 1953 imposed mechanisms of control and surveillance which included hygiene regimes, institutionalised feeding and the separation of children from parents and wider kin, either by a system of dormitory schooling or in the case of mixed-descent children by permanent removal from their Aboriginal mothers into institutional or foster care. Relative to Aborigines elsewhere, the Yolŋu experience of assimilationism was comparatively 'benign' and did not include the 'cultural surgery such as the dormitory system, banning of ceremonies, prohibition of arranged and polygynous marriages, and enforcement of the use of English found elsewhere' (Keen 1994:297).

Even so, the Yolŋu felt the increasing impact of social-welfare interventions as mediated by missionaries and they were not content to accept or reject these interventions but rather sought to re-negotiate relations with Balanda and the Church, the better to exercise more control over their own lives. In 1957, what Berndt (1962) describes as an 'adjustment movement' began in northeast Arnhem Land - a movement in which clan and religious leaders sought to combine the spiritual power of Yolŋu indigenous Law with the introduced and mediatory power of the Christian Church.

This movement, which centred on the mission settlement at Elcho Island, now known by its Yolŋu name, Galiwin'ku, is seen by Berndt as an Aboriginal attempt to anticipate and to control the forces of social and cultural change, which the post war era of settlement and social-welfare intervention introduced. The leaders sought through an exchange of *ranga* (sacred, ceremonial objects) with the Christian Church to re-negotiate relations between Yolŋu and Balanda and among themselves, especially in terms of relations between the sexes. They also wanted more control over introduced opportunities in education, training and employment and over their own affairs (Berndt 1962; see also Rudder 1993:53, 72-77; Keen 1994:276-280).

The welfare measures in the assimilationist era 1950-1970 brought about a rapid growth in population at mission and government settlements in Arnhem Land. From the 1950s to the 1970s, most Yolŋu lived at missions and only a few small groups lived dispersed throughout their clan lands (Keen 1978:17-18).

### 3.3.3 Removal, institutionalisation and inter-ethnic marriage.

In the Northern Territory, Aboriginal people were regularly subject to the summary removal of the mentally ill, the disabled and those to be placed in remand and in prison. In 1955, the Department of Welfare in Darwin initiated a movement of Aborigines from the Northern Territory to the southern capital city of Adelaide for health
and welfare purposes, including institutional, remand and foster care (Gale 1972:83). Aborigines who were removed in this way lived and sometimes died in 'care' away from kin and country.

Prior to the Leprosy Ordinance 1954-57, people suffering from Hansen's disease were forcibly incarcerated at a leprosarium at Channel Island in Darwin Harbour. Changes in the Ordinance in 1958, in medical practices and the subsequent enlightened policies of Dr John Hargrave greatly improved the situation but patients were still obliged to spend a minimum of two years as inpatients of the East Arm Leprosarium on the outskirts of Darwin (Tatz 1964:127-129). Aborigines from Arnhem Land, including the Yolŋu, experienced long-term hospitalisation in this way and among Yolŋu women in Darwin are those who attest to the role of the East Arm Hospital in their history of urban residence.

The Welfare Act of 1953 empowered white authorities, whether mission or government, to exercise control over the movement and place of residence of Aborigines and over their sexual-marital relations and their access to urban amenities and to alcohol (Tatz 1964:27). The Act also made provision for the removal of any Aboriginal child under fourteen for educational and welfare purposes, although the removal of children of mixed-descent 'from tribal affiliations' was now subject to parental permission, a subtle change from the earlier Ordinances (Cummings 1990:93).

Yolŋu were subject to these medical related removals and to the provisions of the Welfare Act, but there was little incidence of miscegenation among Yolŋu at this time and within mission settlements. Hence the removal of mixed-descent children did not impact as heavily on the Yolŋu as it did on other Aboriginal groups. During the assimilationist years, mission settlements in northeast Arnhem Land were administered by a growing number of non-Aboriginal, predominantly Balanda mission and government personnel and also by Pacific and Torres Strait Islander missionary staff (Cole 1979:112). While sexual-marital relations between Yolŋu women and mission staff were rare, although not unknown, mission policy and Yolŋu attitudes typically resulted in the expulsion from the Reserve of non-Aboriginal personnel who engaged in sexual-marital relations with Yolŋu women.

From the mid 1920s to the late 1960s the Yolŋu comprised a largely homogeneous population, geographically isolated and administratively segregated from opportunities for sexual-marital relations with other ethnics, indeed with other Aboriginal groups, with the exception of social and ceremonial interaction and some inter marriage with neighbouring groups in Arnhem Land (Keen 1994:5).
3.3.4 Legislative change and social and geographic mobility.

In 1962, an amendment to the Commonwealth Electoral Act enfranchised Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory and abolished the status of Aborigines as Wards and theoretically lifted restrictions on Aboriginal mobility (Taylor 1990:10). The 1964 Social Welfare Ordinance also removed some of the restrictions to which Aborigines were formerly subject, such as those which related to alcohol and to inter-ethnic sexual-marital relations. Berndt (1964:29) notes that at this time Arnhem Landers were finding ways to move beyond the Reserve and to Darwin.

Legislative changes, however, had a blunted impact on the lives of Aboriginal people on Reserves who were still governed under the Welfare Ordinance. The forbidden fruits of alcohol and of inter-ethnic sexual-marital relations were now the right of Aboriginal citizens who lived in urban centres or elsewhere, but not available to those who lived at mission and government settlements within Aboriginal Reserves. The easing of restrictions imposed on Aboriginal people was counterposed for Yolŋu by legislation which prohibited alcohol and monitored the presence of non-Aboriginal persons within the Arnhem Land Reserve (Williams 1987:5).

The 1967 Federal Referendum officially enumerated Aborigines in the Commonwealth census, removed Commonwealth restrictions on legislation about Aborigines, and by implication entitled Aborigines to the full rights of citizenship. Yet the Welfare Branch continued to determine that Aboriginal people on Reserves were peculiarly dependent, in need of special welfare assistance and a prolonged period of tutelage.

3.4 Targets of change.

3.4.1 Tutelage in separation and by circulation.

While successive federal governments in Canberra were responsible for assimilationist policy and practice in the Northern Territory, throughout the 1950s and into the 1960s Darwin became the administrative centre from which Aboriginal people were governed in the Northern Territory and Darwin was 'promoted as a model for the successful assimilation of Aborigines' into urban centres (Wells 1995:3). Assimilationist policy managed the lives of Aboriginal people in missions and settlements in two main ways: firstly by increasing the level of external intervention by means of the local delivery of goods and services as designed and administered by non-Aboriginal personnel, and secondly by introducing Aboriginal people to centralised and more specialised services within the framework of institutionalised rural-urban mobility and
Tatz criticises the administration of assimilationist policy within mission and government settlements as one in which Aboriginal people experienced 'total institutionalisation' (Tatz 1972:14). He says that the social, psychological and physical malaise experienced by Aboriginal people despite the intended benevolence of external services was popularly attributed to the intractability of Aboriginal people, which allegedly prevented them from realising the benefits offered by government.

Causality, in short, lies in their culture, customs, and cussedness. There is no acknowledgment that 'our' system of services can be, or is, deficient in any way (Tatz 1974:108).

In this way, the Yolŋu were largely confined to settlement patterns not of their own choosing, faced with social and economic change over which they could exercise little control, subject to surveillance and tutelage in remote communities and to movement to Darwin and to other urban centres for hospital care, transitional schooling or for occupational-training.

Whilst assimilationist policy shifted the rationale of Aboriginal Reserves from places of protection to places of tutelage, where Aboriginal people might be prepared to take their place within the wider community at some unspecified time in the future, it was recognised that isolation from and disparity between settlement and wider society contexts was in large measure inimical to the goal of assimilation. Mission and government personnel had the contradictory responsibility to arouse in their Aboriginal charges the desire for new wants and ways of living, which could only find complete expression beyond Aboriginal remote settlements and by assimilation to white Australian norms and values (Tatz 1964:11-28).

In the 1960s, the Welfare Branch sought to overcome this disjunction between aims and realities by bringing Aboriginal people into the urban centres of Darwin and Alice Springs for short-term training within residential courses. A variety of occupational skills were offered but there was an overall emphasis on courses for Aboriginal nursing, hygiene and teaching assistants (Tatz 1964:61-62). Aborigines who were selected and aspired to be trained as Aboriginal assistants in mission and government schools and clinics took part in this pattern of circulation, which was defined by an urban context of tutelage and a rural context of employment.

Under the Training Allowance scheme, Aboriginal people from remote missions, settlements and pastoral properties were given vocational training and some work-experience in the urban centres but there was little emphasis on fitting them for permanent urban employment. There were few opportunities for Aborigines from remote
communities to progress from training in urban centres to gaining urban employment.\(^2\)

Tatz criticised the vocational training of Aboriginal people which ostensibly qualified them for employment within segregated missions and settlements but which, contrary to assimilationist policy, did not enable Aboriginal people to compete within the wider labour market outside of Aboriginal Reserves (Tatz 1964:87). Yolŋu are to this day familiar with a similar pattern of short-term urban residence for educational, vocational and community development courses which are designed to fit them to limited employment opportunities in remote communities.

Throughout the 1960s, the Welfare Branch, under the directorship of Harry Christian Giese, continued to bring Aboriginal people from remote areas into Darwin for training in health and hygiene courses and for them to gain experience in Darwin hospital. However, the training of Aboriginal nursing assistants in Darwin hospital wards was discontinued in 1972 (Kettle 1991:290-293). Dr W.A. Langsford, the Director of Health at the time, endorsed a recommendation which stated that Darwin hospital wards were not a suitable venue for the training of Aboriginal nursing assistants and that hospital nursing courses were not appropriate to the future employment of Aboriginal trainees, which was envisaged as limited to that available within remote Aboriginal communities (Kettle 1991:294-295).

The stance taken by Dr Langsford has a continuing history and contemporary schemes for the occupational training of Aborigines have evolved from similar policy assumptions, namely that the interests of Aboriginal people from remote communities is best served by separate institutions for higher and continuing education and vocational-training programmes which are structured, and limited, to fit trainees for employment within Aboriginal communities.

The training and employment structures which missions introduced to Yolŋu were not formalised as apprenticeships (Williams 1987:28), but they included close interaction between mission supervisor and Yolŋu worker. The repeal of the Wards Employment Ordinance in 1971 ended this era and saw the introduction of award wages for Aborigines, increased wage costs for Aboriginal labour and a commensurate drop in the number of Aborigines in paid employment. The mission economy was unable to afford the costs of award wages for Yolŋu trainees and the number of Yolŋu in paid training and employment was drastically reduced. Ultimately, the Welfare State took over from the Church the primary responsibility for the ‘welfare’ of Yolŋu as dependent citizens and

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\(^2\) In the 1960s some Aboriginal people from the Bathurst Island Mission did engage in a form of short-term and circular labour migration to Darwin, where men found labouring jobs with the defence services and a few women from Catholic missions were employed as nursing assistants and domestics at East Arm leprosarium (Tatz 1964:70).
women and children were deemed especially 'worthy' and in need of care.

3.4.2 Aboriginal education and training.

In the latter years of assimilationist policy, the Watts-Gallacher Report (1963) recommended that the Welfare Branch develop a system of transitional schooling for selected Aboriginal children, so that they might be introduced to higher standards of Western education than was available in schools on Reserves. The Report indicated that the needs of the academically able Aboriginal student were not well served by post-primary schools within remote mission and government settlements and advocated that selected Aboriginal students should attend urban high schools (Watts and Gallacher 1964:137).

In response to this recommendation, Kormilda College opened in 1967 at Berrimah on what was then the outskirts of Darwin. Kormilda was an Aboriginal residential and 'transitional' school, which would bridge the educational, social and cultural gap between the rural and Aboriginal experience and the majority, dominant and urban context. Aboriginal students from Arnhem Land settlements and from elsewhere in the Territory were selected in their Grade 6 year to complete their primary schooling as boarders at Kormilda College and to fit them to go onto urban high schools (Sommerlad 1976).

In 1972, Dhupuma College opened near Nhulunbuy as the Aboriginal transitional and residential school for the region and Arnhem Land students were channelled there rather than to Kormilda in Darwin (Sommerlad 1976). Dhupuma had a short life as Yolŋu parents and Balanda administration became concerned about the morale and viability of the school and Dhupuma closed in 1980. A number of Yolŋu students transferred to Kormilda College but this was also to close, as the purpose and value of transitional schooling for Aboriginal adolescents in urban centres came increasingly to be criticised by Aboriginal parents and white educationalists, and as government policy changed from one of assimilationism to that of self-determination for Aboriginal people.

A few Yolŋu parents persisted with the remaining options available, including to send adolescents to secondary boarding schools in southern states, or to attend high schools in Darwin as day scholars and stay with kin who were already living in town. Then in 1988, Kormilda College re-opened as a privately run secondary and boarding school not restricted to Aboriginal students. Commonwealth payments to Aboriginal students (Abstudy), and subsidies to enable remote-dwelling students in general to attend urban secondary schools, provided the means whereby Yolŋu adolescents were again able
to enrol as boarders at Kormilda College in Darwin.

Yolnu have a long history of sending selected students to Darwin for secondary education and for further education and occupational-training. In the 1960s an annex was set up at Kormilda College for the training of Aboriginal teaching assistants for Aboriginal community schools. This facility had to greatly alter and expand its teacher training functions when the development of bilingual, bicultural schooling, which had modest beginnings in certain mission contexts including in northeast Arnhem Land, gained government momentum in the early seventies.

This development placed a greater emphasis on the need for qualified Aboriginal teachers, Aboriginal cultural experts known as education officers (EOs) and for curriculum development to be generated by and responsive to the educational needs of Aboriginal people (Harris T. 1990:49). In 1974, the Aboriginal Teacher Education Centre in an annex at Kormilda College relocated to the rural township of Batchelor, some 100 kilometres south of Darwin. Batchelor College, as it came to be known, was originally a government run residential campus which offered teacher education and training for Aboriginal people, especially those from remote communities. By 1985, there were some 100 Aboriginal students studying to be teachers and teacher assistants and living on campus at Batchelor (Batchelor College 1994-95).

The Aboriginal students were typically mature aged, married and Aboriginal women were already beginning to predominate. At this time, students at Batchelor were accompanied by spouse, dependent children and sometimes extended family. Housing, creche, school and other support facilities were available on campus. The distance of the campus from Darwin was deemed sufficient to insulate the Aboriginal teacher trainees and their families from such urban distractions as alcohol-drinking, but access to alcohol in the township itself and movement to Darwin tended to confound this attempt to insulate and educate.

Courses were based on the academic year and living on campus for so long meant a major disruption in terms of family and wider kinship and community life. Second and subsequent years of study exacerbated these difficulties. The retention rates were poor as students from remote communities were torn between their studies, the distractions of new opportunities and social and ceremonial obligations in their remote communities (Kemmis 1988:2-3).

It was not simply white administrators and educationalists who began to question the on-campus approach. There were 'those with authority in Aboriginal communities' who expressed their concerns about their kin studying at Batchelor and suggested that life
on-campus 'makes them silly' and 'broken people' (Jordan 1985:79). The underlying concern was that life on campus and too near to Darwin would result in an escalation of social change, particularly in terms of marital change and as a result of alcohol-drinking.

Aboriginal community leaders and particularly Yolŋu at Yirrkala began to criticise the on-campus and away-from-home approach to education and training at Batchelor. In the mid seventies, clan leaders at Yirrkala met with Maria Brandl, then an anthropological adviser to the Northern Territory Department of Education and conveyed their priorities, which she subsequently reported, for teacher training to be conducted locally (Kemmis 1988:4). The first 'on site' program began at Yirrkala in 1976 was the forerunner of RATE, Remote Area Teacher Education. RATE was later to become known as Remote Area Tertiary Education, a system of 'community based' education and occupational training for remote-dwelling Aborigines and centred on Batchelor College. The current role of Batchelor College and the RATE scheme is discussed in detail in the following chapter on Yolŋu transience and migration to Darwin (see 4.5.3).

3.4.3 Women and children and urban hospital and health services.

Another major way in which Aboriginal women were targeted for care and to bring about change was in the matter of health care. Initially, primary and preventative health care was locally delivered within mission 'hospitals' and clinics run by resident European nursing staff and Aboriginal health and hygiene assistants and augmented by local visits by white medical experts.

At the beginning of the 1970s, there were 23 hospitals, 3 clinics and 10 infant welfare clinics throughout the remote parts of the Territory. Even so, the then Prime Minister of Australia, Mr McMahon, acknowledged that the health system was far from perfect, as indicated by the high rates of infant mortality and of disease in general among remote-dwelling Aborigines in the Northern Territory (Tatz 1974:107).

Despite the qualified nursing skills of resident European nurses, regular visits by doctors and other medical experts and mission hospital facilities, curative health services were even then essentially urban-centred. Remote-dwelling people on missions, settlements and pastoral properties and in need of emergency and specialised medical services had to be evacuated, often by aerial medical services, to urban hospitals (Tatz 1964:137; Kettle 1991:21-40).

This emphasis on urban delivery of specialist health services escalated after 1972 when the Commonwealth Department of Health took over responsibility for health services to Aboriginal missions and settlements. In 1973, the Minister for Health, Dr
Douglas Everingham, initiated changes which included the closing down of mission and settlement hospitals with inpatient facilities in favour of an extension of the Aerial Medical Service to fly remote dwelling patients to urban centres for hospitalisation and specialist out-patient services.

Pregnant Aboriginal women were especially targeted as in need of medical transfers from remote areas to urban hospitals for the last weeks of their confinement and this practice became a major aspect of the increasing urbanisation of health intervention (Kettle 1991:347). Health related mobility and hospitalisation were justified on medical grounds and were prompted by national and international concern over the high rates of infant mortality among Aboriginal people who were living in remote areas (Tatz 1974:109).

Following the granting of Northern Territory self-government in 1978, the Northern Territory government took over responsibility for the delivery of health services and continued the pattern in which the deficiencies of remote health services were compensated by medical transfers to hospitals in Darwin and other urban centres in the Territory and also interstate.

Government schemes to move remote-dwelling Aborigines to urban centres for education, health and other purposes of 'care' were not the only mechanisms shaping the rural-urban movement of Aboriginal people. As discussed later in this and subsequent chapters, the dynamics of Yolŋu social and ceremonial life and of individual choice and action were to add to the dimensions and momentum of Yolŋu rural-urban mobility. At the same time, there was a somewhat contrary movement afoot as Aborigines in many parts of the Territory, and the Yolŋu in northeast Arnhem Land, were setting out to regain 'country' and set up small 'homeland' centres in places of their own choosing and within their own lands.

3.5 Land Rights.

3.5.1 Homelands movement and Aboriginal Land Rights legislation.

From the 1960s and with increased momentum in the 1970s, the Yolŋu and other Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory took steps to assert their right to choose where and how they lived. Aborigines began to 'walk off' pastoral properties and to leave mission and government settlements to return to country and establish small, dispersed and more autonomous communities. By the 1970s, the exodus of Aboriginal people from the settlement sites to which they had been attracted or compelled by the agencies of mission and government intervention and mining and pastoral industries, had assumed
Chapter 3. *Ebb and flow*

the momentum of an Aboriginal social movement (Williams 1987:2). The return of Aboriginal people to lands of social, cultural and economic significance has come to be called the 'homelands movement' and the small, dispersed communities which resulted are called homeland centres or outstations (HRSCAA Blanchard Report 1987:7).

The Yolŋu prefer the English expression 'homelands' because it more closely expresses their voluntary repatriation to clan country. They also emphasise that the homelands movement was about autonomy of movement, settlement and socio-cultural practice. As quoted in Cole (1979:146), Gatjil Djerwurkburk from Dhalinbuy explains the homelands movement in this way,

> We prefer to use 'homelands' rather than 'outstations' because more than anything the people have said that they are going home....People went back to their homelands not just because of land rights. It was the people's move.

The homelands movement as an Aboriginal initiative preceded the advent of Aboriginal Land Rights legislation, which dates from the introduction of the federal Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act in 1976.

Yolŋu people had already begun to re-occupy clan lands and to establish their own dispersed communities (Keen 1978:17) well before clan leaders from Yirrkala made the unprecedented attempt to prove Yolŋu land ownership before the Supreme Court in Darwin in 1970 (Williams 1986). The Yirrkala Land Claim failed to satisfy the Court of Yolŋu rights in land and to prevent a major excision of clan lands in the form of a mining lease and an associated European-style urban community on the Gove peninsular (Williams 1986:202).³

While it is a matter of historical record that the Yolŋu were pioneers in the legal prosecution of indigenous land rights, it is perhaps not so well understood that the movement of Aboriginal people to re-occupy clan lands has been an achievement in terms of autonomy of movement and in community formation as much as it has been about land rights. The 'homelands movement' ought not to be interpreted as a retreat from social change and as a desire to remain isolated in clan country. Yolŋu, and other Aboriginal groups, have insisted on the development of modern transport and communication services as well as housing, health, education and retail services in their remote homeland centres and outstations (cf. Marika-Mununggiritj et al. 1990:9).

³ The unsuccessful Yirrkala Land Claim did bring indigenous land rights to public attention in Australia and at the same time, in the 1970s, international attention was also increasingly focused on the rights of indigenous minorities within other welfare-democracies (Dyck 1985:1-27). Yolŋu have the justifiable belief that their land claim initiatives were instrumental in the creation of the Aboriginal Land Rights (N.T.) Act of 1976 (Williams 1986:19).
From a certain perspective, the homelands movement of the Yolŋu may be seen to be in direct opposition to the rural-urban mobility and urban migration of Yolŋu people, in that one is the movement to and settlement within clan estates and the other is the movement away from and residence outside of clan lands. Yet there is much in common in that contemporary Yolŋu patterns of mobility and settlement reflect the desire of Yolŋu people to be more self-determining, whether in 'country' or in urban centres.

The Whitlam federal government first promulgated the policy of self-determination for Aboriginal people and the Northern Territory government was responsible for initiatives which would lead to self-determination of Aboriginal people in the Territory. In particular, Aboriginal people would take over limited powers of local self-government on local councils and in local services within Aboriginal communities and on Aboriginal land. As a result of the federal Aboriginal Land Rights (N.T.) Act of 1976, the Yolŋu were recognised as an indigenous landowning people and under the auspice of self-determination policy, they gained limited powers of self-government in local councils and community services in northeast Arnhem Land.

The Aboriginal Land Rights (N.T.) Act of 1976 gave Aborigines living on Aboriginal Reserves in the Northern Territory title to land formerly designated as Reserve, and the Act also made provision for Aboriginal people to make legal claim to unalienated crown lands and urban Reserves, but otherwise made no provision for fringe and urban-dwelling Aborigines.

3.5.2 Wages, welfare and movement to the urban fringe.

At much the same time as the 'walk off from pastoral properties and the 'homelands movement' was underway, Aborigines were also moving into urban fringe camps. The end of the Training Allowance scheme and the introduction of award wages for Aborigines had increased labour costs for Aboriginal workers and drastically reduced the number of Aborigines in paid employment and training, particularly in remote and rural areas. These circumstances taken together with the seasonality and the decline of Aboriginal employment in the pastoral industry, lead to an upsurge in the movement of Aboriginal people, especially of Aboriginal men to urban fringe camps in the Territory (Sansom 1980, Collman 1988). The Yolŋu were affected by the demise of the Training Allowance scheme but had never been engaged to any great extent with the pastoral industry, nor were they closely associated with Aborigines who were camping at more permanent sites in and around Darwin (cf. Sansom 1980).

From the seventies, however, the major Yolŋu communities were beginning to
have easier access to urban centres with the development of roads and regular air services (Keen 1978:17). The Social Welfare Ordinance of 1964 had lifted restrictions on the mobility of Aboriginal people still affected by the Ordinance and changes in entitlement to welfare monies (pensions and unemployment benefits) also made it more possible for Aborigines to move from remote communities and rural areas to urban centres.

Before the Social Welfare Act lifted restrictions, Aboriginal people who were transients in Darwin had to stay at the Bagot Aboriginal Reserve (Wells 1995). Bagot Reserve was not able to cater for all the diverse groups of Aboriginal people who were coming to Darwin at this time, and some Aboriginal groups preferred to live in socially discrete camps at some distance from each other. In the 1970s, Sansom (1980:8) counted twenty three Aboriginal camp sites, only five of which were permanently occupied by 'fringe-dwelling mobs', while the rest were intermittently used by Aborigines from more remote country, including northeast Arnhem Land.

Sansom (1980) describes these Aboriginal camps as places which provided informal, hotel-like services for out-of-town Aborigines who visited and stayed long term in town and often as not pursued a drinking style while in Darwin. He identifies Aborigines who camped at more permanent camp sites on the fringes of Darwin as 'countrymen' of the 'Darwin hinterland' (Sansom 1980:3-21). The Yolŋu and other Aboriginal people came from more remote regions which lay outside the 'Darwin hinterland' (Sansom 1980:frontispiece, 1-21). In the 1970s, Aboriginal groups from remote country camped at sites which were described by Aborigines as 'on and off' camps and were said, in an Aboriginal sense, to belong to distinct out-of-town groups including to 'that Elcho Island mob' (Sansom 1980:8).

Sansom focuses largely on Aboriginal men and their 'style for grogging' (1980:44-78) and he says that Aboriginal men and women in Darwin fringe camps were 'not assimilated to urban structures' (1980: 6). By contrast, Collman (1988:105) argues that Aboriginal women and children who were moving from remote country and pastoral properties into the fringe camps of Alice Springs, were 'privileged' in their access to welfare monies and urban health and school services and more integrated into urban housing than their menfolk. Aboriginal men came to be 'marginalised' by the urban social-welfare context and in terms of Aboriginal women's urban matrifocal households (Collman 1988:105-125).

3.5.3 Aboriginal urban land rights and 'needs basis'.

The 1970s saw Aboriginal rights in land brought to local and national attention via
the hearings of the Yirrkala land rights case in the Supreme Court of the Northern Territory in Darwin (Williams 1986:xii-xiii), by the pan-Aboriginal Tent Embassies in Canberra and by the various public attention seeking activities of Aboriginal groups, including the Gwalwa Daraniki (Our Land) association of Aborigines of the Darwin region and hinterland (Day 1994).

At this time, Justice Woodward began consultations on Aboriginal claims to land and he recommended that Aborigines in the Northern Territory be granted land on two distinct criteria, the one based on traditional ownership and the other on a 'needs basis', identified by long-term association with particular camping sites (Woodward 1973: 25-27; 1974:50-64).

The former recommendation came to fruition in the Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act in 1976 but the second recommendation was not accepted by the Commonwealth Government after the change of government in 1975. Woodward's recommendations, not the Act, identified the needs of Darwin 'fringe-dwellers' for some form of residential urban excision. At much the same time as the Yolŋu were recognised under the terms of the Act as traditional owners of what remained unalienated of their clan lands in northeast Arnhem Land, the Aboriginal people who were then camping at permanent sites in Darwin and its environs were negotiating for small excisions of land from the municipality on the basis of special purposes.

Woodward's 1973 report, the first of the Aboriginal Land Rights Commission, drew attention to a conflict of interests which existed between Aborigines who were permanent residents at the Bagot Aboriginal Reserve in Darwin and those who used the Reserve for more transitory purposes. One year later, in the second report, Woodward recommended that Bagot Reserve become an Aboriginal town lease with title vested in an incorporated body of permanent residents, under terms which protected the rights of transients (Woodward 1974:69, paragraph 328:xi). To this day, Bagot continues to exercise this dual responsibility in the provision of housing and other services to an Aboriginal population comprised of permanent residents and of those who have more transient purposes at the Bagot community and in Darwin.

In the 1970s, the Larrakia and other Aboriginal groups campaigned vigorously for title to permanent living space within Darwin (Buchanan 1974; Wie 1990; Day 1994). The city had developed on Larrakia land and marginalised the Larrakia within their own tribal range. Other Aboriginal groups were also drawn to fringe camps of Darwin with the decline of the pastoral industry and because they were dislocated and often dispossessed from their country in the Darwin 'hinterland' (Sansom 1980). These people tended to stay
at several permanent camping sites which were later to be legally recognised as Aboriginal urban excisions and special purpose leases, but the ‘on and off’ camping of east Arnhem Landers in Darwin never achieved legitimacy.

In his inquiries as the Aboriginal Land Rights Commissioner, Justice Woodward (1973:15-27) found that Aboriginal fringe-campers in the Darwin area, especially at Knuckey’s Lagoon and the One Mile Dam (now known as Railway Dam) did not have traditional rights to these sites, but that they had long-association with the Larrakia, with the Darwin area and surrounding country and with these particular camp sites in the urban environs. Woodward (1973:26) questioned whether the rights of these Aborigines from the Darwin region were in any way different from those of Aborigines from more remote country who also came to visit and live in Darwin. However, later events have seen distinctions made between Aborigines from the Darwin region and immediate hinterland and Aboriginal people from more remote country in the provision of urban living space. The former eventually did acquire Aboriginal special purpose leases with limited housing, camping and associated services while other Aboriginal people, including the Yolŋu, have not.

In 1975, the Interim Aboriginal Land Commissioner, Justice R.C. Ward, recommended that a special purpose lease be granted at Kulaluk for the community use of Larrakia people and of other Aborigines with whom the Larrakia camped and otherwise associated. The legal recognition and handover of Aboriginal title to special purpose leases in the Darwin area was not to happen for several more years as Cyclone Tracy intervened.

3.6 Winds of change.

3.6.1 Cyclone Tracy, reconstruction and Aboriginal urban excisions.

Cyclone Tracy devastated Darwin on the eve and early morning of Christmas Day 1974. A state of emergency was declared and a mass exodus of Darwin residents was undertaken, largely by air evacuation. Aborigines who originated from remote communities, whether they had been camping or in more conventional housing at the time, were similarly evacuated but to remote Aboriginal communities rather than to southern capital cities, as were the majority of the white evacuees. McKenzie (1976:254) recounts communities in Arnhem Land, including Yolŋu communities, receiving Aboriginal evacuees from Darwin: ‘Milingimbi took 100, Goulburn Island thirty, Elcho twenty and Croker twenty. Some went to Yirrkala and other centres’. As Yolŋu women in Darwin attest, not all Yolŋu were camping in and around Darwin or staying at Bagot, as
some were in hospital and others staying in hostels when the cyclone interrupted their lives in Darwin and caused them to be evacuated to their communities of origin.

A permit system was used to regulate access to Darwin during the six month state of emergency which came into effect after the cyclone. Aboriginal people local to Darwin, Larrakia and others, refused to be deterred and returned to their homeland in the city, despite the permit system put in place by the Darwin Reconstruction Commission (Day 1994:71). Restrictions on re-entry to Darwin were lifted on 1 July 1975. Former residents of Darwin, including Aborigines originally from Arnhem Land communities, were free to return for transient purposes and to re-instate themselves as more permanent residents (McKenzie 1976:260). According to oral histories, Yolŋu women were among those who returned to resume their lives in Darwin.

In the aftermath of Cyclone Tracy, the reconstruction of the city took precedence over Aboriginal urban land claims. It was not until 1979 that Aboriginal title to Kulaluk was officially recognised and handed over to the Gwalwa Daraniki (Our Land) Association, an incorporated body made up predominantly of Larrakia people (Day 1994:101). Today, Kulaluk still reflects Larrakia interests, but a number of Torres Strait Islanders, Maoris from New Zealand and Aboriginal people from elsewhere in Australia and the Northern Territory have come to settle at and to move through Kulaluk. Over the years, the Yolŋu have developed connections with Kulaluk, including those established through alcohol-drinking associations and via the sexual-marital relations of a few Yolŋu women with Aboriginal, Maori and Torres Strait Islander men who happen to camp or live permanently within the Kulaluk leasehold.4

Although few Yolŋu would know the historical details of the dispossession of the Larrakia of their clan lands in the greater Darwin area, Yolŋu recognise that Kulaluk is Larrakia land. Generally speaking, the Yolŋu do not expect either the Larrakia people or those on the Kulaluk excision to host them in Darwin.

In 1981, the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs addressed itself to the needs of Fringe-Dwelling Aboriginal Communities (Sansom 1985:67-94) and in consequence, Railway Dam in the inner suburb of Stuart Park and Knuckey's Lagoon on the outskirts of Darwin, gained their status as special purpose leases, which legitimated the residential rights of some Aboriginal 'fringe-dwellers' to these two areas. These special purpose leases came under the auspices of the Aboriginal Development Foundation (ADF), which currently provides community services to the

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4 Kulaluk was a significant referent for Yolŋu in Darwin and during the years of my fieldwork Yolŋu sometimes called the place "fish camp". This was one camp site name in use some twenty years earlier among Aboriginal people who camped in what is now the Aboriginal urban excision known as Kulaluk (Day 1994:7).
Aboriginal people who live there permanently or who stay there when they visit Darwin.

Aboriginal people from the countryside which abuts Darwin and which extends to the Aboriginal settlements of Belyuen, Port Keats and Daly River continue to identify with both these special purpose leases, although there is some degree of differentiation in the co-resident composition within the two leases (Bernie Valadian 1992, pers. com.). Today, Aboriginal camping grounds at Kulaluk, the housing precinct of Minmirama Park within the Kulakuk excision, and the special purpose leases at Railway Dam and Knuckey's Lagoon provide some Aboriginal groups with the land and limited services with which to pursue an Aboriginal lifestyle and an Aboriginal alcohol-drinking style within the urban boundaries.

Yolŋu people from northeast Arnhem Land are not closely associated with any of these Aboriginal special purpose leases which provide Aboriginal people, and in some cases their Maori and Torres Strait Islander associates, with peri-urban housing and camping sites and services. Yolŋu say that they are "shy" and sometimes "frightened" of strangers, including Aboriginal people of different origins, and they are careful not to trespass in places in Darwin which are closely associated with other Aboriginal groups. They typically do not qualify or press for housing and camping within Aboriginal special purpose leases in Darwin, with the limited exception of some alcohol-drinking associations and sexual-marital relationships which lead some Yolŋu to camp at Kulaluk and elsewhere.

Today, these Aboriginal special purpose leases offer more integration with urban institutions and a more sober living style than did their antecedents, the fringe camps of the 1970s. Even so, Aboriginal special purpose leases and urban excisions continue their original function to provide certain Aboriginal groups with a place of their own to camp and to drink alcohol, in their own style and among kin and countrymen in Darwin. These Aboriginal specific living spaces in and near the city and the venue and the services they provide are largely inaccessible to the Yolŋu. The Yolŋu have had to maintain their shifting and clandestine camping sites in the city and environs, especially but not exclusively in order to drink pānitji (alcohol).

3.6.2 The 'urbanisation' of alcohol-drinking: powers of prohibition.

When Reserves became Aboriginal Land, assimilationism gave way to a policy of self-determination for Aboriginal people. At the same time, remote-dwelling people were more able to move to urban centres to drink alcohol and to take alcohol back into their remote communities. By the early 1970s, there was a considerable erosion of the
prohibition on liquor which had formerly been shaped by mission and reserve status.

In particular, the Yolŋu community of Yirrkala had begun to feel the impact of alcohol-drinking because there were liquor outlets in the nearby mining town of Nhulunbuy. Clan and community leaders sought legal action about the increasing intrusion of alcohol within their communities (d'Abbs 1987:2). Since the late 1970s, the status of Yolŋu communities in northeast Arnhem Land as 'dry communities', that is communities of alcohol prohibition, has been recognised and enforced by the Northern Territory Liquor Act (1979) and in line with self-determination policy, by decree of the local community leaders and town councils. One rationale of the restricted areas provisions within the Act was the devolution of control to Aboriginal communities (d'Abbs 1987:5). Yet, even though the 'dry community' status of Yolŋu communities was self imposed, enforcement has been largely administered externally by the Northern Territory Police and Courts.

The extent to which the prohibition on alcohol has been effective varies from community to community, according to accessibility by road, local leadership, wider community support and police presence and vigilance. In many Yolŋu communities today, 'dry' status is effectively absolute, whereas in others there are divided interests within the community and ease of road access to urban centres and liquor outlets all serve to challenge the prohibition.

Alcohol is not the only introduced substance which is abused and which causes social and health problems among the Yolŋu. Unlike other Aboriginal communities, Yolŋu communities in northeast Arnhem Land were more singularly introduced to kava-drinking, a socio-cultural practice common in the Church's experience within the Fijian mission field. In the 1980s and subsequently, the practice of kava drinking has spread throughout northeast Arnhem Land (Alexander 1985). By the mid 1980s, Yolŋu leaders and medical experts began to call for controls on kava sales as the deleterious effects associated with excessive kava-drinking became evident (Alexander 1985; Matthews et al. 1988).

The introduction of kava has largely been restricted to Yolŋu communities in northeast Arnhem Land where, unlike alcohol, it was not restricted by legislation. Because kava has been readily available within Yolŋu communities, the effect has been that kava-drinking and the associated health and social-welfare problems have largely been confined to Aboriginal communities in northeast Arnhem Land. However, some Yolŋu, Pacific Islanders and others are known to form kava drinking groups in Darwin (Alexander 1985:12). While kava abuse by a minority of Yolŋu is predominantly
confined to remote communities, alcohol abuse by a minority of Yolŋu is largely an urban phenomenon.

Research has provided little evidence of an unambiguous causal link between liquor restrictions in Aboriginal communities and Aboriginal patterns of rural-urban mobility, yet evidence suggests that there is a contemporary 'urbanization' of Aboriginal alcohol-drinking behaviour in the Northern Territory (d'Abbs 1987:11-12). Yolŋu from the more easterly communities find liquor outlets nearby in the mining town of Nhulunbuy, while Yolŋu from the more westerly communities tend to look to Darwin for their urban recreational and drinking pursuits, although from Ramingining, access by road provides liquor outlets closer to hand and as alternatives to Darwin.

Throughout the 1980s, 'Milingimbi and Elcho' people' camped at a site in Darwin known as the 'Low Down', where they were close to their kin at nearby Aboriginal hostels and to the heart of the city (Day 1994:106). The Yolŋu have more recently lost the use of this site and have frequently had to relocate other transient camps in order to avoid harassment by municipal authorities and to make way for urban developments.

The majority of Yolŋu do not pursue a lifestyle of camping out and drinking alcohol in Darwin for they have other purposes in the city and they stay at and live more permanently in Aboriginal and mainstream accommodation and housing. Most Yolŋu live sober lives in the city, many are totally abstemious and while some choose a temperate lifestyle from an indigenous sense of restraint, others have incorporated certain Christian ideas about temperance.

Even so, the availability of gānitji (alcohol) is today one of the many attractions for Yolŋu to urban centres such as Nhulunbuy and Darwin. A small and typically very visible minority among the Yolŋu who come to Darwin do so in order 'to rubbish' themselves, as they say, by binge drinking. There are others who become permanently caught up in the urban drinking scene and in doing so form sexual-marital relations with other Aborigines, Torres Strait Islanders, Maoris, and Balanda in Darwin.

When Yolŋu women form inter-ethnic unions in town, they find it difficult to return with their non-Yolŋu de factos to life in remote communities, especially if they and/or their men are habituated to alcohol drinking. While Yolŋu community leaders and local government prohibit the consumption of alcohol within Yolŋu communities and clan lands, those who wish to drink alcohol or who are already alcohol dependent are thereby forced to move to and live in urban centres.
3.6.3 The permit system and Aboriginal local government and services.

The 'permit' system is also exercised by Yolŋu community and clan leaders and town councils to monitor the entry of non-Yolŋu strangers, including in some circumstances the boyfriends and spouses with whom Yolŋu women live in Darwin. On Aboriginal land and in locally self-governing Aboriginal communities, the 'permit' system which had so long been used by whites to control the movement and inter-ethnic contacts of Aborigines was reversed. Aboriginal community leaders and local councils took over the 'permit' system to monitor the movement, activities and interaction of non-Aborigines, typically whites, within Aboriginal communities and on Aboriginal land. Even so, Balanda continued to move into Yolŋu communities in government employment or under government contract and the Yolŋu 'permit' system exercised nominal control over them as they came to circulate and sometimes to stay more long-term in Yolŋu communities.

Balanda and other Aboriginal men, the non-Yolŋu spouses and boyfriends who live with Yolŋu women in Darwin, Nhulunbuy and elsewhere, were not always welcome in Yolŋu communities. While Yolŋu women and their mixed descent children were not themselves subject to the 'permit' provisions of Yolŋu local government, they were affected in as much as the 'permit' system could be invoked to limit visits or to veto entirely the entry of Yolŋu women's non-Yolŋu spouses and the fathers of women's children into Yolŋu communities and clan lands. The circumstances which were most likely to invoke the withdrawal or withholding of a 'permit' included those in which community disharmony were likely to be aroused, where the non-Yolŋu partner was known to be alcohol dependent and where there was perceived competition with Yolŋu for limited local employment.

As the local work-force had come to be 'Aboriginalised' in line with self-determination policy, Yolŋu men tended to take the lead in local government as local town councillors and in wider arenas of Yolŋu and wider Aboriginal representation. Yolŋu women came to predominate in employment in local schools, health clinics, women's resource centres and in clerical and retail work in remote communities. At the same time, education, employment and especially social security entitlement offered women and adolescents alternatives in terms of marriage, socio-economic relations and mobility which radically altered relations between men and women and older and younger generations. Yolŋu 'power structures' (Keen 1994:299) have had to be reworked to include new opportunities for leadership and authority and in new circumstances of relations between Yolŋu and Balanda and between Yolŋu themselves.
3.6.4 A Christian Revival and the rural-urban dimensions of pastoral care.

In the 1970s, the federal government and the missions, influenced by 'Western liberal notions about participatory democracy' and 'Third World liberation theology' began to work together to shape a new policy of self-determination for Aboriginal people, which would involve the hand over of local functions and authority to Aboriginal people (Bos 1988:433). For the Church's part, Yolŋu were ordained as ministers and inducted as lay preachers.

These new avenues of leadership and arenas of authority were not necessarily based on age related or clan based criteria, and it was predominantly Yolŋu men who filled these new positions of authority in local church and local councils. While in northeast Arnhem Land these initiatives were in the emerging spirit and subsequent policy of self-determination for Aboriginal people, Balanda administrators still did not acknowledge the prior and continuing existence of a Yolŋu system of 'governance and adjudication' (Williams 1987:6).

The Uniting Church, and indeed the early Methodist missionaries, had long been involved in the indigenisation of local church practices to the extent that the Bible had been translated into the vernacular and church services, hymns and prayers were in Yolŋu-matha (Yolŋu languages). From the 1970s onwards, there was an increased impetus towards the Aboriginalisation of the local church. Yolŋu as ordained ministers, lay preachers, congregations, and the like came to Aboriginalise the Church's presence and bring an indigenous interpretation to the practice of Christianity in northeast Arnhem Land (Bos 1988).

In 1979 at Galiwin'ku a Christian Revival began which, like the 'adjustment movement' some twenty years earlier, sought to address new and disturbing experiences and to emphasise 'fellowship' and kinship between Yolŋu and Balanda. At one level, the Revival movement was a Yolŋu response to the introduction of a charismatic form of Christian evangelism at Galiwin'ku at a time when a spate of physical and social ills seemed to plague the community.

The Revival was also a working out of adjustments between age and clan related authority and leadership exercised in Yolŋu social and ceremonial life and new patterns of leadership in introduced contexts of Church and local town councils (Bos 1988; Keen 1994:280-288). Apparently, the Christian Revival did not resolve the leadership quandary within the particular Yolŋu community as, 'a number of key leaders of the Movement subsequently moved into Darwin', where they took up urban-based positions in the Uniting Church and at Nungalinya College (Bos 1988:433).
Chapter 3. Ebb and flow

The Uniting Church, and the church's association with Nungalinya College and with various nurturant but more secular interests in Aboriginal people and their communities, continues to exercise pastoral care over the Yolŋu. In this way, Christian 'fellowship' among the Yolŋu, however limited in congregation numbers, spans remote communities and Darwin and opportunities for Yolŋu in educational, vocational and employment careers are also shaped by the Church and its secular agencies in a rural-urban field of influence.

The Arnhem Land Progress Association (ALPA), which runs a chain of general stores in northeast Arnhem Land and elsewhere, is now formally separate as a commercial business from the Uniting Church but retains close affiliation with the church. ALPA is a significant employer and provider of services to Yolŋu in their remote communities and the ALPA head office in Darwin has also provided Yolŋu with limited employment opportunities in town (Wells 1993; Young, Crough & Christopherson 1993; see also 10.3.2).

Yolŋu, predominantly men, who are permanently resident in Darwin and in full-time employment in secular and religious agencies of the Uniting Church, and their families and urban households, are an important kinship resource in Darwin for other Yolŋu who move through and settle in the city. Other urban dimensions of the Uniting Church's pastoral care over Aboriginal people include the church's association with the Aboriginal Women's Resource Centre, with the former Gordon Symon Substance Abuse Centre now renamed the Centre for Aboriginal Alcohol Programme Services (CAAPS), and with private motel style accommodation in Darwin. These urban services, with which the Church maintains different types of affiliation, provide services to Aboriginal people, including the Yolŋu, when they move to Darwin.

For the Yolŋu who transit through and live in Darwin it is undoubtedly the campus at Nungalinya College which is the major point of their contact with the Church. The College was named after Nungalinya, Old Man Rock, a site and name significant to the Larrakia people of the Darwin area and to coincide with the Christian metaphor for the rock on which the Church is built.5

Nungalinya College operates as a residential campus, which offers theological and community development courses, predominantly for remote-dwelling Aboriginal people and more recently including Islanders from the Torres Strait. Nungalinya has become a focus of Christian activities and even more significantly, as will be discussed in later

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5 The Anglican Church and the Uniting Church joined forces to establish Nungalinya College, which opened in 1973 in the suburb of Casuarina. Although the Catholics had students enrolled at Nungalinya for some time, it was only in 1994 that the Catholic Church became a constitutional partner with the other churches in Nungalinya.
chapters, Yolŋu staff and students on-campus provide kinship support in times of worry and a core group for ceremonies when Yolŋu hold mortuary rituals in Darwin (see 4.3.3, 8.5.3, 9.8.4).

3.7 Service delivery and population mobility.
3.7.1 Urban health services and circulation through the city.

From the mid 1970s to the present, the dispersal of Aboriginal people to small and remote homeland centres and outstations has necessitated the diffusion of health services to small, isolated Aboriginal population centres where local Aboriginal health-workers are responsible for basic health care. Aboriginalisation of local health services in the Northern Territory has coincided with the withdrawal of non-Aboriginal qualified nurses from residence and employment within the remote Aboriginal communities without their replacement by Aboriginal personnel with comparable skills.

Local health services to remote Aboriginal communities are supplemented by limited visits by non-resident, non-Aboriginal medical experts combined with procedures for the referral and transferral of remote-dwelling patients to urban hospitals and specialised health services. Between 1976 and 1985, there was an increasing rate of admissions to urban hospitals of Aboriginal children from rural and remote communities, and this increase was found to be in part a reflection of a 'fall in the threshold for hospital admissions over this time' (Munoz, Powers & Matthews 1992:528).

The threshold for hospital admissions was lowered in order to improve morbidity and mortality rates especially for remote-dwelling Aboriginal women, infants and children and to compensate for the limited nature of local health service delivery in remote Aboriginal communities. Yet a recent health report (Plant, Condon & Durling 1995:x) has found that from 1979-91, morbidity and mortality rates for Aboriginal females in the Northern Territory have risen, and while Aboriginal infant and stillbirth mortality have improved, 'both remain nearly four times higher than the all-Australia rates'. Paediatricians at the Darwin public hospital document malnutrition and associated ill-health among Aboriginal children aged under two years in the Top End of the Northern Territory and conclude that 'on many remote communities potentially preventable conditions are not detected, and intervention, often through hospitalisation, only occurs when the problem becomes severe' (Rubin & Walker 1995:402).

Plant, Condon & Durling (1995:x) advise that 'hospitalisations will inevitably continue to increase for as long as there is so much unmet need'. Therefore, medical evacuation and patient transfers which currently account for a significant volume of
remote-dwelling Aboriginal people, particularly of women and children, moving to Darwin and other centres for hospitalisation and hospital based health services, is expected to increase.

In-patient care and more comprehensive out-patient services in the Northern Territory are confined to five hospitals located in Darwin, Nhulunbuy, Katherine, Tennant Creek and Alice Springs. The Gove District Hospital opened in Nhulunbuy in 1971 and Yolŋu, other Aboriginal people and whites living in the East Arnhem region are normally directed there first for standard hospital services. The limited range of services offered by the small regional hospitals in Nhulunbuy, Katherine and Tennant Creek are augmented by inter-hospital transfers. In the Top End of the Territory, Royal Darwin Hospital (RDH) takes inter hospital transfers from Katherine and Gove hospitals and in the Centre, Alice Springs Hospital takes IHTs from the hospital in Tennant Creek.

The Northern Territory Department of Health and Community Services (HACS), renamed Territory Health Services in 1995, was responsible for this system of service delivery in which limited primary health services were delivered locally in rural communities and increasingly augmented by strategies designed to circulate remotedwelling patients within an administrative region to their district hospital (see map 3). Where necessary, patients were to be further transferred to the major hospitals in Darwin, Alice Springs and where need be to hospitals in southern capital cities. The cost of this health care system increased rapidly and the Northern Territory government took steps to rationalise and to make the system more cost-efficient. In 1991, the Estimates Review Committee (ERC) and the CRESAP Interim Report, made by consultants for the Northern Territory government, presaged an erosion of local and regional delivery of community services in favour of increased centralisation. 6

Primary health care in rural areas of the Territory would continue to be distinguished by a different model, that is one of local community focus and of 'Culturally Appropriate Services' (CRESAP 1991a:2). It was clear from the above statement that Aboriginal people comprised the majority of the clients of the Primary Health Care Rural Model. Equally obvious to the informed observer is that 'culturally appropriate services' is a euphemism for very limited services.

Even though East Arnhem is serviced by the Gove District Hospital in Nhulunbuy

6 The CRESAP Interim Report recommended that the Department of Health and Community Services (HACS) improve administrative cost-efficiency by the reduction of the five administrative zones of Darwin, East Arnhem, Katherine, Barkly and Alice Springs to two, namely Area North centred on Darwin and Area South centred on Alice Springs. The report acknowledged that not all administrative functions of HACS were amenable to centralisation (CRESAP 1991a:9).
Map 3. Health administration districts, N.T.
and Yolŋu women routinely go there for births, and for hospital services for themselves and their families, they are still liable to be transferred to Darwin for specialist and more comprehensive hospital and other health services, the more so in cases of serious injury and illness. In most cases, Yolŋu patients who travel to Darwin to access public hospital and health services do so according to one of several schemes for assisted travel for medical purposes: the Patients Assistance Travel Scheme (PATS), medical evacuation (MEDEVAC) and inter hospital transfers (IHT), all of which include return to community of origin. In addition HACS has a system in place to repatriate deceased Aborigines who were in departmental care, typically in hospital at the time of death or brought to hospital for autopsies and certification of death.

In recent years, the institutionalised movements of rural and remote-dwelling patients to urban hospitals has dramatically increased. The CRESAP Report of 1991 for the Northern Territory Department of Health and Community Services (HACS) indicated that interhospital transfers were up 26 per cent, medevacs by 17 per cent and PATS patients increased by 10 per cent between 1987/88 and 1990/91. The HACS annual report for the financial year 1992-93 indicated that PATS patients and patient escorts continued to increase substantially from 1991, as did medical evacuations, inter hospital transfers and repatriations (HACS 1992:93:24 & 53).

The CRESAP Report of 1991 gave a breakdown of figures by administrative region and noted that there was an 'extremely high rate of evacuations in East Arnhem' and that 'there were more escorts for medevacs and IHT patients in East Arnhem than in any other region' (CRESAP 1991b:136-37). The Yolŋu are a major client group in East Arnhem for these types of institutionalised movement to hospitals in Nhulunbuy, Darwin, and more rarely to major hospitals in southern cities.

Departmental policy guidelines provide for an adult to escort all patients who are less than eighteen years of age. The high incidence of escort rates in East Arnhem is in large measure a reflection of the rates of medevac and IHT movements of Aboriginal children as patients travelling with escorts to hospital in Nhulunbuy and Darwin. Except when Balanda nursing staff have to act as escorts, typically it is close female kin, often the mothers of the children who travel as escorts.

In East Arnhem not only is the total escort rate high, the 'number of escorts per patient' is also high (CRESAP 1991b:137), which reflects the cultural imperative of Aboriginal kin to accompany their sick as well as local interpretation of departmental guidelines. Limited provision is made for escorts, and under the PATS scheme one supporting family member per patient may be provided with subsidised travel and urban
accommodation so as to accompany kin to urban hospital and other health services. These provisions do not adequately address the cultural emphasis which Aboriginal people, including the Yolŋu, place on the support of kin, which is both wider and more compelling than is the norm among the majority population. As Reid and Dhamarrandji (1978:29-31) emphasise, while urban hospitals have appropriated the 'curing' functions, Yolŋu family and wider kin are still obligated to provide the 'caring' services.7

It is the kin based services of care which shape the nature and incidence of the support group of Yolŋu who follow their sick to Darwin and overcrowd the suburban households of kin during times of sickness and anxiety. To some extent, the more serious and critical the health problem the more compelling the obligation of kin to "keep company" with their sick in Darwin (See Ch. 8).

In the financial year 1990-91, 7,495 patients and 2,035 escorts travelled to urban hospitals under the PATS scheme, and 81 per cent were referred to urban hospitals and medical specialists in the Northern Territory and 19 per cent had to travel to southern city hospitals. Aboriginal people who live in rural and remote communities comprised 60 per cent of PATS patients during this time (CRESAP 1991b:227).

The difficulties of finding oneself in the city and away from home and family, when about to give birth or when unwell and awaiting medical attention, are not experiences which are exclusive to Aboriginal people. All remote-dwelling people in the Territory have to travel to urban centres for comprehensive health services (Clark 1991). However, remote-dwelling Aboriginal people, including the Yolŋu, are recognised by health authorities to be especially in need and therefore are a targeted group for sponsored circulation to urban hospital and health services.

3.7.2 Service delivery, housing and population mobility.

The Northern Territory government has taken responsibility, with the aid of federal funding, to provide community and essential services to Aboriginal communities. The system developed has been one of limited service delivery to remote communities and a greater range and higher standard of service delivery has been centralised in urban centres, particularly in Alice Springs and Darwin.

In their own remote communities, the Yolŋu are both agents and clients of local housing, schools, health centres and the like. Local services are not self-sufficient and are dependent upon the material resources, expertise and policy-making of non-Aboriginal, 7 Writing soon after the hospital opened at Nhulunbuy in the 1970s, Reid and Dhamarrandji (1978:29) noted that Yolŋu kin felt obligated to accompany their sick and many were actually camping outside the hospital.
non-local personnel and more comprehensive services which are urban based. In this way, the Yolŋu have made gains in self-determination over a very circumscribed sphere of influence, namely local community services, which are in themselves a basic level of service delivery separate from yet subordinate to and dependent upon urban and increasingly capital centred services.

For example, when the Yolŋu have to wait to be hospitalised, to keep medical appointments and undergo procedures which do not require immediate hospitalisation, they are reliant for accommodation on Aboriginal hostels in Nhulunbuy and Darwin. In 1973, a national system of Aboriginal hostels was set up specifically to help Aboriginal people with their travel and accommodation needs, particularly as they moved between country and town to seek better health and education services, employment opportunities and urban amenities (Aboriginal Hostels Limited 1993:6)(see also 4.2.2).

Galawu hostel was the first of the Aboriginal Hostels to open near the centre of Darwin in December 1975. Formerly the Bridge Guest House, the hostel took the name Galawu, meaning a temporary shelter in Gupapuygu, a Yolŋu language. From its inception Galawu was associated with Yolŋu people, especially those from Milingimbi, and its earliest outstation of Nangalala and from the mission on Elcho Island, now the major Yolŋu community of Galiwin'ku. Silas Roberts Hostel, also near the city centre, was converted from a private motel and opened as an Aboriginal Hostel in August 1976.

Both Galawu and Silas Roberts hostels were near to the old Darwin hospital at Myilly Point near the city centre which closed when a larger, more modern and fully air-conditioned public hospital was opened in the suburb of Casuarina. The Aboriginal Hostel system responded by opening a third hostel in October 1976, the Daisy Wagbara (now Daisy Yarmirr), which was to specifically provide accommodation for Aboriginal out-patients of the newly located and renamed Royal Darwin Hospital (Aboriginal Hostels Limited 1977).

In 1993, Aboriginal Hostels Limited celebrated twenty years of service to Aboriginal people throughout Australia. This twenty year period roughly corresponds with the migrant histories of Yolŋu women who have lived long-term in Darwin, although some individual women's urban residence predates the opening of Aboriginal Hostels in Darwin. Some Yolŋu women tell of earlier urban residence at private lodgings, the YWCA, institutional care at East Arm Leprosarium and in inter-ethnic liaisons and marriages in Darwin. For close to twenty years, however, it has been the Aboriginal Hostel system which has provided Aboriginal groups with a gateway to Darwin and to other urban centres and has made women and children particularly welcome.
In a Central Australian study, Young and Doohan (1989:158-177) describe the contemporary movements of Aboriginal people as 'mobility for survival' and emphasise that the pattern of service delivery itself structures Aboriginal mobility and residence. For example, the provision of community services in the five major Yolŋu communities, although limited, is more developed than the delivery of services to small and isolated homeland centres. The persistence and growth of large Aboriginal populations despite the 'homelands movement' and the considerable dispersal of population to smaller homeland centres or outstations (Taylor 1993:4) is in large measure shaped by the pattern of service delivery.

The five large Yolŋu communities are intermediaries between the small and remote homeland centres on the absolute periphery of service delivery and the central urban services. The Yolŋu want access to community services in their small homeland centres, have reason to move to their own larger communities to obtain services there, and also need to travel to Nhulunbuy and Darwin, and even via Darwin to southern cities, to seek the most comprehensive range and highest standard of services, especially health and education.

Local services, especially housing in Aboriginal remote communities, are seldom adequate to address the average needs of a growing permanent population and are typically not designed to address peak fluctuations in population such as those shaped by Aboriginal people's seasonal and socio-cultural patterns of mobility and of residential relocation (Young and Doohan 1989:199).

In the inter-censal period, 1986-1991, the annual growth rate of the Aboriginal population in the Top End was 3.3 per cent, which exceeded that for the Territory as a whole at 2.9 per cent (Taylor 1993:5). Although the Aboriginal 'population at outstations continued to grow at an equivalent rate to the population in urban areas', most significantly it was the population in the major Aboriginal communities or townships which 'experienced the greatest increase both in absolute and in relative terms' (Taylor 1993:4).

The five major Yolŋu communities or townships of Yirrkala, Gapuwiyaŋk, Galiwin'ku, Milingimbi and Ramingining are the major population centres as well as centres of service delivery to the Yolŋu in northeast Arnhem Land. These townships are experiencing population growth and intermittent influxes of population which put a greater strain on limited housing and other services. For example, the Department of
Lands and Housing Report (1989) on the availability of serviced land at Milingimbi states,

During the wet season the outstation residents often move into Milingimbi to ensure access to food, welfare and medical services. This seasonal movement has been assumed to involve 50% of the outstation population. As these people are not permanent residents, no allowance has been made to house them within the township (Lands and Housing 1989:12).

Within Yolnu communities in Arnhem Land there are specific but variable conditions in which community services become grossly overloaded and sometimes dysfunctional. Yolnu who live in the smaller homeland centres tend to move to the larger townships which are serviced in all weathers and they come in for large ceremonial gatherings, which tend to be held in the major and better serviced communities. These forms of population movement within northeast Arnhem Land have repercussions which include the movement of Yolnu into Darwin, as kin come in for a respite from difficult living conditions and to seek more permanent accommodation and housing in the city.

The inadequacies and recurrent crises in the provision of housing services in Aboriginal remote communities, together with the apparent but not always tangible availability of 'Aboriginal rental housing and a general concentration of services and employment in urban areas', especially in Darwin, are contributing factors in the urban transience and migration of Aboriginal people (Taylor 1990:10). As Collman (1979b, 1988:105-25) noted earlier of Aboriginal households in Alice Springs, welfare mechanisms of government 'privilege' women, who are supporting parents or guardians of children, with reliable pension incomes and with subsidised urban accommodation and housing.

The following chapter examines how Yolnu women, children and family groups come to circulate through Darwin and take up more permanent residence in urban accommodation and housing. It is shown that hospital and other health services, education and vocational-training have brought Yolnu women, children and families to Darwin to service their needs and ostensibly to return them to their remote communities. Aboriginal specific hostels and housing and 'mainstream' public rental housing have enabled Yolnu and other Aboriginal groups from remote communities to stay longer and to settle in the city.

Notwithstanding their attachment to particular country, the importance Yolnu place on community services, especially those of health, housing and education, significantly determines their choice of where they will stay for a time and live more permanently. The following chapter provides evidence that a significant and increasing number of Yolnu are choosing to "sit down" in Darwin.
Chapter 4

Visiting and sitting down
Chapter 4. Visiting and sitting down

4.1 Introduction.

This chapter shows how government travel schemes, sponsored accommodation and income support strategies shape the movement of Yolŋu women, children and family groups to Darwin. I examine the role of urban hospital and health services in bringing Yolŋu and other remote-dwelling Aboriginal people to Darwin for transient, long-term and more permanent purposes and in placing them in Aboriginal specific and mainstream accommodation and housing in Darwin. I also examine the part played by secondary schools and campuses of further education and training in bringing Yolŋu to Darwin.

The role of the Church in bringing remote-dwelling Aboriginal people to Darwin for theological courses and personal and community development studies is described as is the significance of the Nungalinya College campus in the development of Yolŋu social and ceremonial life in Darwin. Later chapters develop further the personal, social and ceremonial dimensions of Yolŋu movements to and from Darwin.

The primary focus of this chapter is Yolŋu movement to Darwin via government, and, to a lesser extent, church sponsorship of rural-urban travel and urban accommodation and housing, specifically to access urban health, education and training services, and how this movement and these services lead some Yolŋu to settle in Darwin and integrate into urban life. When Yolŋu, and other remote-dwelling Aboriginal people, are sponsored to travel to Darwin or more independently move to the city, they are likely to be accommodated in Aboriginal hostels, at the Bagot Aboriginal community, in Housing Commission flats and houses in the suburbs, and to a lesser extent in private rental accommodation and housing in Darwin (see map 4).

A descriptive account is supported by numerical data that indicate the current scope of the institutional dimensions of the movement of Yolŋu to Darwin for transient and longer term purposes. Tabled data and my field observations in general suggest that the volume of Yolŋu movement to Darwin is increasing and that transience through the city often leads to more long-term stays and permanent migration. The two processes of moving through and settling in the city are related and at times merge.

Even though Yolŋu might originally come to Darwin for defined purposes and for limited periods there are circumstances which prolong their stay, alter their purposes and ultimately lead to settlement in the city and a reverse orientation of their movements, that is when they live permanently in Darwin and visit their communities of origin for social and ceremonial purposes. The Yolŋu describe themselves as "visiting" when they have strictly defined purposes and limited time in the city, but otherwise, when their purposes
are more open ended and their stay is indeterminate as well as permanent, they say that they are "sitting down" in Darwin.¹

4.2 The Aboriginal component of a multi-ethnic city.

At the time of the 1991 Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) census, Darwin had a population of approximately 78,000, of which some 6,000 identified themselves as Aboriginal. The ABS census revealed that while Aboriginal people were predominantly permanent residents of the city, Aboriginal transience was significant and 11% of Aborigines in Darwin indicated that their permanent place of residence was elsewhere (N.T. Urban Housing Strategy for Aboriginal People 1992:9).

The city and its suburbs are modern in construction and have been largely rebuilt since Cyclone Tracy devastated Darwin in 1974. The northern capital, historically and to this day, attracts ethnically diverse peoples who are seeking to better their lives by means of various forms of population mobility, which include the international movement of refugees and immigrants, labour related mobility within Australia and rural-urban mobility patterns within the Territory itself. While Darwin is multi-ethnic in composition, white Australians are in the majority and the monolingual and monocultural bias of this group prevails.

The population of Darwin reflects the labour circulation of predominantly white Australians from southern states in employment and in the Defence Forces and this mobile population has in the main been housed in public rental housing owned and administered by the Northern Territory Housing Commission. In recent years, the majority population has tended to stabilise as a result of the initiatives of the Northern Territory government to promote private home ownership and more permanent settlement (Taylor, Jaensch & Clarke 1989:48).

At the time of the 1986 census, Aborigines comprised 7.6 per cent of the population of Darwin, including the satellite town of Palmerston (Taylor, Jaensch & Clarke 1989), a percentage which has grown slightly to 7.86 per cent according to the 1991 census (ABS, Darwin). Aborigines in Darwin do not form an homogenous social and cultural group. They have diverse histories of contact with whites and major distinctions between Aboriginal groups in the city include whether they are of full or mixed-descent, 'traditionally-oriented' or 'urbanised', speak an Aboriginal language, Aboriginal English or standard English as their first language.

¹ In Yolgu-matha (Yolgu languages) the verb nhina means 'to sit down, to stay, to stop at, to live (in a place)' (Zorc 1986:210).
Chapter 4. *Visiting and sitting down*

In Darwin, Yolŋu typify the full-descent, indigenous language speakers and traditionally-oriented dimension along a continuum of Aboriginality (cf. Langton 1981), although it must be noted that inter-ethnic marriage, mixed-descent children, facility in English and long-term urban residence and employment among the Yolŋu challenge such facile markers of identity.

The majority of Aboriginal people in Darwin are so-called 'urbanised' Aborigines who lack legal recognition as Aboriginal landowners, either in the country or in the city, and who have over successive generations become increasingly integrated into urban life. For the most part, this group of Aborigines historically experienced dislocation and dispossession from land resulting from the pressures of European settlement and territorial expansion, and many of the mixed-descent people were also removed from their Aboriginal mothers and wider kin under a policy of assimilation (Cummings 1990).

While the dominant majority of white Australians in Darwin are, in the main, comparatively recent and labour-related migrants and transients from southern states, the mixed-descent Aboriginal people of Darwin comprise a distinctively Aboriginal and permanent component of the multi-ethnic population of the city. Numbered among the long-term resident group of Aboriginal people in Darwin are the mixed-ethnic descendants of the Larrakia people, whose clan lands are alienated by the present and proposed development of the greater Darwin area (Wie 1990).

Aboriginal people in Darwin have different contact histories, different status in terms of indigenous rights and integration into the city and they originate from many parts of the Territory and from elsewhere in Australia. All these Aboriginal people claim Aboriginal identity and the rights and entitlements of Aborigines as citizens of the nation and denizens of the city.

4.3 Aboriginal Hostels: transient accommodation.

Aboriginal Hostels Limited (AHL) is a nation wide Aboriginal organisation which provides a range of services to assist out-of-town Aboriginal people find accommodation when they have various purposes in town. In Darwin, AHL operate three hostels, Galawu, Silas Roberts and Daisy Yarmirr, and provide financial and other assistance under the Community Support Hostels (CSH) system and the Student Rental Subsidy Scheme (SRSS) to support hostel type services run by other organisations.

For example, AHL gives limited support to the Foundation of Rehabilitation With Aboriginal Alcohol Related Difficulties (FORWAARD) and the Council for Aboriginal Alcohol Program Services (CAAPS), two centres for the rehabilitation of substance
abusers, to Juninga which is an Aboriginal hostel for the frail and aged, for accommodation provided by the Northern Australia Aboriginal Legal Aid Service (NAALAS) and to Mitawyuga, a Catholic mission hostel, which mainly accommodates Aborigines who come to Darwin from communities which were formerly Catholic missions. Aboriginal Hostels Limited also give some financial support to Nungalinya College, an Aboriginal residential campus for theological and community development studies.

There are other hostel services in Darwin which also provide accommodation for Aboriginal people in town including an Anglican hostel, which tends to cater for Aboriginal people from remote communities which were formerly Anglican missions. In recent years, a former private motel on the Stuart Highway at Winnellie was purchased and set up as a Christian Outreach Centre (COC) and began to offer hostel services to Aboriginal people. While I confine my detailed survey and analysis of Yolŋu use of hostel accommodation in Darwin to the three AHL hostels, which together account for the major volume of Yolŋu women, children and family groups moving to and finding transient accommodation in Darwin, it is appropriate to digress briefly and to describe how Yolŋu were also using these other hostel services in Darwin.

In the late 1980s and early 1990s, Yolŋu were coming in from remote communities to participate in substance abuse and community support programs and particularly to stay at the CAAPS hostel, where a Yolŋu man had for several years been employed to help with the programs. A disabled Yolŋu woman, who had been living for many years with female kin at the Bagot community was eventually housed at the Juninga Centre, as was an elderly Yolŋu man who had been living in Yolŋu drinking camps in and around Darwin until he was medically referred to the Centre. Yolŋu as individuals and family groups had begun to use the Christian Outreach Centre (COC) when enroute through Darwin to attend Christian rallies and Yolŋu who lived in the city were using the COC as an emergency accommodation service.

Of all the hostel-type accommodation services available to Aboriginal people in Darwin, the Yolŋu are mainly associated with Galawu, Silas Roberts and with Daisy Yarmirr hostels and with Nungalinya College, where they are a significant student group and where Yolŋu are also represented as paid staff. The Nungalinya College campus is of sufficient importance to the Yolŋu moving through and living in Darwin to require separate discussion later in this chapter (see 4.5.1).

By 1993, Aboriginal Hostels Limited provided 38 beds at Daisy Yarmirr hostel in the suburb of Tiwi, 42 at Galawu and 56 at Silas Roberts Hostels, both of which are near
to the city centre. All three AHL hostels provide for medical transients but the Daisy Yarmirr hostel, which is situated close to the public hospital, does so to the greatest extent. The AHL hostels and the Patients Assistance Travel Scheme (PATS) in combination provide for Aboriginal people who come to Darwin for medical purposes and who do not immediately or necessarily need to be hospitalised.

For example, Aboriginal women who come to Darwin to await going into hospital to give birth are booked into AHL hostels under the PATS scheme. Similarly, Aboriginal patients from out-of-town who have to keep medical appointments in Darwin have their rural-urban travel and hostel accommodation sponsored by the PATS scheme. The Aboriginal hostels also cater for the support groups of kin, mainly women, who accompany children and adult patients who are to be hospitalised. In these ways, the AHL system and the PATS scheme have played major roles in circulating Aboriginal women, children and family groups through Darwin and incidentally familiarising them with the city.

Certain chronic medical conditions, some of which are particularly prevalent among Aboriginal people in remote communities, require the patient to be in Darwin and available for longer-term treatments, for example for kidney dialysis. This type of need can stretch the requirement for accommodation beyond the three months designated by AHL hostels as transient accommodation.

In December 1994, the public hospital opened a Self Care Centre (SCC) in the hospital grounds for adult and paediatric patients, not exclusively Aboriginal, so that they can be supported by one or more family members when they do not need to be hospitalised but require continuing care and contact with the hospital for a limited period. For more indefinite term and emergency housing for family groups, application can be made to the Housing Commission by medical or welfare referral and under the Out-of-Turn (OOT) housing scheme (see 4.4.3).

All three AHL hostels have a charter to provide transient accommodation, which is ostensibly limited to three months, and yet the AHL hostels in Darwin have come to provide much longer term accommodation. Galawu and Silas Roberts hostels, described as family and transient accommodation, regularly housed married couples with children and women with children for as long as two or three years and even longer. A technical appearance of periodic rather than permanent use was maintained because the long term residents interrupted their stay for brief visits to their communities of origin, by moving between hostels or between hostels and kinship households in the suburbs.

Despite these brief manoeuvres, a number of Yolgu women and children lived in
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the same or one or the other Aboriginal hostels for many years. They merely punctuated their residence with visits away but their residence in AHL hostels was essentially permanent. In particular, those on the waiting list for Housing Commission housing were long-term residents at Aboriginal hostels as they waited the two, three, or more years for public rental housing in the suburbs. Even this length of time was prone to be extended if housing applications were broken off, then recommenced, and if applicants deferred accepting Housing Commission housing for various reasons. Yolŋu women and children were significantly represented in this group of more permanent residents at Galawu and Silas Roberts hostels. Yolŋu women pensioners tended to be reliable paying residents and therefore acceptable as longer term tenants at Aboriginal Hostels.

Yolŋu women and children also moved back into hostel accommodation after they had lived in more independent housing in flats and houses in the suburbs. The reasons Yolŋu women gave me were varied and included the need for kinship company, for temporary shelter during some disruption to their normal marital and residential lives and as a respite or more permanent retreat from the difficulties of maintaining independent households in the suburbs.

If they owed the Housing Commission large arrears in rent and for property damage, when they were unable to control the composition and style of the household, especially disturbances associated with overcrowding and with alcohol-drinking, Yolŋu women householders might decide or be persuaded to give up their independent households. In extreme circumstances they were evicted from Commission houses and had to look for alternative accommodation.

The Aboriginal hostel system is one residential option and often the one most favoured by Yolŋu women as a retreat from the difficulties they have experienced in suburban households. The AHL hostels were therefore not only important in Yolŋu movements to town but also to their residential movements within Darwin. For some Yolŋu women, the supervision of the Aboriginal Hostels offers them a more secure and well regulated, if less autonomous life-style in Darwin. The problem is that there is no apparent mechanism to rehabilitate these women so that they can re-establish independent households, and they too become more permanent residents at Aboriginal hostels.

The hostel system provides dining room meals, room cleaning and sometimes laundry services with only a single tariff rather than the complexities of maintaining, provisioning and funding more autonomous households. Moreover the manager and hostel security ensure that the room regulations are adhered to and shield registered guests from some of the demands of non-resident kin. This type of accommodation does
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not answer all the purposes of all the Yolŋu who visit Darwin and who stay more permanently in the city. In particular, alcohol consumption is prohibited on AHL hostel premises and known drinkers are not welcome as paying guests or as visitors. These regulations serve to exclude Yolŋu, predominantly men who take the opportunity to drink alcohol while in town, and those men and women who are more permanently caught up in the Aboriginal alcohol-drinking scene in Darwin.

Although Yolŋu men do stay at these Aboriginal Hostels, they are typically outnumbered by Yolŋu women and children who use hostels more frequently and over longer periods. The proportion of Yolŋu women and children using Aboriginal Hostels is, in itself, liable to dissuade Yolŋu men from seeking accommodation in hostels. Yolŋu favour a separation of the sexes in certain contexts of sociality and relations of avoidance operate between certain categories of kin of the opposite sex, but these cultural patterns of behaviour are difficult to maintain in the confines of hostels. Having said this, AHL hostels in Darwin do not cater exclusively for women and children and Yolŋu of both sexes come to Darwin and stay at Aboriginal hostels for many purposes.

Yolŋu men are also eligible for sponsored travel to and accommodation in Darwin and sponsorship is via a variety of government departments and Aboriginal organisations. For example, Aboriginal men who registered at Silas Roberts and Galawu hostels in 1993 included men whose travel and accommodation was sponsored by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders Commission (ATSIC), the Katherine Regional Aboriginal Legal Aid Service (KRALAS), the North Australian Aboriginal Legal Aid Service (NAALAS) and the Centre for Aboriginal Alcohol Programme Services (CAAPS). Yolŋu men are also known to stay at Aboriginal hostels in Darwin when attending meetings scheduled by the Northern Land Council (NLC), Arnhem Land Progress Association (ALPA), the Uniting Church, Top End Aboriginal Bush Broadcasting Association (TEABBA) and many other agencies dealing in Aboriginal representation but held in the city.

Because Yolŋu men have predominated in these wider fields of Aboriginal and cross-cultural interaction, Yolŋu women are much less likely than their menfolk to have their rural-urban travel and urban accommodation sponsored in these ways. On the other hand, Yolŋu women have tended to predominate as professionally trained teachers, para-professional health-workers and in clerical, retail and other white collar employment in Yolŋu communities in northeast Arnhem Land. From time to time, these women are sponsored by appropriate government departments to travel to and stay at Aboriginal hostels in Darwin and via Darwin when travelling elsewhere to attend conferences, courses, inservice workshops and the like.
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The Aboriginal Hostels system also caters for specific educational purposes such as school excursions to town by Aboriginal students from remote and rural schools and for out-of-town students who study at urban schools and campuses for higher education. Sponsored travel and accommodation for educational purposes ranges from short visits to Darwin by school groups from remote Aboriginal communities to semester length board for students studying tertiary courses in Darwin. During 1993, the Yolŋu were not well represented at any of the three hostels either as school or further education students. However, Yolŋu do use the AHL hostels in Darwin for educational excursions to the city and Yolŋu community schools also book into private motel, holiday style accommodation when bringing children to Darwin for school excursions.

While AHL hostels have begun to provide semester length accommodation for Aboriginal students attending courses at the Northern Territory University, in 1993 there were no Yolŋu booked into AHL hostels as students via the student rental subsidy scheme. This may in part be because Yolŋu typically enrol at the higher education and residential campuses of Batchelor and Nungalinya Colleges and at Kormilda, a secondary boarding school, rather than attend these campuses as day students and board at AHL hostels. Otherwise, Yolŋu students who come to Darwin for secondary schooling or further education typically live with kin in suburban housing or with parents who are studying and living on campus at Nungalinya College.

A small number of Yolŋu students have been enrolling in courses for further education in Darwin for many years, particularly within the Aboriginal studies centre which has periodically been re-organised and renamed as the Aboriginal Task Force, the Centre for Aboriginal and Islander Studies (CAIS) and more recently the Faculty of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (FATSIS) within the Northern Territory University. In 1995, there were five or six young people from Yolŋu remote communities enrolled in courses at FATSIS. Again, these Yolŋu tertiary students were not staying in student accommodation on campus or in the AHL hostels but with families in the suburbs. These kinbased households in the suburbs could give them familial support and chaperonage but were not geared for study purposes. In the recent past, Yolŋu students who have undertaken tertiary studies in this manner in Darwin have dropped out of their studies early and returned to their remote communities, typically without completing the course requirements.

Apart from these sponsored forms of circulation through the city and transient accommodation at the Aboriginal hostels, Yolŋu men and women stay at hostels when they are in Darwin for a shopping trip, to visit urban kin and to attend various events.
which attract remote-dwelling people to the city. The near city hostels are convenient for Aboriginal people who come to town and lack the use of private vehicles. Galawu and Silas Roberts hostels are within easy walking distance or short taxi trips to the city and its financial, retail and recreational amenities.

When there are major Aboriginal events like the National Aboriginal and Islander Day celebrations, the Aboriginal sports and cultural festival at Barunga, near Katherine, and Aboriginal music groups performing in Darwin, the Aboriginal hostels typically experience an influx of people from remote areas. Similarly when there are mainstream popular events such as rock music concerts, football finals, Darwin Show Day and the like, because Aboriginal people from remote communities are enthusiastic participants in such urban events. At these times, Aboriginal hostels are often fully booked and Yolŋu households at Bagot and in the suburbs typically become overcrowded with visiting kin.

Aboriginal residents at the three AHL hostels in Darwin come from many parts of the Territory and even from other states. Yolŋu from the five major Yolŋu communities, Yirrkala, Gapuwiyak, Galiwin'ku, Milingimbi and Ramingining are all known to use the AHL hostels in Darwin, but there are significant variations among them in the volume of movement into Darwin and also in the pattern of where people stay when in the city. For example, Yolŋu from Ramingining have the most favourable road access to Darwin. Ramingining people who come to Darwin in private or community owned vehicles have tended not to stay at the Aboriginal hostels but at the Bagot Aboriginal Community. Moreover, Yolŋu from Ramingining have also established marital and other social ties with the neighbouring Aboriginal community of Maningrida and there is evidence Ramingining Yolŋu tend to follow the patterns of rural-urban mobility and urban residence which Maningrida people use, including residence at Bagot.

Their use of the Bagot Aboriginal community may account for why Ramingining Yolŋu do not figure significantly in AHL hostel registrations, other than as PATS registrations, compared with Yolŋu from Milingimbi and Galiwin'ku. Because Ramingining originated as an outstation of Milingimbi, it is also possible that Ramingining kin may identify themselves as Milingimbi residents when staying with the concentration of Milingimbi Yolŋu at Galawu hostel. This would tend to mask the number of Yolŋu from Ramingining who are using the hostel system.

Yolŋu from Yirrkala and Gapuwiyak appear not to have developed as many and long-term purposes in Darwin as have Yolŋu from the other major communities who have developed both more diverse patterns of transience and more long-term residence at Galawu and Silas Roberts hostels, at the Bagot Aboriginal community, and in suburban
housing in Darwin. Possibly one reason for this difference is that Yolŋu living at Yirrkala and Gapuwiyak and their homeland centres look to the mining town of Nhulunbuy for a range of urban services and amenities which Yolŋu from Galiwin'ku, Milingimbi and Ramingining seek in Darwin.

From my interaction within Yolŋu kinship networks in Darwin, I was aware that even though the majority of Yolŋu who lived in hostels and suburban housing were from the five major Yolŋu communities, Yolŋu from small homeland centres were also regularly present within these urban networks and households. Yet the smaller Yolŋu homeland centres typically are not indicated (by previous or forwarding address or community of origin) when Yolŋu register at Aboriginal hostels in Darwin.

It may be that Yolŋu find it convenient to register under the name of a community familiar to urban administrators, and in this way the number of Yolŋu who come from small homeland centres and stay in urban hostels cannot be determined. For this reason, my analysis of AHW hostel registrations in 1993 only provides numerical data on Yolŋu registered guests who come from the five major Yolŋu communities. Since community of origin was often not recorded on registration forms, I interviewed hostel supervisors and in some cases Yolŋu registered guests in order to discriminate Yolŋu from other Aboriginal registrants as well as determine Yolŋu communities of origin. In an appendix, I present data obtained from the registration records for Silas Roberts, Galawu and Daisy Yarmirr hostels during 1993 (see Appendix I).

4.3.1 Silas Roberts, Galawu and Daisy Yarmirr Hostels.

During 1993, Yolŋu staying at Silas Roberts were predominantly from Galiwin'ku, with Yolŋu from Milingimbi being the next most numerous and few Yolŋu registered as coming from the other three major Yolŋu communities. The other major user groups were the Tiwi of Bathurst and Melville Islands and other Aboriginal individuals and groups from inland communities.

Hostel staff explained that over recent years they had tried to help the separate Aboriginal groups mix together more comfortably when they stayed at Silas Roberts and to this end they encouraged all residents to join in organised events, such as bus trips for hunting and gathering purposes and evening meals around a barbecue. Although there had been some progress in breaking down the reserve between groups at Silas Roberts, especially among the more long-term women and children residents, hostel staff noted that the Yolŋu still tended to keep to themselves. A factor contributing to Yolŋu group cohesion at Silas Roberts hostel was that on average they comprised about a third of the
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As described earlier, Yolŋu book into AHL hostels via the subsidies of a number of government or Aboriginal organisations and at their own cost and for their own purposes. There is some traffic in PATS patients and their escort kin at Silas Roberts, including Yolŋu, but not to the same extent as there is at Daisy Yarmirr Hostel which specialises in medical transience.

A significant feature in how the Yolŋu were using Silas Roberts was found in the incidence of long term and what could be described as permanent residence by a number of Yolŋu women with children. Three Yolŋu women and the varying number of children in their charge were resident at Silas Roberts for several years including 1993. These three Yolŋu women each had responsibility for a number of children, in one case as a supporting mother with her own children, in another as a grandmother pensioner with her daughter's children. The third long-term resident was a Yolŋu widow who had been helping bring up her sister's and brother-in-law's children by having them stay with her semi-permanently in the hostel. When her sister became ill and died, this Yolŋu woman took even more responsibility for the children, and late in 1993, she and the children moved into a Housing Commission house in the suburbs:

The composition of these three Yolŋu family units fluctuated as adult kin and additional children visited Darwin and as the children moved back and forth with kin between their remote communities and the city. Even so, these three groups of Yolŋu women and the children in their care were in fact resident at Silas Roberts over many years and according to hostel staff some of the children could be said to be raised at the hostel. Two women and the children in their charge were from Galiwin'ku and they were living at Silas Roberts hostel when I first started field work among the Yolŋu in Darwin during 1988-89 and were still there some four to five years later.

In late 1993, the three long-term Yolŋu women, plus the children currently in their care were relocated to three separate Housing Commission houses in the suburbs. This move was stimulated in part by the imminent closure of the hostel for several months of maintenance work. The aged and infirm grandmother with grandchildren was the most reluctant to move into independent housing in the suburbs and according to hostel staff her chances of making a successful adjustment from the hostel to suburban housing were not good.

At Galawu hostel, a similar core group of Yolŋu women with dependent children were long-term residents in the city. Two separate family units of women and children were registered guests throughout 1993. One young Yolŋu woman who was resident at
Galawu hostel at this time had a long history of urban residence. In 1988-89 she was a single girl and living in various Yolŋu kin-based households in the suburbs. By 1993, she was a single mother of two children and she and the children had been living at Galawu Hostel for more than twelve months.

Another Yolŋu woman and her mother and her two children began their stay at Galawu during the earlier years of my fieldwork in 1988-89. In 1993, the older child, then about ten years of age, was mostly living with kin in his community of origin and attending school there, when he was not holidaying with his mother and grandmother at Galawu Hostel in Darwin. The younger child had been raised since three months of age until his fourth year at the hostel in Darwin.

When Yolŋu women's children become obviously of school age and begin to cause concern among kin and attract the attention of hostel and school authorities, a decision has to be made whether to send them to suburban schools or send them back to remote communities to live with kin, perhaps to attend the local bilingual, bicultural school. Yolŋu women procrastinate for as long as they can, not wanting to send their young children into the care of strangers at suburban schools or to part with them by sending them home to live with kin in remote communities. From about the age of seven onwards the choice has to be made as children out of school are conspicuous at hostels and attract the attention of urban education authorities.

Yolŋu women and children who are long-term hostel residents plan their movements and length of stay in remote communities according to Yolŋu purposes rather than to synchronise with European holiday periods such as Christmas, Easter and the long school holidays in June-July and December-January. Hostel management noted a reverse tendency and registrations at Galawu Hostel in 1993 supported this view.

Hostel staff said that an influx of children from remote communities rather than an exodus of children from town typically coincided with school holiday times. A group of five Yolŋu school boarders from Kormilda College in Darwin did not return to their remote communities for the mid-year school holidays but on the contrary, they booked into Galawu hostel so as to holiday in town. In 1993, two distinct peaks in Yolŋu occupancy at Galawu roughly corresponded with the mid-year and end of year school holidays (see Appendix I, Table 2).

Yolŋu from Milingimbi and Galiwin'ku formed the majority of Yolŋu residents at both Silas Roberts and Galawu hostels and at both hostels there were core groups of Yolŋu women and children who were long-term residents. In 1993, there was little evidence of Yolŋu registered as coming from Yirrkala, Gapuwiyak and Ramingining. By
contrast, these three Yolŋu communities were strongly represented among residents at Daisy Yarmirr hostel which caters very largely for medical transience.

The Daisy Yarmirr hostel in the suburb of Tiwi is the main provider of accommodation for medical transience, specifically to Aboriginal out-patients and their support kin, who come to Darwin under the sponsorship of the Department of Health and the Patients Assistance Travel Scheme (PATS). As the hostel specialises in medical transience, it was not surprising to find that at Daisy Yarmirr there were fewer Yolŋu children registered as dependent children than was the case at both Galawu and Silas Roberts hostels. Where possible, adult patients and their support kin tend to leave children behind with family in their home communities when they come to Darwin under the Patients Assistance Travel Scheme (PATS).

An accurate account of the number of Yolŋu children staying at Daisy Yarmirr was difficult to determine because of the way in which PATS transients were registered. When children are the PATS patients, they are typically accompanied by at least one adult kin and they and their escort kin may be booked simply as PATS registrations, unless there is a memo about a mother with infant. When children are the patients they are often hospitalised from the outset and in this situation only the accompanying adult kin are registered under PATS at Daisy Yarmirr.

Apart from medical transience, Daisy Yarmirr hostel also provides some longer-term accommodation. For example, the hostel has begun to provide term-time accommodation for Aboriginal tertiary students who are studying at the Northern Territory University. In 1993, a group of 5-6 Aboriginal students stayed at Daisy Yarmirr for longer than the three months designated as transient usage, while they attended courses over two semesters at what was then named the Centre for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (CAIS) at the Northern Territory University.

Aboriginal guests who were not registered as medical transient but whose hostel accommodation was for more long-term medical purposes in Darwin were also staying at Daisy Yarmirr. For example, individuals who were on regular dialysis treatment, and their support group of kin who accompanied them to the city, were often booked into Daisy Yarmirr.

In 1993, Yolŋu did not figure in either longer-term groups of medical or student residents at Daisy Yarmirr hostel. By comparison with Yolŋu use at Galawu and Silas Roberts hostels, there was no evidence of long term residence by Yolŋu at Daisy Yarmirr. Yolŋu used Daisy Yarmirr hostel predominantly via the PATS scheme for medical transience and to a lesser extent for independent purposes and short stays in the city.
Aboriginal people from remote communities who want to live in Darwin for longer term purposes and permanently can not stay at AHL hostels indefinitely. Their main options are to apply for public rental housing from the N.T. Housing Commission (see 4.4.2), or to obtain Aboriginal housing within the Bagot Aboriginal Community.

4.4 Aboriginal and mainstream housing.

4.4.1 The Bagot Aboriginal Community.

The Bagot Community plays a part in accommodating remote-dwelling Aboriginal family groups when they come to Darwin for various purposes. The Bagot Community, an Aboriginal urban excision and housing precinct in Darwin, caters for many different Aboriginal people from diverse backgrounds, communities of origin and 'country' of affiliation. Bagot provides a limited range of housing, camping and community services to Aboriginal people who originate from the Darwin area or who have moved to Darwin from other regions of the Territory or from other states (Loveday 1985; Taylor 1986).

A population report on the Bagot community in the mid 1980s identified 12.8% of heads of households at Bagot as being from the Arnhem region, specifically from Groote Eylandt, Maningrida and from the Roper River (Taylor 1989:8), but these Aboriginal people are linguistically and culturally distinct from the Yolŋu. A medical study conducted within the Bagot community in the late 1980s revealed that 23% of the study population originated from the East Arnhem Region, mostly from Groote Eylandt, while only 2% of the study population at Bagot were identified as Arnhem Land people from Milingimbi and Ramingining (Evans 1990:156).

Agents of urban bureaucracies often fail to recognise distinct Aboriginal groups and tend to respond to Aborigines who migrate to or transit Darwin, as if they were an homogeneous people or a people of a type or of a region, although the designations are devised by white administrators and for administrative purposes. For example, East Arnhem is an administrative zone in terms of the delivery of hospital and health services and of remote area further education and occupational training. As noted in the Introduction, the Yolŋu are only one of the culturally distinct Aboriginal groups within the administrative zone designated as East Arnhem (see map 3).

The population and the medical surveys of Bagot in the mid to late 1980s identify a core of long-term residents but also emphasise the high level of transience through the community. Loveday (1985:8) and Taylor (1986:5) also noted that people at Bagot made a distinction between family residence and adults who use Bagot as a place to sleep for
Plate 1
Yolŋu women
and children,
Galawu hostel.

Plate 2
Yolŋu family
group,
Housing
Commission
housing.
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the night. Aboriginal residents at Bagot blamed 'outsiders', that is those Aboriginal people who did not have strong claims but yet were not refused a stay at Bagot, as being the cause of disturbances which were often associated with alcohol-drinking (Loveday 1985:10). In the late 1980s, the Yolŋu tended to fit the more transient, outsider and overnight dimension of residence at Bagot.

During 1988-90, there was only one permanently resident Yolŋu household at Bagot, a matrifocal household of mature aged women who between them cared for a permanently disabled kinswoman. The household was frequently extended by visiting kin, both those from Arnhem Land communities and urban-dwellers who wanted to stay for a night or two away from their more regular place of residence. The household was often host to kin whose drinking habits made it difficult for them to maintain accommodation in Aboriginal hostels and with kin who live in Housing Commission houses and flats in the suburbs. This household used typically to be extended by adult visitors and more rarely by women with young children. The women who were the permanent core did not exercise any influence within the Bagot Community Council, and, although the household formed a link in the network of Yolŋu kin which interconnect kin in Darwin with kin in northeast Arnhem Land, the household did not constitute a strong claim by Yolŋu to residence at Bagot.

By 1992, however, the situation had altered. The disabled Yolŋu woman had been relocated to the recently opened Juninga Centre, a hostel for frail and aged Aboriginal people. Yolŋu households occupied six of the thirty-two houses that were occupied at Bagot and Yolŋu were represented on the Bagot Community Council. The Yolŋu had come to be a more numerous, more permanent and influential presence at Bagot. Yolŋu from Ramingining were particularly conspicuous both as householders and as visitors who drove into Darwin in community-owned fourwheel drive vehicles and stayed with kin living at Bagot.

By comparison with other Bagot residents, some of whom have lived in Darwin from birth until their mature years, the Yolŋu were still comparative newcomers to Darwin and to Bagot. Even those Yolŋu who occupied representative positions on the Bagot Council were likely to be living elsewhere in six to twelve months time (Patricia Brahim 1992, pers. com.). Relative to the long-term, life-long and trans-generation associations of some residents, the Yolŋu lacked historical depth of association and density of kinship ties to Bagot. Yet Bagot is an important residential option available to the Yolŋu in Darwin. As an Aboriginal controlled housing precinct, Bagot accommodates the comings and goings of Yolŋu visitors to Darwin and of Yolŋu residents in Darwin in
ways which are not well served by other forms of urban accommodation.

For example, when organised parties of Yolŋu plan to go to Darwin for Aboriginal events such as the Aboriginal Rock Music Festival, National Aboriginal and Islander Day celebrations and the like, they are likely to stay as a group at Bagot. Similarly, when parties of Yolŋu are staging through Darwin to the regional centre of Katherine and the Aboriginal township of Barunga for the Barunga Aboriginal Sport and Cultural Festival, Yolŋu town councils in northeast Arnhem Land apply to the Bagot Community Council for permission for Yolŋu visitors to erect tents and to use the amenities and services of the Bagot Community. A less official and temporary build up of Yolŋu in town for other but not specifically Aboriginal calendar events, such as Northern Territory Football League (NTFL) grand finals and Darwin Show weekend, may see an influx of Yolŋu visitors at Bagot.

While Bagot formerly prohibited alcohol, in the early 1990s alcohol consumption, if not condoned, was at least permitted within the premises. Yolŋu who wished to drink alcohol within the shelter of a kin based household, or to find a place to sleep and to recover after binge drinking, found Bagot a convenient place. This practice is not condoned by the more long-term residents and Bagot has become more a place of permanent Aboriginal residence in town and Aboriginal transients are not always welcome.

At the time of the 1991 national census, the Bagot community reflected a younger than average age profile (Harrison 1993:9) which included families with school aged children. In the late 1970s and early 1980s, when the Bagot Community had its own preschool, a Yolŋu woman used to be a teacher's aide there but since then the preschool has closed down. Aboriginal children at Bagot now attend mainstream suburban schools in the neighbourhood, in particular Ludmilla preschool and primary school and Nightcliff high school. In my interaction with Yolŋu parents and interviews with Balanda teachers, it was clear that Yolŋu children, as well as others from remote communities staying at Bagot, do not make an easy transition into suburban schooling.

The Bagot Community also provides a health service to its residents in the form of an on-site health clinic, formerly run by the Northern Territory Department of Health and staffed by Aboriginal health workers and non-Aboriginal doctors and health professionals. In 1992, the health services to Bagot were taken over by Danila Dilba, an Aboriginal medical service in Darwin. A Yolŋu woman who was experienced as a health worker in her community of origin was employed in the city as well as the Bagot clinics when Danila Dilba first took over this service. East Arnhem Landers were noted as
frequent users of the clinic at Bagot, a fact which reflected both their poor health status and their willingness to access health services (Evans 1990).

Yolŋu stay with kin at Bagot for many purposes and many are not interested in and indeed are disturbed by the drinking scene. A stay at Bagot is often a first step in the residential careers of Yolŋu women and children before they move in with kin who live in suburban households or before they obtain a Housing Commission house or flat in their own name. Yolŋu families are apt to move out of Bagot after a relatively brief orientation to urban life. Yolŋu women, children and family groups choose to move out of Bagot because they fear close proximity to Aboriginal people who are strangers, they wish to get away from alcohol-associated disturbances, they have found an alternative place with kin in suburban housing or at Aboriginal Hostels, or they have waited the two or three years and met the criteria for obtaining Housing Commission flats and houses.

At the same time, the movement is not always one-way. Yolŋu kin who have been staying in extended family households in the suburbs sometimes have to retreat for a time to Bagot. This may be necessary when host households must shed excess co-residents in order to comply with rent and tenancy agreements. Yolŋu women and children sometimes use kin connections at Bagot when they need shelter for a night or two from Yolŋu households in the suburbs which have become too noisy, overcrowded and the scene of drinking, arguments and violence. Similarly, if Yolŋu women cannot manage their own matrilocal households in the suburbs and are persuaded to surrender them or are evicted, they sometimes find themselves back at Bagot, where they may have started their urban career.

4.4.2 Public housing and the N.T. Housing Commission.

When Yolŋu move into public rental housing in the suburbs they are more integrated into ‘mainstream’ housing than they are when they live in the Bagot Aboriginal Community. In Darwin, low-density and family-style housing is provided by the Northern Territory Housing Commission predominantly in the northern suburbs and in Palmerston. Although the Commission does cater for households based on welfare incomes, it also provides housing for higher income earners and especially for employees of the Northern Territory Public Service. Commission houses are interspersed in the suburbs with other forms of housing tenure, including private home ownership, so that public housing in Darwin typically does not concentrate people of low socio-economic

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2 Data on the immunisation histories of east Arnhem Landers at Bagot suggests that in their own remote communities, prior to migration to or transience in Darwin, these Aboriginal groups were regular users of Aboriginal, community based health services (Evans 1990:256-58).
status into depressed enclaves (Taylor, Jaensch & Clarke 1989:48).³

The Northern Territory Housing Commission also have blocks of flats, which are
designed to house small households. Commission flats are particularly found in the near
city suburbs of Parap, Fannie Bay and Coconut Grove as well as the suburbs of Millner
and Malak (Taylor, Jaensch & Clarke 1989:48). Once again, the Commission has taken
measures to ensure that these medium to high-density flats do not become ethnic
enclaves. The 1991 Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) census revealed that the
dispersal of the Aboriginal population throughout the wider community had been largely
achieved in Darwin and Alice Springs in the Northern Territory (Taylor 1991:16-170).

The residential distribution of Yolŋu households in Housing Commission flats and
houses conforms to this overall pattern of dispersal of the Aboriginal population via
public housing. Even so, Yolŋu households in three or four bedroom Commission houses
tend to be clustered so that two or three Yolŋu households are within easy walking
distance of each other in the same or adjacent suburbs. These small scale concentrations
result from Housing Commission planning which is sympathetic to the needs of
Aboriginal people to be near known kin, but which is antithetic to the development of
substantial concentrations of Aboriginal households in any given area. In Housing
Commission houses and flats, Yolŋu tenants find themselves among neighbours from a
great variety of ethnic backgrounds.

Yolŋu who live in two bedroom Housing Commission flats are less able to live in
extended family units and households than are kin who live in three and four bedroom
Commission houses. This is not just a matter of differences in number of bedrooms or of
tenancy agreements, but is related to the greater degree of surveillance which can be
exercised by the Commission over flats within managed blocks of flats, as compared to
that which can be exercised over houses dispersed in the suburbs. Some Yolŋu women
prefer to live in Commission flats rather than houses because the greater level of external
supervision has the effect of lessening the demands made on them by kin for
accommodation and for other forms of material support.

The Housing Commission provides Aboriginal tenants with assistance in
household budgeting in that rent, power and water charges are typically deducted from
the householder's pension or pay cheques. Aboriginal liaison officers from the Aboriginal
Housing Advisory Service (AHAS), an agency to facilitate and monitor Aboriginal access

³ The 1986 census revealed a concentration of Aboriginal households in the suburbs of Rapid Creek and Millner,
which reflected the early development of Housing Commission housing in those suburbs (Taylor, Jaensch & Clarke
1989:26). This earlier concentration of Aboriginal housing has to a large extent been broken up. Commission policy
has been to disperse Aboriginal households throughout the suburbs so as 'to avoid ghettoisation' (Tyler 1993:334).
to public rental housing and an adjunct of the Department of Lands, Housing and Local Government, assess and respond to the needs and the coping ability of Aboriginal households. Technically, Aboriginal people can apply for urban housing while living in remote communities, but many prospective Aboriginal tenants need the help of Aboriginal liaison staff at the AHAS office in Darwin. For example, Aboriginal applicants might need help to complete the personal, income and family details required for applications to proceed. A pre-tenancy interview (PTI) in the AHAS office in Darwin is obligatory.

In some circumstances, Yolŋu applicants do apply directly from their remote communities and in cases where there is some urgency, written information to support the application for urban housing is supplied by one or more of the following, the local Yolŋu town council, school, health centre and/or by Balanda health and welfare authorities. Some Yolŋu apply for housing while in Darwin and then return to their remote communities to wait the two to three years for the allocation of housing. Most Yolŋu applicants, however, live in Darwin and in a variety of circumstances before they apply for housing in their own name and while they are on the waiting list.

Yolŋu who apply for public rental housing have typically been living in Darwin for some time, often for many years. They live in a variety of residential circumstances which include staying in Aboriginal and church hostels, with family who have already obtained Housing Commission housing, in private rental accommodation, in women’s shelters and in beachfront and long-grass camps in and around Darwin. Notes on file at the AHAS office revealed that several Yolŋu applicants gave beach or long-grass camps as previous or current addresses for at least some of the family for whom the application for housing was lodged. My understanding was that these Yolŋu did not have good prospects for their applications to proceed.

The Aboriginal applicant must establish to the satisfaction of the AHAS that the ‘family structure’ of their proposed household fulfils the minimum criterion that there be at least one income earner and one or more dependents. The ratio of income to dependents, of adults to children and the perceived capabilities of the would-be householder determine whether the application for urban housing is liable to be successful. Yolŋu married couples and Yolŋu women who are sole parent pensioners and guardians of, on average three to five children, appear to have the appropriate ‘family structure’ to qualify as successful applicants for Commission housing. By contrast, the application of a Yolŋu man, an invalid pensioner with seven dependent children, was marked on file at the AHAS office as not likely to proceed because the proposed ‘family
structure' would not make for a viable urban household.

It is possible that Yolŋu women who are married to Balanda spouses may bypass the agency of the AHAS and deal directly with housing services within the Department of Lands, Housing and Local Government or seek housing in the private housing market. Otherwise, Yolŋu tenants, former tenants and applicants for public rental housing are ordinarily clients of AHAS and should therefore all appear in Table 5 showing tenancies current in 1993, and Table 6, showing applications on record in the same year as still pending or recently terminated (see Appendix II).

When an application for housing was lodged effectively, the applicant still had to wait for housing to be allocated, and, if applicants lost contact with the AHAS office during the waiting period, the application was terminated. For Yolŋu who are prone to move about between housing in town and between Darwin and their remote communities, loss of contact and thus termination of application was common. In 1994, the waiting time for a three bedroom house in the suburbs of Palmerston was 24 months and 36 months for the same type of public housing in the suburbs of Darwin. There was an even longer waiting period for larger houses and one and two bedroom flats.

4.4.3 Out-of-Turn housing: referral and procedure.

Recommendations for Out Of Turn (OOT) housing can short circuit the normal period of a two to three year wait for public rental housing in Darwin. The most common recommendation for OOT housing and the most successful is on medical grounds, usually following the written submission of a doctor at the hospital. Medical referrals for OOT housing also come from Danila Dilba, an Aboriginal medical service in Darwin. Medical grounds for OOT housing include a permanent or long-term medical condition which requires close specialist monitoring, hospital based treatments and specialist education and rehabilitation services for adults and children with physical and mental disabilities.

For example, in Table 5 (see Appendix II), a Yolŋu grandmother who was the guardian of a number of children and was herself in poor health was recommended for OOT housing by Danila Dilba medical service. Another of the medical referrals for OOT housing related to a Yolŋu family who came to Darwin to support a family member who needed regular dialysis treatment at the public hospital. Two OOT tenancies were based on the medical and specialist educational needs of children and two on the medical needs of adults.

There are, however, Aboriginal patients and their kin who come to town to support them, who are reluctant to take up OOT housing and who prefer to stay at the
Chapter 4. Visiting and sitting down

hostels or in the households of kin in Housing Commission housing, rather than try to
manage households on their own and in new circumstances while in poor health and
undergoing medical treatments. Among the Yolŋu households already established in
Darwin and Yolŋu family groups who have applied for urban housing, the need to move
to the city for specialist health and educational services is clearly prominent (see Tables 5
& 6 in Appendix II).

A recommendation for OOT housing on medical grounds is not necessarily
successful if other criteria for tenancy are not satisfied. For example in Table 6 (see
Appendix II), one OOT application was terminated despite having a paediatric referral.
Notes on file suggest that the proposed family structure was considered not viable with
only one adult care-giver. Apparently, the Yolŋu mother was considered not well able to
care for her disabled child even when living in the more protective environment of one of
the AHL hostels. The mother and the disabled child returned to the remote community
and the OOT application was terminated.

Even when an Out-Of-Turn application is successful, there is usually a two to
three month period for OOT applications to be processed. In this respect, the OOT
provision does not satisfy the need for housing on immediate and urgent grounds. For
example notes on file at the AHAS office indicate that three Yolŋu women and five
children came to Darwin from Ramingining because a child needed urgent medical
attention. The family group stayed with kin at the Bagot Aboriginal community while the
OOT application was being processed, but in the interim the young patient died and the
family group went home for the funeral ceremonies. My research suggests that Yolŋu
have difficulty gaining access to emergency housing and that it is already existing Yolŋu
households which provide the first housing resource for kin who have urgent purposes in
Darwin (See 8.3).

There are also social grounds for Out-Of-Turn tenancy although social OOTs are
less common and less likely to be approved than medical referrals. Notes on files which
pertain to the cases recorded in Table 6 (see Appendix II), reveal that medical and
welfare referrals for OOT housing include information given by Yolŋu town councils and
health clinics, as well as referral from the Darwin Aboriginal Women's Shelter (DAWS)
and from church and Aboriginal Hostels in Darwin. OOT submissions on welfare
grounds also take police interventions such as restraining orders into consideration and
OOT housing on welfare grounds is typically recommended for women and children.

Whether Yolŋu become tenants by out of turn procedures or by waiting in turn the
full period, they have still to uphold the tenancy agreement in respect of rent, household
composition, care of property and to demonstrate an acceptable style of household in a suburban neighbourhood. In my experience, Yolŋu householders were rarely evicted as such but personnel from the Aboriginal Housing Advisory Service were liable to urge Yolŋu householders to voluntarily move out if the household had a history of rent arrears, damage to property, over-crowding and of complaints by neighbours and of police intervention.4

A former tenant must repay any outstanding debt, in terms of arrears in rent and accounts for property damage, to the Northern Territory Department of Lands, Housing and Local Government before they can apply for tenancy again. Yolŋu women who have had bad experiences in their Housing Commission houses in the suburbs often retreat to the Aboriginal Hostels where they do not have to manage the composition of households and the demands of a seemingly endless procession of visiting kin. Yolŋu women explain that they are relieved to have the manager and staff responsible for the composition of rooms and for security and they also find life in hostels easier than suburban households in as much as they have only a single tariff and few domestic tasks.

Hostel management see this as a trap and say that Aboriginal women, including Yolŋu women who are long-term in Darwin, cannot stay indefinitely in Aboriginal Hostels which are designed as transient accommodation. There is no appropriate mechanism to introduce or to rehabilitate women and family groups into Housing Commission housing in the suburbs. In particular, when former tenants of the Commission owe arrears in rent and accounts for damage incurred during previous tenancies, no sustained effort is made to have them pay off their debt and so become re-eligible for another Housing Commission house.5

4.5 In school and on campus.

In addition to urban health and housing services, the other major urban institutions which attract Yolŋu women, adolescents and family groups to Darwin are the secondary schools and campuses for further education, vocational and occupational training. Government schemes are in place to organise and subsidise the movement of remote-dwelling Aboriginal people to the city for educational purposes and to accommodate

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4 A discussion paper entitled Northern Territory Urban Housing Strategy for Aboriginal People (1992:9) outlines similar problems and states that lack of success among Aboriginal tenancies is 'disproportionately high'.

5 That there are gaps in current urban housing services for Aboriginal people including, little or no co-ordination of existing services, insufficient transient accommodation and permanent housing options, inadequate servicing of special needs groups and urgent need for improved household support services, is acknowledged by housing authorities (see NT Urban Housing Strategy for Aboriginal People 1992:13-17).
Plate 3
Open Day,
Nungalinya
College

Plate 4
Open Day,
Aboriginal
Unit, NHS
them in boarding schools, at various residential campuses, in hostels or elsewhere in town for defined periods such as school excursions, school terms, in-service conferences and workshops and for semester length courses and the like.

In their sponsored movements between remote communities and the city, adult Yoŋu at Nungalinya and Batchelor Colleges and to a lesser extent adolescent Yoŋu who come to Darwin to board at Kormilda College or to stay in kinship households and attend suburban high schools provide their urban-dwelling kin with news of home, a constantly replenishing and wider kinship group with which to interact, situations in which kinship obligations may be met in the city and contexts in which to keep vital a distinct Yoŋu identity in Darwin.

4.5.1 Nungalinya College.

In 1993, Nungalinya College offered a 'Best of Both Ways Learning' practice in which Western and Aboriginal learning techniques and priorities were attempted (Brockway 1993). Theology courses and bicultural life studies have TAFE accreditation. These courses run for an academic year of forty weeks and include a compulsory minimum of study on campus at Nungalinya College in Darwin or at a comparable residential campus in southern cities. The on-campus component of studies is available in options which range from semester length, that is five months in residence, to three week courses on campus twice an academic year. The rationale for the residential component is that the on-campus experience offers students 'the fellowship and support of other Aboriginal and Islander Christians' (Nungalinya Handbook 1993). Students and their families sometimes interrupt their stay on campus with visits home for funeral ceremonies and other family and wider kinship commitments.

As discussed in chapters 8 and 9, the Nungalinya campus also provides a place where Yoŋu can "keep company" in times of worry and grief. When Yoŋu in Darwin face crises such as illness and death, many turn to Nungalinya College for services of care, both Christian and kinship care. For example, they attend especially convened prayer meetings and regular 'fellowships' dedicated to their particular worries and grief and look to kin on campus for advice, help and company. In chapter 9, Yoŋu staff and students at Nungalinya College are seen to form the nucleus of Yoŋu management of "funeral business" in response to a death within kinship networks which span Darwin and remote communities. Nungalinya College has, whether intentionally or not, contributed to the extension of Yoŋu social organisation and ceremonial life into the city.

Nungalinya College and its residential campus offer two levels of support. One is
the spontaneous support which occurs within kinship networks and the other is a religion-based and institutional response. These are not separate responses so much as a comparatively harmonious articulation of two forms of pastoral care, one offered by the Church and the other by the family. The Christian and educational philosophy which underpins Nungalinya College shows some evidence of trying to meet Yolŋu and other Aboriginal groups as it were 'half way', and so Yolŋu social and ceremonial life continue to have relevance in Darwin and on campus at Nungalinya.

Studies at Nungalinya are largely tailored to the needs of remote-dwelling indigenous people in the expectation that they will return to their remote communities to put their newly acquired skills and confidence to work. However, some Yolŋu men who were former students at Nungalinya College have gone on to become teaching staff and to further careers within the Uniting Church and in Darwin.⁶

Some Yolŋu have embraced the religious vocational and more secular educational and occupational courses offered by Nungalinya College. At any given time there is a small group of Yolŋu who are resident on campus at Nungalinya as students and accompanying family. In 1993 as in previous years, Yolŋu were a significant group at Nungalinya College. From Galiwin'ku, there were two families, one consisting of two parents and two children, the other of two parents and five children. There were also two family groups from Ramingining, one of two parents, four of their children and some of their grandchildren, and another family unit of husband and wife and three children. One family of parents and five children came from Milingimbi. A woman, her single adult daughter and foster child were from Yirrkala, and that year, there was no one on campus from Gapuwiyak.

Single accommodation and married quarters were available and the policy was that only students and their school aged and younger children lived on campus. Men typically undertook theology certificate and diploma courses, although wives were encouraged to participate in theology certificate courses in addition to their enrolment in Bicultural Life Studies, formerly known as Women's Studies. Theology students had to have the support, including financial support of their respective Churches, and women students with dependent children were entitled to Commonwealth government support from the Department of Employment, Education and Training (DEET) in terms of

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⁶ For example, the Reverend Djiniyini Gondarra, originally a theology student from Galiwin'ku, lectured in Aboriginal Studies at Nungalinya from 1983-1985 and has since become a pastor of the Uniting Church and an executive officer of the Northern Regional Council Congress (NRCC) of the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress. Mr Dhulumburrk Gaykamangu, whose community of origin is Milingimbi, has been employed as staff on campus for many years, and in 1993 was the co-ordinator of the community development courses at Nungalinya College.
Chapter 4. *Visiting and sitting down*

ABSTUDY monies and child-care subsidies.

Creche facilities were available on-campus and school age children were enrolled at and expected to attend suburban primary schools and high schools. Among the Yolŋu families on campus, school attendance was irregular even though the parents themselves valued education and possibly because of the parents' pre-occupation with their own studies.

4.5.2 Kormilda College and Nightcliff High School.

Having closed down as a government run transitional school for Aboriginal students from rural and remote areas, Kormilda re-opened in 1988 as a privately owned day and boarding school for secondary students of whatever ethnic origins. Kormilda continued to foster the school's former historic links with Aboriginal communities and to attract remote-dwelling Aboriginal students, including Yolŋu, to Darwin to attend the school as boarding students.\(^7\)

By 1990, Kormilda College had achieved an enrolment close to three hundred and by 1994 this figure had doubled. While the day scholars were predominantly Balanda suburban-dwellers, approximately half the student population was boarders, mostly Aboriginal students from remote communities. Aboriginal boarders were fully funded by the Commonwealth government's ABSTUDY scheme and on the basis of education for students from isolated areas.

Who enrolled for secondary schooling in Darwin was normally a matter decided by parents and teachers within the local Aboriginal community. Kormilda takes students from grade 8 to 12, although many Aboriginal students from remote communities do not stay on after year 10 and the Junior Secondary School Certificate (JSSC). In 1993, there was a poor survival rate and only two students from Aboriginal communities completed year 12 studies. In the previous year, there was more success and eleven students from Aboriginal communities completed final year studies, and eight achieved scores which would enable them to enter courses at the Northern Territory University, but none were Yolŋu students.\(^8\)

\(^7\) In 1995, there was a new development in the movement of Yolŋu to Darwin for educational purposes when a number of Yolŋu students from Galiwin'ku enrolled as boarders at St John's College, a Catholic day and boarding school which offers secondary education to Aboriginal students, although typically to those from Aboriginal communities which were formerly Catholic missions.

\(^8\) In 1993, seventeen students from Yolŋu communities enrolled as boarders at Kormilda College. Boys predominated, with four from Yirrkala, five from Galiwin'ku, one from Ramingining, three boys and four girls from Milingimbi and one girl from Gapuwiyak. In 1994, twenty-four Yolŋu students enrolled, twenty of whom were males. There were seven boys from Yirrkala, six boys and two girls from Milingimbi, three boys from Ramingining, three boys and one girl from Galiwin'ku and one girl and one boy from Gapuwiyak.
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How Yolŋu in Darwin manage the often competing aims and values of Western style schooling and the Yolŋu way of "growing up" children is discussed in later chapters and particularly in relation to how schooling competes with the Yolŋu way of "making men" of boys in rituals of circumcision held in remote communities (see Chs. 6 & 7). Unlike other Aboriginal groups where rituals of male initiation take place at or after puberty, Yolŋu boys are ordinarily initiated into male ceremonial life at an earlier age, and therefore their preparation for circumcision ceremonies typically takes place during their primary school years and ordinarily does not prevent older and already initiated adolescent boys from pursuing secondary education away from remote communities and in Darwin.

On the other hand, Yolŋu girls today ordinarily delay changing their childhood status by staying on at school and they no longer marry before or at the onset of puberty. Schooling at mixed co-educational and boarding campuses away from home exacerbates the potential for girls to form illicit relationships and to fall pregnant to "wrong-side" Yolŋu boyfriends and to strangers (cf. Burbank 1988). While Yolŋu parents worry that their adolescent boys and girls might form sexual-marital relations which will not be condoned in their home communities and which might lead them astray, some still value educational opportunities sufficiently to send their adolescents to study in Darwin.

Yolŋu parents in remote communities rely on urban-dwelling kin to "watch out for" their young kin at Kormilda and to chaperone them when they have free time off campus and in the city. In order to avoid the problems they associate with boarding school, a few Yolŋu parents in remote communities have begun to send their adolescents to live with close kin in suburban housing and to enrol at suburban high schools, particularly in the Aboriginal unit at Nightcliff high school. Similarly, Yolŋu who are themselves studying on campus at Nungalinya College send their children to neighbourhood primary schools and to one or two high schools.

In 1993, a report on the Aboriginal unit at Nightcliff high school recorded that fifteen Aboriginal students were enrolled, but noted that in the past attendance had been as high as sixty, although the unit had never received 'formal recognition' from the Northern Territory Department of Education and annually had to apply for federal funding (Howard & Carter 1993:4). In 1992, my own research revealed twenty-five Aboriginal students, including six to eight Yolŋu students enrolled in the Aboriginal transitional unit at Nightcliff high school for all or part of that year. Daily attendance was typically less than this figure and throughout the year students tended to 'drop out'.
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For the most part, these students originated from remote Aboriginal communities in the Territory, but they, and the families which supported them, were currently living in Darwin in a variety of circumstances, including at the Bagot Aboriginal community, in Aboriginal hostels, on campus at Nungalinya College and in Housing Commission houses and flats in the suburbs. Some of these students were living in Darwin for other family purposes and their attendance at a suburban high school was incidental, but most students and their families included schooling as high among their urban purposes. A few students came especially to stay with kin in the city in order to go to secondary school.

Nightcliff high school, and the Aboriginal unit there, was seen as a way of obtaining more 'mainstream' schooling while living with family in urban accommodation and housing rather than separate from family as boarders at Kormilda. In fact, the Aboriginal unit at Nightcliff high school tended to be 'peripheral' to the rest of the school and to provide something less than 'mainstream' secondary schooling (Howard & Carter 1993:18).

Of the six to eight Yolŋu students enrolled in the unit at Nightcliff high school in 1992-93, two girls and a boy from two separate families came from Ramingining and lived on campus at Nungalinya College, where their respective parents were studying theology and personal and community development courses. Another girl came originally from Galiwin'ku and was living with her parents, younger siblings and extended family in suburban housing. Two sisters from Milingimbi had come to Darwin expressly to go to Nightcliff high school for their secondary education and they stayed with their father's sister, a Yolŋu widow who held urban employment and had a Housing Commission house in the suburbs.

While the younger of these two sisters left mid-term and returned to her remote community, the older sister enjoyed school and the widow brought in her own adolescent daughter to study and keep her brother's daughter company at Nightcliff high school. The new arrival was judged by teachers to be capable of completing senior secondary school, but she did not attend regularly and soon returned to her community of origin. The older of the two sisters completed two years of secondary schooling at Nightcliff high school and went on to study at the Centre for Aboriginal and Islander Studies (CAIS) at the Northern Territory University, but dropped out after one term. In 1993, an adolescent Yolŋu boy also enrolled at Nightcliff high school and he stayed with his father's brother, who held employment in Darwin and lived with his wife and youngest children in a Housing Commission house in the northern suburbs. The boy proved to be more interested in the video game parlours and the shopping centres than in school and study.
and his kin in Darwin and parents at home agreed that he should return home.

The Yolŋu parents and guardians who were responsible for bringing Yolŋu adolescents to Darwin, enrolling them at Nightcliff high school and housing and caring for them in Darwin placed a high value on educational opportunities. They were either in paid employment or held leadership positions in remote communities, were pursuing further education themselves at Nungalinya College, or were comparatively well educated in a Western sense and in responsible positions in Darwin. Even with this family background, Yolŋu adolescents going to Nightcliff high school were, in the main, irregular in school attendance and tended to 'drop out' before completing even a full year. One notable exception was the girl from Milingimbi who moved on to tertiary education at CAIS in the Northern Territory University, but who quit after one term. While Yolŋu families were giving these students the chance for a better Western education in Darwin and as much support as they could, it appeared that the urban education system typically failed to hold Yolŋu students and lead them to a successful completion of their secondary school years.

4.5.3 Batchelor College.

Adult Yolŋu have also been coming via Darwin to pursue further education and occupational training at Batchelor College in the rural town of Batchelor, approximately 100 kilometres south of Darwin (see map 2). In the late 1980s, a major revision of the future directions of Batchelor College was undertaken and the rationale for taking Aboriginal students away from their remote communities to study at the residential campus at Batchelor came under scrutiny.

When Batchelor College originally set up the Remote Area Teacher Education (RATE) scheme, the latter was designed as a bridging program for first stage Aboriginal students who were unable or unwilling to leave their remote communities to study on campus at Batchelor, but who would be more ready and willing to come to Batchelor for subsequent stages of study. At the same time, there was also an arrangement between Batchelor College and a southern university, Deakin, for remote-dwelling Aboriginal students to complete a Bachelor of Arts (Education) award, which was achieved in part by intensive study on campus at Deakin University. The Deakin-Batchelor Aboriginal Teacher Education (D-BATE) scheme was phased out in 1988.9 This arrangement with

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9 The contribution of the D-BATE scheme in terms of educational outcomes, published writings of Aboriginal students, development of an Aboriginal pedagogy and the careers of graduates was significant (Batchelor College 1991:2; Henry & McTaggart 1991:7-17). One Yolŋu graduate under this scheme was Mandawuy Yunupingu, Yirrkala school principal, former Australian of the Year and leader of the Aboriginal music group, Yothu Yindi.
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Deakin was replaced by Batchelor College's own accredited diploma course and in anticipation that the Northern Territory University would soon offer higher education courses in Aboriginal education (Harris 1990:42), an outcome which has not been fully achieved by 1995.

Yolŋu at Yirrkala, some of whom were participants in the D-BATE scheme and other RATE students were to articulate the way in which they thought Aboriginal teacher education should proceed. In 1983, RATE students at Yirrkala formed an 'Action Group' with Yolŋu who were already qualified teaching staff in order to develop a 'community' approach to higher education and teacher training (Kemmis 1988:4-5).

Yolŋu community leaders and educationalists have consistently argued for greater autonomy in teacher training and they came to an agreement that on-site training in Yolŋu schools, within Yolŋu communities and on clan lands was the locale most amenable to Yolŋu being in control of the direction of education and social change. Centralised initiatives and urban locales for Aboriginal education were seen by Yolŋu as the continuation of dominance of Yolŋu by Balanda (Marika-Munungguritj et al. 1990:13-14).

On the other hand, Yolŋu students of Batchelor College and community leaders wanted to participate in Western education at its most representative best. In a report given by the consultation team which gathered Aboriginal opinion on the future directions of Batchelor College (Batchelor College 1988:11), Yolŋu respondents said that:

We all want to be qualified people to run all the areas of our community; that is our goal (Ramingining).

Health workers would like the opportunity to have training equivalent to that of medical sisters (Milingimbi).

To date, the Yolŋu have not achieved these aspirations.

In 1988 the second stage of RATE was offered 'off campus' in a pilot program at Yirkala. There was some opposition to the trend towards education and in-service training in remote communities rather than on campus at Batchelor. One line of opinion among white administrators and academic staff at Batchelor, and shared in part by Aboriginal students, was that the mix of Aboriginal groups and Balanda on campus was a stimulating and emancipating experience. There were those, including Aboriginal students and community leaders, who were concerned about the loss of the interaction on campus and the 'narrowing of horizons' (Jordan 1985:79). There was a suggestion that some students welcomed the opportunity to break away from the problems and
constraints they experienced in their remote communities, but a contrary opinion held that these difficulties were not resolved by living on-campus at Batchelor and study on campus was often interrupted as students went home for 'ceremonies, funerals and family business' (Batchelor College 1991:9).

There was also the concern expressed by some administrators and educators that 'culturally appropriate programs' had the potential to be misinterpreted as and degenerate into 'culturally appropriate standards' (Harris, T. 1990:18). If skills, qualifications and standards were designed to suit Aboriginal people and fit them to remote communities and employment contexts, then their ability to be self-determining and employable would be circumscribed.

Despite these doubts, Batchelor staff and Aboriginal community leaders, teachers and students came to the general agreement that local delivery of higher education and occupational training was less disruptive, more effective and more empowering when largely delivered 'on site' in remote communities rather than on campus at Batchelor. Second stage RATE programs piloted at Yirrkala were extended to other Aboriginal communities and to subsequent stages of courses offered by Batchelor College. Again, when Batchelor College was preparing for re-accreditation of the Associate Diploma of Teaching (Aboriginal Schools) and the Diploma of Teaching, Yolŋu RATE students at Yirrkala sent 'a strongly worded expression of concern' which re-emphasised Yolŋu priorities for tertiary education to be delivered locally in their own communities (Batchelor College 1991:22).

The RATE scheme evolved a 'both ways education' philosophy, a 'community based' approach and a 'mixed mode' of delivery consisting of distance education, regular tutoring offered locally by a resident tutor, visits by lecturers and intensive workshops conducted locally or at one of Batchelor College's regional annexes and decreasingly at Batchelor College itself (Kemmis 1988). In 1990, annexes of the College were opened at Alice Springs, Nhulunbuy, Katherine and Tennant Creek and in Darwin in 1994.

This pattern of higher education centres servicing remote-dwelling Aboriginal people appeared, at a superficial level, to be much the same as health service delivery to remote-dwelling Aboriginal people via public hospitals in the five major urban centres of the Territory. In fact, the two systems of service delivery were dissimilar in as much as Batchelor and the RATE system of delivery of higher education and in-service training were administered and resourced at the urban regional centres and at Batchelor College, but all levels of education and training were largely carried out in the local Aboriginal community by resident non-Aboriginal tutors, visiting specialist lecturers and with
minimal movement of students to urban centres and to Batchelor. By contrast, the
delivery of limited primary health care to the larger Aboriginal communities and smaller
homeland centres is very much dependent on moving remote-dwelling Aboriginal
patients to urban hospitals for comprehensive and specialist medical services and for
hospitalisation.

In 1990, Batchelor College took over the role of training Aboriginal health
workers from the Northern Territory Department of Health and Community Services. The
College had grown from strictly an Aboriginal teachers's college to a tertiary institution
with Schools of Education, Community and Health Studies. Most of the courses
including TAFE award courses were offered through RATE, which now stood for
Remote Area Tertiary Education. Total enrolments at Batchelor College had nearly
reached 1,000 by 1994, and students were typically mature aged and approximately 70%
of them were women (Batchelor College 1994-95).

In 1993, there were 60 Yolŋu students enrolled in courses run by the School of
Education and School of Health at Batchelor College and they were predominantly
mature aged women, married with children. Withdrawals and the like were not taken into
account, but the raw figure is useful to indicate the considerable investment that would be
required and disruption to family and community life that would have been entailed, had
this number of students, plus spouses and dependent children, had to travel and live on­
campus at Batchelor for semester length courses. By this time, Aboriginal students could
study and gain in-service training in their remote communities with only limited time
spent away from home on fieldtrips and workshops held at regional annexes of the
College and at Batchelor.

By contrast, in 1988-89 teacher education was still largely conducted on campus
at Batchelor. Only the first stage of Remote Area Teacher Education (RATE) was offered
in remote communities and a pilot second stage had only just started at Yirrkala. At this
time, the presence of kin resident on campus and the annual replenishment of new
students and their families at Batchelor used to provide Yolŋu in Darwin with a wider
kinship group in which to interact and with kin fresh from their communities of origin.
There was much visiting between kin at Batchelor and their kin in Darwin, especially on
weekends and during semester breaks. The city held many attractions for remote­
dwelling students and their families, but Yolŋu who lived in Darwin also visited their kin
at Batchelor on social visits, to gamble at cards or to co-ordinate a trip to hunt wallabies
in the neighbouring bushland.

When a group of Yolŋu students graduated from courses at Batchelor College,
Chapter 4. Visiting and sitting down

Yolŋu would stage a buggul (ceremonial dance) on campus in honour of the occasion and as a feature of the graduation ceremonies. Kin living in Darwin would travel to Batchelor for the day to participate in these secular celebrations. On the other hand, Yolŋu who were resident on campus at Batchelor would come to Darwin to visit kin and to participate in Yolŋu mortuary rituals held in Darwin (see Ch.9). Yolŋu as students and accompanying family who were resident on campus at Batchelor added to the social and ceremonial life of Yolŋu who lived more permanently in Darwin.

To the extent that Yolŋu still come to the Batchelor campus for short intensive workshops and other purposes, Batchelor has continued to be within the field of Yolŋu movements and networks, which interconnect remote and urban-dwelling kin. However, the volume of traffic and the reservoir of resident kin is not as significant as formerly since Batchelor College took the direction of delivering Aboriginal education and training 'on site' in remote communities rather more than 'on campus' at Batchelor.

To the extent that this turn around in policy and in the delivery of services was decided upon by Balanda educationalists and administrators in consultation with Aboriginal leaders and spokespersons, including Yolŋu community leaders and educationalists, it was an agreement in principle and from different cultural perspectives, about the benefits of tertiary education and in-service training being locally delivered.

The former circumstances of life on campus at Batchelor which had provided a 'window of opportunity' for remote-dwelling Aboriginal people to meet, mix with, learn from and possibly to have sexual-marital relations with Aborigines from elsewhere and with Balanda on campus and in the nearby city was largely closed, at least via Batchelor. However, this 'window of opportunity' was still open in 1988-89 when I first met a number of married Yolŋu women from remote communities who were studying on campus at Batchelor for the year and coming to Darwin on weekends and during semester breaks. Some of these women figure in case studies presented in the next chapter, in which Yolŋu women are seen to take advantage of the opportunities the city offered, including more personal autonomy in their sexual-marital lives.

4.6 Conclusions.

This chapter has mostly focused on the agency of urban institutions of health, education and housing in shaping the transience and often unintentionally contributing to the migration of Yolŋu to Darwin. While the Yolŋu dynamics of kinship and of ceremony have been briefly introduced, these dimensions of the Yolŋu experience of rural-urban mobility and of life in the city are more fully developed in subsequent chapters. The
decisions made by and the life trajectories embarked upon by Yolŋu women are also factors which influence the movement of Yolŋu women, children and family groups to and from Darwin and these more idiosyncratic features will be discussed in the next chapter.

For the Yolŋu, a sustained period of residence in the city, whether it be for health, education, training, employment related purposes involves some form of urban accommodation and governmental care, varying from complete institutional care: in hospital, on campus, in hostels, at Bagot, to the comparative autonomy of suburban housing. While Yolŋu life in the city is structured by urban agents of government and by kinship obligations and patterns of sociality and co-residence, urban life also suggests the possibility of more personal autonomy, more opportunity for inter-ethnic contacts, including sexual-marital relations, and different norms, goals and values.

How individual Yolŋu women make decisions, set out their own life trajectories and move to live in Darwin, with the encouragement and within the constraints of both external government and Yolŋu governance, is considered in the following chapter. A number of extended case studies demonstrates that some Yolŋu women consciously attempt to go their "own way" in Darwin.
Chapter 5

Going my own way
Chapter 5. *Going my own way now*

5.1 Introduction.

Yolŋu women say that the city offers them the possibility of "going my own way now". This is how Yolŋu women express in English their perception that urban life allows them greater personal autonomy than is possible in remote communities. Among the Yolŋu women who move to live in Darwin are widows who feel no need to do so and resist pressures to remarry Yolŋu men after the death of their husbands. Others move to Darwin in protest against their husbands taking younger wives in polygynous marriage or when they become estranged from Yolŋu husbands in polygynous or monogamous marriages in remote communities. Among the younger women in Darwin are those who have avoided going in marriage to the husbands to whom they were "promised", typically older men who were already married. Some women and girls pursue educational and employment opportunities in Darwin as single women who defer marriage indefinitely or after marriage, as estranged wives and widows.

Young women find boyfriends of their own choosing in the city, including in "wrong-side" relationships which are culturally prohibited because the couple are in the wrong kin relationship to each other. These "wrong-side" affairs with Yolŋu men rarely if ever achieve recognition as "married now" even in the city. Yolŋu women also meet and marry Balanda who live and work as professionally qualified and skilled personnel in Yolŋu remote communities and migrate to the city. On the other hand, Yolŋu women form casual liaisons and live in 'de facto' marriages with other Aborigines, with Balanda and more rarely with men of other ethnic origins whom they meet in Darwin. While Yolŋu women have complex and various reasons for choosing to live in Darwin, for many women and girls a common factor is that they seek more personal autonomy outside the contemporary practice of Yolŋu marriage and in the city. In the main, they live sober lives in the suburbs although a few Yolŋu women live a lifestyle dominated by alcohol-drinking in Darwin and its fringe camps.

In remote communities in northeast Arnhem Land, the Yolŋu are experiencing similar circumstances of change, so that marital change is not confined to Yolŋu who live in town. Introduced opportunities and Yolŋu *Rom* (law, culture, right way) offer alternative 'right ways', especially to women and young people. These alternatives in life result in conflicts and pressures in relationships, in families, in Yolŋu communities which some Yolŋu women and girls seek to escape by moving to Darwin. Women's pensions and child care payments and access to subsidised urban accommodation and housing give them the means to move to Darwin or alternatively they find new marital partners.
including Balanda, who provide the motivation and the means to live in the city.

Among Yolŋu, the lawfulness of the "straight way" of sexual-marital relations and of the "promise" system of bestowal continues to be salient. Polygyny, while in decline, is still a current form of marriage among the Yolŋu. Senior Yolŋu men and, to some extent women, assert 'control as care' (Keen 1989:27) over Yolŋu women and girls in terms of their sexual-marital lives. On the other hand, the Balanda way of life and government agencies offer alternative ideas and means for Yolŋu women and girls to seek more personal autonomy, which some choose to do so outside of Yolŋu marriage and by moving to the city. It is this difficult and sometimes hazardous process of choosing alternative life and marital trajectories, moving to the city and manoeuvring within the possibilities and the constraints of two systems of care and control and the Yolŋu and Balanda ways of live, which Yolŋu women describe as "going my own way now" in Darwin.

5.2 Background
5.2.1 Promised and polygynous marriage and social change.

After fieldwork in northeast Arnhem Land in the late 1960s and mid 1970s, Shapiro (1981) wrote of Miwuyt marriage that every female child was 'promised as a mother-in-law to a particular man' who thereby had rights 'to all daughters of his WM' (Shapiro 1981:47-56 ff.). Yolŋu females were bestowed in marriage even before their mothers bore them and in the comparatively recent past, Yolŋu girls joined the men to whom they had been promised at or before the onset of puberty.

In the 1990s, when Yolŋu women and girls speak of their "promise", they are typically referring to the more direct relationship of bestowal of themselves as wives to men who are the husbands to whom they are promised. The men to whom they are promised are typically older than themselves and already married so that for Yolŋu women and girls the "promise" system of marriage tends to presuppose polygynous marriage.

In the past, a Yolŋu man could expect to marry all or many of a set of sisters via sororal polygyny (Warner 1969:43-44) but he had typically to wait for many years before he acquired his first and subsequent wives. Yolŋu polygyny included the levirate and younger men inherited the widows of their deceased brothers, and old men while still alive might relinquish wives to younger brothers (Warner 1969:43-52) and wives 'stolen' by 'sweethearts' (Shapiro 1981:69). Warner and Shapiro describe the male point of view and Shapiro (1981:70) acknowledges that this obscures women's initiatives in these manoeuvres to obtain sexual-marital partners more to their liking.
Chapter 5. *Going my own way now*

In the 1970s, Keen (1978:19) found that the Yolŋu system of marriage had persisted although the impact of social change was evident in the fact that widows in receipt of pensions were choosing not to re-marry and girls and young women deferred going to their promised husbands in marriage, while they went to school and pursued opportunities in education, training and employment. Yolŋu women and girls were increasingly able to 'evade marriage contracts' as men's willingness and ability to enforce promised marriages declined (Keen 1994:299). Even so, there were senior Yolŋu men who had multiple wives, some as many as ten or more (Keen 1982).

Yet there was evidence that these levels of polygyny would not be reached in the future and many Yolŋu men opted for monogamous marriage, at least in their earlier marital lives and often in terms of their employment careers, modern image and if they professed to be Christian (Keen 1994:299). Yolŋu men had their own times and reasons for disassociating themselves from the full implications of polygynous marriage and the "promise" system (cf. Burbank 1987:226-234, 1988).

Yolŋu men were increasingly influenced by Western and Christian ideas and norms of marriage and new avenues for leadership in Church and local community councils (Bos 1988). In general, Yolŋu men renounced the more forceful techniques of dictating the marital lives of women and young people (Keen 1994:87). The 'connection between marriage, political support, and control of economic and religious resources' was breaking down at the same time as 'new powers in settlement governance' were coming into being (Keen 1994:296-303).

Missionaries and Yolŋu leaders met at Yirrkala in 1967 for the purpose of making a new ruling that promised marriage should cease in favour of the match being made by the conjugal partners (Shapiro 1981:72). Since then, a 'greater degree of freedom of choice by the partners to a marriage' had come to be acceptable in Yolŋu communities, but Williams (1986:48-49) says that this was the case only 'as long as that choice did not abrogate' relations between inter-marrying clans and Yolŋu law. At a meeting held in Yirrkala in 1976, Yolŋu leaders re-asserted that the 'promise law still stands' (Williams 1986:49).

On the other hand, Burbank (1987:232) found that in southeast Arnhem Land and in the 1980s, 'the institutional aspect of the past marriage system is now largely defunct' but that the salience of "straight" marriage continued to be upheld. While the Yolŋu in northeast Arnhem Land experienced comparable social change, promised marriage, polygyny and the "straight way" of marriage were in the process of transition but by no means defunct in the 1990s.
Chapter 5. *Going my own way now*

Yolŋu women and girls experience the sanctions of kin and of particular male kin, and of inter-generational and wider kinship pressures on them when they attempt to exercise more personal autonomy in remote communities. Some Aboriginal women and girls decide to escape these sanctions and constraints by moving to urban centres and by marrying white men (cf. Burbank 1988:111-112; Keen 1994:299).

Yolŋu women and girls in remote communities have educational and economic opportunities which provide them with the motive and the means to exercise more personal autonomy and choice in marriage. They can choose not to re-marry when widowed, to leave husbands who take other wives, to desert monogamous marriages, to reject their "promised" husbands, but their autonomy and single status are not won without considerable personal cost (cf. Burbank 1994:145-47). Although social change has seen new categories of single womanhood emerge in Aboriginal communities in Arnhem Land (cf. Burbank 1980, 1987 & 1988), there has been very little provision made for single women's housing in Yolŋu settlements (Keen 1994:299).¹

School peer groups, women's households and women's work places in local schools and health centres furnish Yolŋu women with limited contexts and means for women and girls to exercise personal autonomy and enjoy collective strength. These contexts are more 'emancipating' when pursued outside local communities and in urban centres (cf. Burbank 1987:231-33, 1988:105; Keen 1994:299). In their own remote communities, Yolŋu women's means to be personally autonomous are circumscribed.

For example, in remote communities housing is chronically and often acutely in short supply (see 3.7.2). Housing for women 'without strings attached', that is without marital and familial ties is not possible. In one sense accommodation is more available to women in their own right in Darwin, independent of marriage, nepotism and to a lesser extent of wider kinship demands. Urban housing is more independently accessible to Aboriginal women and indeed 'privileges' them and children as dependent citizens and 'marginalises' Aboriginal men (Collman 1988:105-125).

There are critical times and events in life, including when a husband takes another wife, a wife deserts a husband, the death of a husband or of significant kin and pregnancy and birth which interrupt women's lives, alter their status, help shape their movements

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¹ Among Aboriginal groups in Arnhem Land, there had been little or no tradition of single women's camps (Hamilton 1984:76). While Aboriginal women in Central Australia exercised considerable autonomy in ritual life and in single women's camps (Bell 1983), by contrast, women in Arnhem Land were more incorporated into male-dominated ceremonial life, lacked the institution of the single women's camp and traditionally were never single (Hamilton 1984:76). Goodale (1980:226-229) records the absence of a category of single womanhood among the Tiwi of Bathurst and Melville Islands but she also notes that women as co-wives in polygynous marriages exercised considerable solidarity and authority.
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between country and town and alter women's plans and life trajectories. At such times, Yolŋu women are seen to re-assess their own lives and options even as agents of Yolŋu familial governance and agents of Welfare government seek to redefine women's status, re-assert interests in them and to realign women according to their altered circumstances.

Before proceeding with a number of extended case studies to illustrate how particular Yolŋu women seek to go their "own way" in the city, it is important to determine to what extent particular relations of kinship and obligations in ceremonial life continue to shape the lives of Yolŋu women as they live in Darwin. An important starting point is to examine how women and girls fare at critical times in their lives and in circumstances of social change in respect of their relations to their dhuway (husband, brother-in-law) and wāwa (brother(s)).

5.2.2 "Straight way" marriage and dhuway-galay (husband-wife) relations.

The Yolŋu marriage system is one of matrilateral cross-cousin marriage and of moiety and clan exogamy (cf. Keen 1978:8). Among the Yolŋu, relations of kinship are extended between groups and similar marriages connected the lineages through the generations in continuing alliances (Keen 1994:88). The preferential relations of marriage are those between male dhuway (father's sister's son) and female galay (mother's brother's daughter), ideally close genealogical relations, and the variant galay (mother's mother's brother's daughter's daughter) (see Keen 1994:88).

Unlike other groups in Aboriginal Australia, 'there is in northeast Arnhem Land no "alternate wife" kin-class' (Shapiro 1981:46) which might explain the specificity of the Yolŋu response to social change. Arguably, the unidirectional and unambiguous nature of the Yolŋu marriage relationship might be the strength which underlies the continuing salience of the "straight way" of marriage among the Yolŋu in times of change and in new circumstances. The relationship between female galay (wife category) and male dhuway (husband category) continues to be important even when marital relations are severed by death, estranged by marital breakdown, never contracted as actual marriage and otherwise non-connubial when Yolŋu women move to the city.

In the case studies of Yolŋu women in Darwin which are presented in this and the next chapter, Yolŋu men who were dhuway as promised husbands, actual husbands, former husbands and brothers-in-law (that is husband's brothers or sister's husbands) were seen to exercise interests in their female galay, who were variously their promised wives, actual wives, estranged wives and sisters-in-law (that is wife's sister and brother's wife or widow).
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A major focus of this and the following chapter is whether the interests of these Yolgu men were constituted within transformations of the levirate and sororate and as covert forms of polygynous marriage between senior Yolgu men in remote communities and Yolgu women in the city, or exercised more as kinship obligations and affinal interests than as marital rights to Yolgu women in Darwin.

On the other hand, fathers and brothers had interests in and responsibilities for daughters and sisters and, in the long-term, it was wāwa (brother) who maintained the consanguineal dimensions of familial care and control over yapa (sisters) who were girls of marriageable age, estranged wives, widows and women married inter-ethnically and living in Darwin.

5.2.3 Yapa-wāwa (sister-brother) relations and mirriri.

Among the Yolgu, the wāwa-yapa (brother-sister) relationship is ambivalent in that it is one of affection as well as a relationship of avoidance. Between yapa (sister) and wāwa (brother) who are biological siblings there is a relationship of blood, of shared childhood and of common identity in clan and country. Yet an etiquette of avoidance and the potential for ritualised anger and aggression distinguish this relationship between initiated brothers and their actual as well as classificatory sisters.

Warner's research among the Mumgin (Yolgu) in the first years of mission settlement describes, 'two sets of behaviour in the relationship of a brother and sister that must be treated together...the Wakinu (wakingu) and Mirriri customs' (1969:55 & 98-102). The mirriri response involves the actual or potential violence of brothers to any or all of his sisters, actual and classificatory, if he should hear or see any evidence of the more personal dimensions in their lives, including eliminatory and reproductive functions and in particular, sexual-marital relations. A girl or woman promised or given in marriage is wakingu (without kin) to her brothers (cf. Warner 1969:55) and henceforth the responsibility of her husband and of his clan. Yolgu brothers verbally disown their sisters who are bestowed and married as wakingu (without kin) and bambay (lit. blind; invisible). On the other hand, Warner (1969:99-100) says of a betrothed or married sister that, 'fundamentally she is considered as belonging to her own group, not to her husband's' (see earlier discussion 2.5.1).

A brother did not want to hear or see ill of his sister, such as gossip and verbal and physical abuse, particularly in relation to his sister's sexual-marital life and involving her husband and his brother-in-law. Therefore a brother acted in a 'seemingly anomalous' way by throwing spears at his sister or at any available sisters and not at his brother-in-law.
and in this way circumvented hostilities between clans (Warner 1969:100-101). Warner (1969:99) says that the custom of *miriri* served to 'censor the due'-galle (i.e. *dhuway-galay*) relationship' and prevented escalation of discord between affines and inter-marrying clans (Warner 1969:101).

The ritualised violence of *miriri* aroused when brother hears ill of sister has been extensively documented among various Aboriginal groups in Arnhem Land.\(^2\) There has, however, been little specific discussion of ritualised violence as a sanction and mechanism of dispute resolution within an Aboriginal jurisdiction of family law (see Williams 1987:64-66), nor of its contemporary relevance in circumstances of social change including marital change and rural-urban mobility.

It has been argued that in Arnhem Land, Aboriginal girls were socialised into subordination to males (Hamilton 1980; Cowlishaw 1978, 1979, 1982) and, in particular within brother-sister relations of avoidance, where they learnt to avoid male aggression where possible and to expect to be the target when trouble erupts (Cowlishaw 1978:275-277;1979:119-122). Women are 'very careful of brothers' and in this respect the whole etiquette of brother-sister avoidance and *miriri* is an example of sexual asymmetry (Burbank 1994:152). However, Burbank (1990:1; 1994:153) disputes that Aboriginal women in south-east Arnhem Land simply experience the measure of their subjugation in male acts of aggression towards them.

In Arnhem Land, the *miriri* complex contains anger and violence in a ritualised way, deflects aggression away from the true object of displeasure, rarely causes actual bodily harm (Burbank 1985) and interrupts a more potentially violent situation without 'jeopardising important social relationships' (Burbank 1994:154). Burbank (1994:154) says that brothers 'colluded to protect' women by ignoring what was going on in their sisters' lives and by reacting in ritualised violence when circumstances could not be ignored (see also Hiatt 1964). Avoidance etiquette and ritualised violence by brothers was especially called into play when their sisters were in situations which could more readily degenerate into uncontrolled violence, for example within marriage or over sexual relations outside of marriage.

In remote communities, social changes have seen the decline of the single men's camp, and today initiated Yol̤u brothers and sisters of marriageable age often live in the same household with parents, older married siblings or other kin. These circumstances also apply in Yol̤u urban households so that the whole etiquette of brother-sister avoidance and ritualised violence remains intact as a mechanism for resolving disputes.

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avoidance is something which has to be managed and manipulated carefully, not just by brother and sister, but by co-resident kin and within the wider context of kinship interaction.

In the late 1980s and early 1990s among the Yolŋu who moved between remote communities and Darwin and those who lived more permanently in the city the term wakingu was not used so much as bambay (lit. blind; syn. wakingu) as a way of addressing and referring to a sister within the presence and hearing of her brother, real or classificatory. Even very small children learnt to call women and girls bambay in suburban households where brothers and sisters were co-resident, and in all mixed gender contexts of Yolŋu social life in Darwin.

While I never saw an episode of mirriri (ritualised violence) in Darwin or in a remote community, the possibility of mirriri should brothers hear gossip, arguments or swearing that involved their sisters, was a recurring potential felt by and cautiously discussed by Yolŋu women in Darwin. Alcohol-drinking was an added complication in the city as caution was suppressed, tongues loosened, and sober-living Yolŋu feared that the unpredictable behaviour and comments of drunks would provoke wäwa (brother) to ritualised anger and violence towards yapa (sister).

In Darwin, the threat of mirriri was typically enough to prevent an escalation of violence within marriage and between in-laws and inter-marrying clan groups (cf. Warner 1969:99-101). Gossip and trouble-making tended to be suppressed in the wider kinship community (cf. Burbank 1990:5-6) and responsible kin were alerted to protect women from male violence (cf. Maddock 1970; Hiatt 1966; Burbank 1994:155). In consideration of all these features and effects, it would appear that mirriri, the ritualised aggression of brothers towards sisters, acted among Yolŋu in the city as a deterrent; as a mechanism of Yolŋu 'family law'. The case studies will also reveal that Yolŋu women could manoeuvre so as to gain the protection which this manifestation of family law offered with little danger of experiencing the violent sanctions.

5.2.4 'Traditional law' and 'domestic violence'.

Aboriginal 'traditional law' has limited recognition by white authorities in the Northern Territory and the range of sanctions available to Aboriginal custodians of the 'law' has been curtailed. The legitimacy of what some would justify as 'traditional violence' has also been challenged by white authorities and from within Aboriginal society, with differences of interests and opinions being evident between men and women and older and younger generations (Bolger 1991:49-53; Burbank 1994:146-151).
Chapter 5. *Going my own way now*

Aboriginal people are experiencing new dimensions of violence in remote communities and urban contexts, including so-called 'domestic violence', violence associated with substance abuse, especially alcohol consumption and petrol sniffing. In the Northern Territory, 'bullshit traditional violence' is a phrase coined to describe how some Aboriginal men attempt to justify violence against women as 'traditional' when their violence is shaped more by social change and alcohol consumption than by cultural precedents (Bolger 1992:50; Cummings 1993).

In northeast Arnhem Land, Yolŋu leaders and Balanda authorities have come to recognise the limits of an Aboriginal 'jurisdiction' and that of the police and the courts (cf. Williams 1987:126-154). The Yolŋu have made an accommodation with Balanda law and the more extreme dimensions of 'traditional violence' have been largely suppressed in favour of Australian law. For example, homicide and major assault are *yindi mari* (big trouble) and matters for the police and the courts (Williams 1987:126-154). The Yolŋu have retained their right to manage disputes and to impose sanctions within a jurisdiction which includes religious and family life in their own communities and clan lands (Williams 1987). I would argue that a Yolŋu jurisdiction extends, albeit somewhat attenuated, to manage conflicts among and at times impose sanctions on Yolŋu who move to Darwin.

Although there are real differences between the point of view of the sexes and the generations, Yolŋu still hold certain prescribed disciplines and ritualised expressions of anger and aggression, including *mirrirri*, to be legitimate (cf. Burbank 1994:151). In addition, the Yolŋu believe in the power of elders, of the sacred (Keen 1994), in sorcery and cursing (Reid 1983), and 'arguing', ostracism and exile are powerful techniques of social control among the Yolŋu (Williams 1987:96-102).

Yolŋu women and adolescent girls are most likely to be subject to social constraints and sanctions in relation to sexual-marital issues, while at the same time they are attracted to and eligible for Balanda ways and means which offer them an alternative to 'government' by the family (cf. Donzelot 1979:48-96). Yet the 'cost of a chosen course of action' for Aboriginal women in Arnhem Land was often male aggression and violence towards them (cf. Burbank 1994:145-47). To avoid the conflicts, pressures and sanctions experienced over sexual-marital matters in an Aboriginal community in southeast Arnhem Land, Burbank (1988:111-1) notes that some women chose 'to step completely out' from the local community and marriage system by moving to Darwin and marrying white men. Keen (1994:299) also finds that Yolŋu women took advantage of 'alternatives', including education, employment, marital change and that some chose to
avoid local 'power structures' in remote communities by moving to urban centres.

A Yolŋu system of familial governance is most concentrated and most empowered in remote communities. It is perhaps not surprising that some Yolŋu women seek to avoid the constraints and the sanctions which apply most fully in northeast Arnhem Land, in order to seek more personal autonomy by moving to live in Darwin. While Yolŋu women seek the apparent freedoms and benefits promoted by government and most fully developed in the city, they have not necessarily turned their backs on the Yolŋu way of life nor gone beyond the succour and sanctions of a Yolŋu system of governance when they move to Darwin. On the contrary, they seek to minimise the constraints and maximise the benefits of "both-ways" and to manoeuvre their "own way" in the city.

5.3 Extended case study - Part I.

The following extended case study, parts I, II and III, illustrates how several Yolŋu women exercised their personal autonomy by moving to live in Darwin. The lives of these Yolŋu women exhibit a range of marital change from polygynous marriage to monogamy, estrangement from marriage, inter-ethnic liaisons and unions to maritally autonomous womanhood as widows, single mothers and career women. The women's lives demonstrate the pace and direction of social change between two generations, for example between a mother and her daughters, and within a single generation of female siblings. These Yolŋu women are not isolated rebels as other kinswomen are seen to have already set the precedent for them to seek more personal autonomy in the city.

Although this chapter particularly focuses on marital change and urban migration, events and crises in life including marital breakdown, sickness, death, pregnancy and birth are seen to punctuate the lives of Yolŋu women and girls in Darwin. At such times, the women themselves seek to re-adjust their own future and status while particular relations and wider kin in general have other plans and directions for them. In particular, significant male kin are seen to exercise interests in women and girls who live autonomous of Yolŋu marriage and in Darwin. The relations of kinship, including affinity, which are illustrated in this chapter, are those between men who are dhʉway (husband, brother-in-law) to women and girls who are their galay (wife, sister-in-law) and relations between yapɑ (sister) and wʉwa (brother).

Many of the characters introduced here will reappear in later chapters, where case studies describe some of the most personal moments and concerns of life. In particular, this chapter gives details of the choices Yolŋu women make, and the directions they take, in regard to sexual and marital relationships. Because much of the case data is of a
sensitive nature, and because I have an ethical obligation to maintain the anonymity of Yolŋu as individuals and family groups, I employ Yolŋu language pseudonyms, as explained earlier (see 1.1.1). My discussions with Yolŋu were never forced, and I was mindful of Yolŋu rules of speech etiquette and relations of avoidance. In representing the differing points of view of Yolŋu on matters of contemporary social change, including women's marital and rural-urban careers, I have been careful not to betray confidences.³

5.3.1 The senior widow.

Därpa had been a senior wife in a polygynous marriage to a Yolŋu clan and community leader who at the height of his career had ten wives. In the mid 1970s, when first I met Därpa, she was living in her own household in the same community but separate from her husband and the wife or wives with whom he was currently co-habitating. Even though she lived separate from her husband, Därpa still regarded herself as married to him and he remained an important father figure in the lives of her children.

Därpa had little or no formal Western education but she was socially well placed in the local community because of her seniority and her marriage. Even after her husband died she was still a woman of considerable influence in the local community as her eldest son succeeded his father as clan headman and local community leader and other of her adult children held paid positions on the local town council and in local community services. One would imagine that Därpa would have every reason to enjoy her seniority as matriarch of a large and leading family in her remote community.

Yet in the mid 1980s and sometime after she was widowed and in receipt of a widow's pension, Därpa decided to migrate to Darwin to be near one of her sons, Warraga, and his wife, Mułunda, and their young family who were living in the suburbs of Palmerston. Därpa wanted to help this family especially with child care as there were five young children and the youngest baby had needed specialist medical attention.

When first she came to Darwin, Därpa stayed in her son's household and with various kinswomen who lived independent of marriage in Aboriginal hostels and Housing Commission flats and houses. During this time, Därpa applied to the Commission for housing in her own name and learnt that to be eligible for a three bedroom house she had to have at least two dependents. Wurrpan, her youngest daughter was a single girl who had finished her schooling some time ago but had not found employment in her home

³ For further discussion of the politics and ethics involved when anthropologists write about sensitive topics see, for example, the exchange of views between Smith (1989a, 1989b) and Burbank (1989), and Larbalestier (1990) and Bell (1990). See also (1.1.1, fn.2) for my earlier discussion of the ethnographer's position and the literature on the politics and ethics of representation.
community. Wurrpan would join her mother in the city and so would a little grand-daughter, one of the five children of Därpa's son and his wife who lived in Palmerston. The grandmother planned to take the little girl into her own care to lighten the child-care burden of her daughter-in-law, to give the little girl more attention since she had been recently displaced as the youngest by the birth of a baby brother, and to qualify for a three bedroom house from the Housing Commission. These three females, the widow, her single daughter and the little grand-daughter, set up household in a Commission house in Palmerston.

The composition of this Yolŋu household appeared to conform to the model of Aboriginal matrifocal, urban households as depicted by Collman (1988 105-25) of Aborigines in Alice Springs, in as much as Aboriginal men as husbands of women and as fathers of women's children were missing from women's urban households. While both the widow and her unmarried daughter exercised their personal autonomy by moving to the city, they did not minimise relations with male kin. On the contrary, this female headed household was set up in order to support and be supported by the household of a Yolŋu man who was son, brother and father respectively of the widow, single young woman and the girl child.

This was not the only example of this type of Yolŋu household in Darwin and Därpa had contemporaries, known kinswomen and widows from Galiwin'ku and Milingimbi who as momu (father's mother) or māri (mother's mother) had come to Darwin largely to be near their adult sons and daughters who had earlier moved to the city and to help out with the care of their grandchildren. These older women did not have educational or employment prospects in Darwin but they valued urban accommodation and housing, especially Aboriginal hostels and Commission housing, which they obtained in their own right. They also appreciated the use of buses and taxis which made shopping, visiting and even hunting and gathering possible in the city and environs. For those Yolŋu women with chronic health problems, urban health and hospital outpatient services were another attraction to the city.

Senior Yolŋu women also sought to go their "own way now" in Darwin to the extent that as widows they were independent of marriage, received pension incomes, held urban accommodation and housing in their own names and had put distance between themselves and the concentration of kinship demands upon them in their remote communities of origin. Därpa claimed to be made "too tired" and ill when she returned to her home community because "all the families" were always asking her for help and for money. As a senior widow of a large polygynous family and a senior woman in the wider
kinship community, Därpa was always being pressed to help "all the families", to intervene in disputes about the behaviour and sexual-marital relations of youthful kin and to look after her many grandchildren. She was always relieved to return to Darwin because there was "too much arguing" and "too much djäma" (effort, work) for her in her community of origin.

There are onerous demands made upon older women who have seniority, traditional knowledge and skills and pension incomes. Older women are expected to care for and socialise children, chaperone girls and young women and together with senior men they must ensure that young people marry "straight way", resolve family disputes and wider conflicts, nurture "all the families" and maintain Rom (law, culture, right way) (cf. Hamilton 1975:174-5; Bell1983:83-4). Older Yolŋu women did not entirely avoid these responsibilities when they moved to the city but in seeking to make their own way in Darwin, senior Yolŋu widows attempted to minimise the strain and maximise the benefits of living "both-ways".

5.3.2 Two sisters, the single girl and the career wife.

Därpa's single daughter, Wurrpan, was fortunate in that urban employment was offered to her soon after she and her mother set up their household in Palmerston. How she came by urban employment is discussed in a later chapter (see 10.5.3). Wurrpan enjoyed the work and the company of the mainly mixed-descent Aborigines who were her co-workers and supervisors. From being an extremely shy girl from a remote community, her self-confidence grew and she obtained a driver's licence and with her wages she bought a second-hand car. She was well into marriageable age but there were no immediate demands being made by the man to whom she had been promised to marry, and her brothers were content that their youngest sister was well chaperoned by their mother in Darwin.

Meanwhile Därpa's married daughter, Burala, had also begun to visit her mother and stay in her mother's house at Palmerston. Burala was a married woman with children and she was a trainee teacher employed in her local school. Her course of study meant that she alternated between teaching at the school in her home community and studying on campus at Batchelor College. When she was enroute to and from Batchelor College, where she was enrolled part-time in a three year Diploma of Teaching (Aboriginal Schools), Burala had the opportunity to stay with her mother and younger sister-and kin living in the Palmerston household.

Burala and her Yolŋu husband had four children whom they had raised together for
many years in a monogamous marriage until he took a younger "promise" as a second wife. Burala said that she did not object so much to her husband marrying another wife so long as she did not have to live with them in the same household. As a teacher employed at the local community school, Burala had an independent income and was entitled to a house in her own right, an option she first took up when her husband exercised his options in polygyny. Since then, Burala and her adolescent and young adult children kept a separate household in the same community but at a discrete distance from that of her husband and his second wife and their children. Burala explained to me that she was still married the Yolŋu way, that is in a polygynous marriage and that her *dhuway* (husband) continued to visit her and to care for her children.

In these circumstances, Burala became used to a degree of residential autonomy and her husband accepted her movements and absences in the course of her teaching career. As a teacher, Burala was used to the company of Balanda as workmates, friends and as mentors in teacher education. It was during her time at Batchelor that kin began to spread the rumour that she was having an affair with a Balanda within the circle of educationalists in which she moved. Burala denied that there was any substance to this gossip which made trouble for her back at home. Her husband was angered by the rumours and began to object to her trips to Batchelor, which had included the opportunity for her to stay with her mother in Darwin.

### 5.3.3 The death of mother: restlessness and constraints.

Burala was unsettled in her relationship with her husband, by moving between her remote community and Batchelor via Darwin in the course of teacher training and she felt more unsettled when her mother died in Darwin in 1988 (see 9.8). At the same time, the urban employment and relatively autonomous lifestyle the younger daughter, Wurrpan, had led as a single girl chaperoned by her mother in the city was cut short when her mother died suddenly. Both sisters found that their mother's untimely death interrupted the pattern of their lives, firstly by the obligation to attend funeral ceremonies and observe a period of mourning in the remote community. Ultimately, the women themselves and concerned kin were to reappraise the direction their futures should take and the personal autonomy and the freedom of movement both sisters had enjoyed began to be challenged.

At the time her mother died, Burala was in her home community, teaching in the local school and this unhappy event stirred her to thoughts about leaving her remote community and moving to live in Darwin. In her grief, Burala said that she hated her
home community and that kin there were to "blame" for making her mother move to the city. There had been "too much arguing" over family matters which used to distress her mother and that was one reason why her mother had moved to Darwin.

After the funeral rituals and period of mourning were over, Burala said that she felt "more settled" and she carried on with her life and put aside the ideas of moving to Darwin. On the other hand, Wurrpan, the younger sister expressed her intention to return to Darwin to live and resume her job at an Aboriginal agency in town, but she found that her family were opposed to the idea.

Burala explained to me the family position, that is the stance taken by the older brothers and sisters since both father and mother were now deceased. While the older siblings were happy for their youngest sister to live in Darwin when she was chaperoned by her mother, they were not happy once these circumstances were altered by their mother's death. They wanted Wurrpan to stay in their home community where they could "look out for" her. Her brothers were well placed in the community to find her employment and they offered her a position in the local store.

Wurrpan was able to persuade her older siblings and wider family that she needed to return to Darwin to finalise matters related to the suburban house, her car and her urban employment, matters which were on hold since she returned to her home community for the funeral ceremonies. Her brothers had Wurrpan start in her new job first and then when she had some pay she was able to come into Darwin for a popular music concert. Her brothers and wider family back home expected Wurrpan to finalise these urban matters, visit kin, enjoy the concert but return promptly. At first Wurrpan stayed with her married brother, Warraga, and his wife and children who were now living in the northern suburbs, but this meant that she was constrained by the etiquette of brother-sister avoidance and was well supervised. She soon moved into another household of young and single kinswomen from her own home community where she was neither so inhibited nor so well chaperoned.

5.4 Extended Case Study - Part II
5.4.1 Coercion and enticements.

The kinswomen into whose suburban household Wurrpan moved were three unmarried mothers who had been living in Darwin for some time. Two of the young women, Giyapara and Miku, were mothers of mixed-descent children conceived in casual inter-ethnic liaisons in Darwin. Wurrpan found that this household catered more to her youthful interest in the good times in Darwin and the young kinswomen provided her
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with the support to delay her return, at least until after the next rock music concert scheduled sometime in the following month.

Her brothers sent word by phone and via kin coming into Darwin that their youngest sister must return to her job and to her community. In the meantime, the household of young kinswomen provided Wurrpan with a model of autonomous young womanhood and some of them introduced her to the excitement of pubs and the Aboriginal alcohol-drinking scene in town. Next, the brothers asked a Balanda who was well known in this network of Yolŋu in Darwin to help them to persuade their younger sister to return home. They paid her air-fare and booked her flight for a particular day and the Balanda was given the task of ensuring that she was on the plane.

Although one of their brothers lived in town, the remote-dwelling brothers did not employ him as an enforcer. Nor did one of them come in to effect their youngest sister's return, for brothers are constrained in their relationship with their sisters by the etiquette of *wāwa-yapa* (brother-sister) avoidance. In this instance they did not trust the chaperonage of female kin and they found support in the Balanda man who made it his business to know the whereabouts and lifestyle of Yolŋu in Darwin. The Balanda proved to be the urban facilitator the rural-dwelling brothers required as Wurrpan caught the next available flight home.

When next I heard from Wurrpan it was by phone. She was living in the home of her eldest brother and his wife in her home community and she had quit the job her brothers held for her at the local store, perhaps as a sign of protest against their insistence on her return from Darwin. At this time she was helping her brother and sister-in-law with the preparation of foods in their fast-food business. She complained to me that "it is too much *djāma* (work)" but she liked driving the fast-food van around the camps at night. She missed her own car and had no other access to the limited number of vehicles in the community, where there were few vehicles and women rarely drove them.

Wurrpan seemed to be ambivalent in her feelings about life in her home community and every complaint was soon after balanced with a positive comment. For example, she said she was unhappy there but she very much liked the trips her eldest brother and sister-in-law took her on when they went hunting and visiting kin in the smaller homeland centres. These trips included power boat rides to outlying islands and were the first opportunity she had had to see some of the most remote and beautiful parts of her clan lands. The eldest brother was making a point of showing his youngest sister the wonders of her heritage, no doubt to dissuade her from the lure of the city.

Meanwhile, Burala had also been offered some opportunities which ordinarily might
have been expected to satisfy her with life in her remote community. As a member of the local Town Council, her husband was in a position to organise that a house then in construction be allocated to his first wife and her young adult and adolescent children. The new house was being built adjacent to his and his second wife and their young family. By making these arrangements to bring his two wives and their respective households closer together in spatial terms, the Yolŋu husband re-emphasised his position as head of a polygynous family.

Yet despite the prospect of a new, four bedroom house, which any Yolŋu woman would normally covet in a community where the housing stock was chronically in short supply and largely in need of repair, Burala began again to consider moving to Darwin to live. As the new house was nearing completion, Burala was recommended for promotion to Assistant Principal of the local school.

Rather than being pleased with her career prospects, Burala was anxious and felt that it would be "too much djäma" (work)" and responsibility. There were other Yolŋu who were candidates from the same community for the same position, a kinsman and a kinswoman. The latter had more teacher training than herself. Burala suggested that if she were appointed as Assistant Principal there would be "jealousy" within the local community.

Burala reasoned that these potential differences of interests between herself and her husband and herself and other candidates for promotion and their respective kinship groups were again arousing in her a desire to escape it all by moving to Darwin. The strong possibility of her career promotion and the prospect of a new house were seen not as benefits but as constraints, which would tie her more fastly to the local community of kin and to her husband in polygynous marriage.

5.4.2 An urban household and an urban affair.

In 1989 and more than a year after her mother's death, Wurrpan, the younger sister was again back in Darwin and staying with her brother and sister-in-law in the northern suburbs. She came in because one of her gäthu (father's brother's child), a nineteen old son of her close classificatory father became seriously ill and was medically evacuated to Darwin public hospital. (This health crisis and the impact on kinship households in Darwin is discussed in a later chapter, 8.3.1, 8.4.1). Wurrpan said that she was now content in her home community and only intended to stay in town while the young kinsman was sick in hospital, but unforeseen circumstances altered her disposition and her plans.
Firstly, the illness of her kinsman was prolonged and very serious and his immediate family and concerned wider kin flew into Darwin to "keep company" in this crisis. Two of his sisters, Giyapara and Miku, who were introduced earlier (see 5.4.1), were more familiar with the city than the majority of the visiting kin and they decided to find alternative accommodation for themselves and for their sick brother while the medical authorities decided upon and organised appropriate therapy. These two single mothers with mixed-descent children were earlier considered by family to be inadequate chaperones for Wurrpan when she stayed in their previous suburban household at the time of the popular music concerts. Once again Wurrpan joined them. There was apparently no resistance from her brothers, perhaps because her stay in town was this time considered to be for legitimate purposes, to keep company with kin in times of sickness.

At the same time, the elder sister, Burala, was of more concern to the immediate family. Gossip again circulated among kin in Darwin and in her home community that Burala was having an affair with another Balanda, not at Batchelor but in Darwin, and that her frequent trips to Batchelor via Darwin were providing her with the opportunity for the affair. The Balanda was the same man her brothers earlier entrusted with the task of rounding up their younger sister and seeing that she caught the plane home, so he was no use to the brothers as an enforcer of their wishes in these new circumstances.

The medical emergency involving a young kinsman furnished Burala with another reason for staying in Darwin longer, and the household of her single young kinswomen, Giyapara and Miku, provided her with a place to stay and a refuge from kinship censure about her affair with the Balanda. The two sisters, Burala and Wurrpan, were both living in this single women's household in Darwin and largely outside the care and control of kinsmen they called dhuway (husband, brother-in-law) and wīwa (brother).

While Burala's husband was angry about the affair being conducted in Darwin, his classificatory brother, who was her dhuway as a brother-in-law and married to another sister, was even more angry on his behalf. As yet, this mari (trouble) had not provoked mirriri, the ritualised violence which Yolŋu brothers direct towards sisters about whom they hear ill words. Even so, Burala and Wurrpan found it convenient to stay on in Darwin as long as they could so as to avoid trouble with husband, brother-in-law and brothers in the home community.

By May of the same year, two months after what was to be a short stay in Darwin, the younger sister Wurrpan was still in town and co-resident in the young singles household of her gāthu. The sick youth was in and out of hospital and Wurrpan felt that she could be
of some help by staying in Darwin. Besides, Wurrpan said she was frightened to go home because of the *mari* (trouble) in her home community over her eldest sister's extra marital relations with the Balanda. There was news from home that her other married sister was taking the brunt of the anger shown by her own *dhuway* (husband), the clan brother of the deceived husband.

5.4.3 *Mari* (trouble) and *mirriri* (ritualised violence).

The kinship community at home was astir with gossip and there was always the potential that the sisters' brothers might be provoked into the *mirriri* response of ritualised violence towards their sisters. In the home community, Burala, Wurrpan and their other sister, Manbirri, had eight full brothers and untold numbers of classificatory brothers, whereas in the city there was only one brother and one classificatory brother. It was easier to negotiate that these two brothers would hear no ill of sisters when living in Darwin and away from the centre of *mari* in the wider kinship community in northeast Arnhem Land.

Yet although Burala and Wurrpan were in a household set up for a medical emergency, the necessity to avoid trouble and the anger and aggression of brothers was not entirely absent. A close classificatory brother from Galiwin'ku was also staying in the same household and one of their own full brothers, Warraga, lived with his wife and family in the northern suburbs. I was cautioned by urban-dwelling kin to be very careful when discussing Burala and her urban affair in case anyone she calls *wāwa* (brother) should hear. They said if *wāwa* should hear any gossip or arguing about *yapa* (sister) it is *mirriri*. There will be *yindi mari* (big trouble), he might kill her, hit her, throw spears at her or any other sisters.

All kin in this household were careful not to let *wāwa* hear ill of *yapa*. The constraint also bore on Yolŋu kin in other contexts in Darwin not to let *wāwa* hear their gossip and argument about his *yapa* and her urban affair and not to provoke *mirriri* (cf. Warner 1969:54, 98-102; Burbank 1990:5-6, 1994:151-155). The fact that both brothers were of congenial dispositions, the one with urban aspirations, the other long-term employed and resident in the city, did not apparently over-ride the threat of the violent *mirriri* response within the *wāwa-yapa* (brother-sister) relationship of avoidance.

It was not only traditional forms of etiquette and conflict avoidance which made Yolŋu kin within the household and in Darwin cautious about talking about their kinswoman and her urban affair with a Balanda. Other circumstances helped to minimise kinship censure in Darwin. Among urban-dwelling kin there were several Yolŋu women
who already lived in established 'de facto' marriages with mixed-descent Aborigines and with Balanda men. Two were 'close' kinswomen married to Balanda spouses and eager to offer Burala their company and their advice.

One of the Yolŋu women, ιŋaŋili, said that she had been "worrying for" her kinswoman because her own mother and Burala's mother were sisters who had the same father but different mothers. She advised Burala to go home because "the Balanda will always be coming around, will always be a temptation". She urged Burala to consider the good position she held at the local school in her home community. Yet her own life belied her advice because in the mid 1970s, ιŋaŋili had quit her job as a literacy worker, left her home community and moved to Darwin when her Yolŋu husband took a young girl as a second wife. She subsequently formed an enduring 'de facto' relationship with a Balanda and they had lived together in the city for the most part of twenty years.

Another close classificatory sister of Burala's was in an even more compromised position. Minhala, who had lived in Darwin and in an inter-ethnic marriage for many years was a confidante to Burala at this time in the matter of her urban affair. Yet Minhala also had close kin ties to Burala's Yolŋu husband for it was Minhala's own younger sister who was Burala's husband's second and younger wife. Burala's estrangement from her Yolŋu husband began with her objections to his taking another wife, even though in the intervening years she had accepted that she was still married to him the Yolŋu way, that is in a polygynous marriage.

Minhala explained to me that her younger sister and Burala were married to the same man, did not speak to each other and had always kept separate households and never had to live together with the one husband. Minhala herself was on good terms with her classificatory sister, Burala. In particular, there was a new dimension to her association with Burala in as much as the latter was about to embark on a similar life trajectory as she herself did many years ago. Again it was in the mid 1970s, when Minhala who was a school-cleaner at the time left her home community when her Yolŋu husband, himself a local teacher, broke with their many years of monogamous marriage by taking a younger woman as a second wife. Minhala migrated immediately to Darwin and subsequently met and married a man who claimed to have Aboriginal ancestry.

Minhala and ιŋaŋili were two mature age Yolŋu women who were inter-ethnically married and long-term residents in Darwin. As close kin they were obliged to care for their kinswoman, Burala, and they were not predisposed to criticise or sanction her. Their personal histories provided Burala with examples of women who had earlier rejected polygynous marriage and opted to migrate to Darwin and to marry inter-ethnically.
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Because these women had non-Yolŋu husbands, their households were more restricted in terms of who and how long kin might visit and so Burala was not usually able to stay with them when she came to Darwin. In daytime socialising, these Yolŋu women provided Burala with the company of kinswomen who had made similar life choices to the one she contemplated.

Burala stayed with Giyapara and Miku, two daughters of her half brother who were single mothers and had themselves had casual affairs with Balanda and with urban Aborigines of mixed-descent. These two young women were comparatively seasoned city dwellers and the youthful composition of their suburban household predisposed them towards openness to marital change. As their own relations with Balanda and with Aborigines of mixed-descent in Darwin had not prospered, the young unmarried mothers were now more guarded about inter-ethnic affairs. Even though they had reservations about the Balanda in question, these single young kinswomen did not criticise Burala, and their household provided a kinship context in which Burala and her Balanda could at least meet.

These young unmarried mothers also provided the youthful company and a household context in which the single girl, Wurrpan, could pursue a more personally autonomous lifestyle and the recreational interests which she found so attractive about life in Darwin. Even though she was legitimately in town to help them with the sick youth, she was also learning to go her "own way now", and without the chaperonage she had when she formerly lived in Palmerston with her mother.

### 5.4.4 Crises in life and troubled relationships.

In the first half of 1989, Burala's affair with the Balanda continued, aided by her purposes in Darwin and at Batchelor College, but she had not as yet made a decisive break with her husband and home community. She retained her teaching position in her home community, visited Darwin frequently but always in connection with her educational and occupational interests and stayed with kin to "help out" during the prolonged illness of her young kinsmen.

The death of their young kinsmen was a family tragedy which forms a major part of two later chapters (see 8.5, 9.5) but it is relevant here in that Burala and Wurrpan no longer had an excuse for prolonging their stay in town and they were obliged to go home for the funeral ceremonies. In the home community, emotions were stirred up among immediate kin because of this recent tragedy and *mari* (trouble) over unresolved issues and 'latent antagonisms' (Warner 1969:405) surfaced.
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Wurrpan, the younger sister said that she was frightened for herself and her older sister because of trouble over her sister's affair. She said it was not her sister's actual dhuyay (husband) who was to be feared but their dhuyay (brother-in-law) who was his clan brother and married to another sister of theirs. He was angry and he "swears and hits" his own wife, their sister Manbirri, and threatens them. The potential for an escalation of mari (trouble) and of miriri (ritualised violence) was great. Even though Burala was a close bāpa mukul (father's sister) to the deceased, she only stayed the weekend for the funeral rituals and then returned to Darwin.

Wurrpan had something else to worry about because it was when she went home to attend the funeral ceremonies for her deceased gāthu (father's brother's child) that she was ill and kin began to speculate that she was pregnant. She phoned her relatives in Darwin that she was unhappy and that she would "run away to Darwin" when she could. Mulunga, her sister-in-law in Darwin heard this news but she would not discuss it with her husband, Warraga, because this was not a fit subject for brothers to hear of sisters.

When Burala came back to Darwin after the weekend of the funeral ceremonies, the household where she had been staying had been disbanded after the death of her kinsman, so Burala stayed with her brother, sister-in-law, and their children in the northern suburbs. This was a tense situation as the Balanda persisted in visiting her there and would take her off in his car. The nature of her movements and of this inter-ethnic relationship was thinly disguised by her trips to Batchelor and kin were cautious about discussing the matter in the way that all kin in town were careful not to speak of the affair lest they draw her brother's attention and because they were "frightened for miriri".

Burala was still employed as a teacher in her home community and her authorised purposes in Darwin could not be extended indefinitely, so she returned to her teaching position at the local school. She was back at work when her Yolŋu husband had a heart attack. He was medically evacuated to Gove regional hospital in Nhulunbuy, then sent by inter-hospital transfer to Royal Darwin Hospital where he was admitted first to intensive care and later to the coronary care ward (see 9.7).

While this crisis in the health of a close kinsman was of paramount concern, there were two other issues which compelled the interest of immediate kin, namely the inter-ethnic affair of the senior wife and the pregnancy of her unmarried sister. News of the pregnancy was in wide circulation among Yolŋu in Darwin and there was much speculation as to who was the father.
5.5 Extended Case Study - Part III

5.5.1 Pregnant, promised husband and avoidance relations.

The topic of the single girl's pregnancy was discussed in exclusively women's circles in Darwin. The junior wife who was married to the same husband as Burala came to Darwin to visit her husband in hospital after his heart attack. She brought news of what was being said among kin in Wurrpan's community of origin. Some kin were saying that there was nothing to worry about as the father of the as yet unborn child was Wurrpan's dhuway, her "promised" husband and pre-arranged marriage partner.

This view was not widely accepted either in the remote community or among kin in Darwin. Wurrpan's brother's wife, Mulunda, who lived in the northern suburbs said that the father could not be her "promised" husband because he denied it and he "has one wife already". Another sister-in-law, the wife of the eldest brother said that Wurrpan did not have the opportunity to be with her "promise" when she was living in their house in the home community. He only visited briefly from Galiwin'ku for a funeral ceremony and the young woman was well chaperoned and accounted for at all times.

The promised husband as fictional father may be a useful device to legitimate pregnancy and to effect a marriage but only if all parties agreed to the fiction. In this case they did not (see also 6.2.3). The sister-in-law said that the family still wanted their young kinswoman to "go to" this promised dhuway (husband). He was not too old, and although he was "married already", he was a manymak dirramu (good man). The young woman's late father made the match many years ago with another kin and clan group and it was still the marriage alliance preferred by both families.

This was not the view taken by Minhala, a close classificatory sister of the pregnant girl. As mentioned earlier, Minhala had herself rejected polygynous marriage when her husband took a younger wife and she migrated to Darwin and subsequently formed an enduring inter-ethnic marriage. She said that not all the family wanted the girl to "go to her promise" in a polygynous marriage and predicted that there would be mari (trouble, arguing) within the family. She said that perhaps the first wife would be yātkurru (bad, horrid). This urban-dwelling kinswoman speculated that the senior wife might resent and resist a husband's acquisition of a second and younger wife as she herself had done. Her contrary opinion to that of remote-dwelling kin appeared to have been shaped by her own rebellion against the Yolŋu system of polygynous marriage and by the personal autonomy she had sought in the city so many years ago.

The news of Wurrpan's pregnancy had to be handled carefully so as not to offend her brothers. The sister-in-law in the home community said that her husband, the eldest
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brother, would not say anything to his younger sister. She herself would not ask and had not been confided in. The sister-in-law complained that the two sisters who were in trouble over their extra and pre-marital affairs conducted in Darwin did not "support" their eldest brother enough even though he was the clan and community leader and was always doing things for the good of "all the families". She said that the two sisters "always look to" two other brothers, one who lived in the home community and the other who lived in Darwin.

These two brothers had found prominence within paid employment and in cross-cultural contexts, the one at the remote community and the other in Darwin. While the eldest brother was more of a "traditional" authority figure by virtue of birth order and his roles and status in the family, community and clan, these other two brothers represented a more modern image and enjoyed more relaxed associations with their sisters, subject to the constraints of the *wāwa-yapa* avoidance relationship.

Since she was back in Darwin for this most recent health crisis in the family, Wurrpan had been staying with her brother, Warraga, and sister-in-law in the northern suburbs. Her sister-in-law, Mulunda, explained the position her husband took in relation to his now visibly pregnant and unmarried sister, who was staying in his suburban household. She explained that "wāwa won't see, won't ask". Even though the brother in Darwin had a more relaxed relationship than the eldest brother with their youngest sister, the etiquette of brother-sister avoidance still constrained him from giving overt attention to the circumstances of his sister's private life.

Since both her parents were deceased it was more appropriate for an older sister and her husband to take notice of the young woman's pregnancy. The fact that it was a married sister and her husband who took most responsibility for the young, single and expectant mother, suggested that Wurrpan and the child in her womb were regarded as at least partly transferred into the care of a family within the clan into which she should by rights be married. While she rejected her "promised" *duwayne* (husband) and he disowned responsibility for her unborn child, on the other hand, her *duwayne* (as a brother-in-law) her sister's husband, showed a willingness to take some responsibility for Wurrpan and to recruit her child into his patriclan, as will be shown in the following chapter (6.3.1).

Meanwhile, Burala who came into Darwin to accompany her husband who was hospitalised also had other purposes in town. She went to Batchelor College until the Friday and attended an education conference at Darwin Highschool on the weekend. There was some agitation among kin that she was not making a sufficient show of solicitude for her husband but others were more understanding of her career interests.
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After an initial recovery, the Yolŋu husband had a fatal coronary occlusion while in Royal Darwin Hospital and the principal mourners were obliged to return to the home community for the funeral rituals (see 9.7). Kinship energy was re-directed towards making arrangements to bring the women, young people and children, who had so recently travelled to Darwin to "keep company" with the patient, back to the home community for the funeral rituals and burial.

5.5.2 Widowed and "locked up".

Soon after their husband's death in the public hospital in Darwin, Burala and the junior wife, now widowed, received news from their home community that Maranydjalk, their *dhuway* (brother-in-law), was very agitated because the women and their respective families of children failed to return immediately. He sent the message that they were not to stay in Darwin to "farewell the coffin plane" as that was for other kin who lived in town to do. It was said that he was sick "in the stomach" and was worrying because the *miyalk ga djamarrkuli* (women and children) should be with the mourning camp, where the funeral ceremonies had already begun.4

Maranydjalk had his wife make repeated telephone calls to kin in Darwin to urge the women to return immediately. Burala said that her eldest *wāwa* (brother), who was a clan and community leader rang kin in Darwin to say that he would explain to his brother-in-law that the funeral was to be delayed and that the women and children would come home but for the moment they had no money. These communications suggested that *wāwa* (brother) supported his *yapa* (sisters), one his actual sister the other a 'close' classificatory sister, when the widows were being harassed by their *dhuway*, in this instance their late husband's clan brother.

In earlier times, their deceased husband's actual brother or a clan brother would have been ideally situated to inherit the widows as wives in accord with the traditional marriage practices of the levirate (Warner 1969:49-52, 43-44). Maranydjalk was a close classificatory brother of the deceased, who had no biological brothers who might otherwise exercise responsibility for and lay claim to the widows and Maranydjalk was already married to the senior widow's sister.

Once they had returned to their remote community, the two widows were obliged to keep vigil over their deceased husband and they were said to be "locked up" together in the *bala'* (bough shelter, shade) beside the coffin. The widows had to keep company and apparent harmony under the one roof and to lie down either side of the coffin of their

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4 See Reid (1983:127-9) on anxiety and worry manifesting as symptoms of illness among the Yolŋu.
deceased husband, although in life they had not been prepared to live as co-wives with their husband in the same household.

A week after the burial, three weeks after her husband's death, Burala returned to work at the local school. This enraged her dhuvay (brother-in-law) who was said to "blame" her for his close classificatory brother's death. Burala's brother-in-law accused her of "blame" because she had given her husband cause to worry by her extra-marital affair with a Balanda in Darwin. The brother-in-law took her return to work after the funeral as a flagrant breach of mourning and of her role as a widow who should still be "locked up". He followed her around the community loudly berating her and on one occasion hit her several times with the flat of the spear on the back of the head and shoulders.\(^5\)

Burala felt at the time that life was intolerable in her home community so she pretended to farewell kin at the airstrip but in fact flew out for Darwin. In the city, Burala again stayed with her brother and sister-in-law in their Housing Commission house in the northern suburbs. At the time a kinsman, who was related as märi (mother's mother's brother) to Burala as his gutharra (sister's daughter's child), was in Darwin for a business meeting. He explained the furore which Burala's precipitous departure for Darwin had caused. Her märi said that as a recent widow she should have been "locked up" in mourning. The other widow was doing the right thing. She was shopping, visiting kin but still camped at the ceremony ground and to this extent was acting appropriately as a recent widow. This kinsman said that his gutharra should have stayed "locked up" for some time longer. The length of time depended on "the families" and was at least until "the finish up" of the funeral rituals.\(^6\)

This kinsman said that when he went home he would face "arguing four ways" from Yirrakala, Galiwin'ku, Milingimbi and Ramingining as the implications of the widow's actions were far reaching. He said that a senior Yolŋu man from Galiwin'ku, a clansmen and classificatory brother of the deceased, was angry because of the widow's behaviour. He himself as her märi and because her father and mother were both "passed away", felt more responsible for the widow. He said her brothers would not say anything because of mirriri.

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\(^5\) Some culturally patterned forms of assault or discipline whereby Aboriginal men threatened and inflicted injuries on Aboriginal women typically do not attract police action (cf. Reid 1983:8; Bolger 1991:49; Burbank 1994:135 & 155).

\(^6\) The "finish up" of Yolŋu funeral ceremonies involves the buku-lup rites of washing (Keen 1977:168, 1994:140). Reid (1979:335) describes the liyalupthun or ritual washing which is held some weeks after the funeral rituals and burial as an indication that persons and objects so washed are 'freed' of death taboo.
5.5.3 Waiting to give birth and to run away.

Meanwhile, Wurrpan, the single young mother-to-be said that she would only stay for the funeral rites and then she too would leave for the city. She would run away to Darwin because she was "too tired" in her home community.\(^7\)

While the funeral ceremonies continued, she lived with "all the bąpurrú" on the ceremony grounds and in the temporary shelters built for the occasion. Afterwards, Wurrpan stayed with another brother and sister-in-law and their family of young children in her home community, where she was called bambay (blind, ext. invisible) just as she was in Darwin, because in both places she lived in the house of one of her brothers.

Later, Wurrpan moved out of her married brother's household and into her married sister's and brother-in-law's household in the same remote community because brothers were not supposed to see their sisters in late pregnancy. Yolŋu women said that it was "dangerous" if any of her brothers saw her close to her time and "dangerous" if they should see the infant within several days of the birth. Yolŋu women said that while the new-born was still "light-coloured", its hold on life was tenuous and was particularly put at risk by breaches of avoidance relations and specific prohibitions.\(^8\)

Despite her earlier suggestion that she would go to Darwin and join her recently widowed sister who had moved to the city, Wurrpan stayed on in her home community in the care of her other married sister and her husband until it was time to go to Nhulunbuy and give birth in the Gove District Hospital.

5.5.4 Demand for compensation and avoidance of mirrriri.

By moving into her brother's house in the northern suburbs, it may be that Burala calculated that her brother-in-law and wider kin would be unable to berate her there because of the obligation to avoid provoking a wāwa (brother) with bad talk about his yapa (sister). At the same time, the affection which Yolŋu brothers and sisters typically show towards each other, within the constraints of brother-sister avoidance, made her brother's household a natural choice as haven from kinship censure. Burala balanced the disadvantages of restrictions on conversation and commensality, which sister-brother avoidance imposed upon her in the household, against the advantages of the inhibition on

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\(^7\) Yolŋu use the English language expression "too tired" to express a lassitude which is more heartfelt than is boredom or weariness. When Yolŋu say they are very tired in this way, they convey a sense of powerlessness or lack of resolution in social relationships as much as they do about their circumstances of material and physical well-being.

\(^8\) Yolŋu babies were born pale in skin pigmentation by comparison with the colour they assumed in time (Warner 1969:86) and Yolŋu parents were expected to observe specific prohibitions in relation to commensality and sexuality in the immediate ante and post natal period (Warner 1969:67). Brothers of the mother as well as a husband and/or the infant's father were considered "dangerous" to the new-born in the first few days after birth.
avoidance imposed upon her in the household, against the advantages of the inhibition on all kin not to speak ill of yapa (sister) in the hearing of wawa (brother).\(^9\)

There were no such inhibitions among parties of Yolŋu women and children which daily gathered to spend the day together and to exchange news between kin who lived in Darwin and remote-dwelling kin who were visiting town. One kinswoman who had just come from Burala's community of origin brought news from home that there had been talk of "compensation".\(^10\)

There was word that certain clan brothers of the recently deceased agreed with the "close up" clan brother, who was married to a sister of the renegade widow, when he demanded $2,000 in "compensation money". All these men stood in classificatory kinship terms as dhuway (husband category) to the galay (wife category), that is to the widow who absconded and they were dhuway (brother-in-law category) to her brothers. Reparation for a break down in affinal relations and in inter-clan relations was at stake in this call for "compensation".

Burala admitted that she should have stayed longer at her home community and at least waited until the "finish up" ceremonies. She worried about her brother-in-law's anger and his demand for "compensation money" and whether she and her Balanda friend would have to pay. There was talk of her Balanda lover taking "legal action" if the clansmen made claim on him for compensation. Burala rang her eldest brother, a clan and community leader in her home community, to ask his advice and he told her not to worry about "compensation". Again this was evidence that a brother can and does give his sister support in contemporary disputes over her sexual-marital life.

At this time, Burala and her Balanda set up household together in a privately rented flat in the suburbs. For the first time her brother in Darwin became "angry". There was still no recourse to the mirriri response as his anger was deflected towards something other than his sister's cohabitation with a Balanda. Her brother was said to be "angry" with his sister because she took one of his young children, a boy of about six, to the flat which she now shared with the Balanda. She did so "without permission". Now there ordinarily was nothing untoward in a bāpa mukul (brother's sister) taking it upon herself

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\(^9\) Burbank (1994:154) suggests that brothers 'collude' to spare themselves and their sisters from the violent outburst of mirriri by pretending ignorance of gossip and trouble.

\(^10\) In the 1970s and at Yirrkala, Williams (1987:100) noted that demands for large sums of money were 'punitive as well as restitutive' measures, which Yolŋu had begun to use in lieu of other effective measures to uphold 'marital law'.
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to feed and house a gāthu (brother's child) in this way.  

Perhaps Burala thought to use her brother's young son as a link or open door to her consanguineal kin, especially her brother. This action brought her to the brink of mari (trouble) in that her brother was "angered" but still did not provoke her brother to the ritualised violence of mirriri. Burala's brother directed his rising irritation away from his sister's personal life to a matter of etiquette of lesser consequence and not relevant to the mirriri response within the wāwa-yapa avoidance complex.

It was not long before this tension was eased and the brother started to take his wife and young children to visit his sister for the day, while he went to work. The brother in Darwin never withdrew his support from his sister during this difficult time in her life. The Balanda spouse worked long hours and weekend shifts and Burala said that she was lonely and bored in the suburban flat when he was away. She was separated from her children, unemployed for the first time in many years and the subject of gossip, criticism and advice in wider kinship circles. It was to her brother and sister-in-law and their children that she most turned for company and respite from "all the talk".

When Burala's brother-in-law and his wife, her sister, decided to pursue her to Darwin, they stayed with her brother in his Commission house in the northern suburbs. Burala was now virtually isolated as she could not risk a visit with her sister while she was in town, nor keep company with her brother, his wife and family as she had been. She feared that her brother-in-law would start arguing and provoke her brother.

While on a visit to the campus at Batchelor, I learnt that kin there as well as those in Darwin were alert to the dangerous situation. A Yolngu woman who was a student on campus at the time explained that the brother-in-law was "making trouble for all the families". The situation was aggravated because the brother-in-law had started to drink alcohol while he had the opportunity in town. She said that when he was drunk he brought up all that mari (trouble) again. Everyone was "frightened for mirriri" if he talked about yapa (sister) in front of wāwa (brother). The husband of the student at Batchelor College had come in from his remote community of Gapuwiyak to stay with his wife on campus. He was trying to help the situation by advising the aggrieved brother-in-law to return to his own community because he was now responsible for "all the djamarra kulik".

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11 Warner (1969:54 & 66) observes that on first joining a husband in virilocal marriage, a Murngin (Yolngu) wife typically took a young brother to live with them. In this way a young brother provided a tangible link for a married sister to her consanguineal support group, when she moved away in virilocal marriage.

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5.5.5 "Locking up" the children instead of the widow.

The man at Batchelor made a direct appeal, clan brother to clan brother, for the brother-in-law to forget about *galay* (wife category) and her breach of norms of marriage, mourning and widowhood and concentrate on all the children, his own and those of his deceased brother. This advice was heeded and Burala's brother-in-law, Maranydjalk, and his wife returned to their community where he modified his strategy from that of *dhuway* (brother-in-law/husband) attempting to exercise control over *galay* (sister-in-law/wife) to that of *biipa* (father) exercising care of and control over his *gāthu*, in this case his deceased brother's children. Although he had failed to directly control and sanction the widow, Maranydjalk now did so indirectly by not allowing Burala's children to telephone or to visit her.

Maranydjalk was well placed to exercise responsibility for the children of his classificatory brother, now deceased, and of his wife's sister who absconded to the city. He was their closest classificatory *bāpa* (father) and the young adults and adolescents had grown up accustomed to his care and authority in their lives, as he had lived close by in the same remote community and his wife was their mother's actual sister. In the remote community and as part of the funeral rituals, the house of the recently deceased man was ritually "smoked" and the surrounding grasses burnt off to release the house and surrounds from the dangers associated with a recent death. Soon afterwards, Maranydjalk and his wife and children occupied it. In this way, the "close up" classificatory brother of the deceased stepped, if not into the shoes, then into the house of the deceased and took up some of the responsibilities of the dead man.

As mentioned already, the house next to that formerly occupied by the deceased and his younger wife and children was a new house recently completed and intended for the senior wife, Burala, and her children. Now that Burala, the senior widow, had moved to live in Darwin, her young adult and adolescent children took up residence in the new house and formed a young singles and sibling based household. Her younger sister, Wurrpan, also moved into this household some time after the birth of her infant. While this young peoples' household was financially based on two supporting parent pensions and the study allowances of those still at school, the young people themselves were very much under the direct supervision of the married couple next door, who were *pāndi* (mother) and *bāpa* (father) to the siblings and *yapa* (sister) and *dhuway* (brother-in-law) to Wurrpan.

When Burala returned to her home community for the funeral rituals of a close classificatory sister, she only stayed for the climax of the funeral rituals on the weekend.
This was her first trip home since she left for Darwin and set up household with the Balanda. She was not able to stay with, visit or even talk to her young adult and adolescent children who were living in the house which had been intended as her house. A strategy of "locking up" the children in lieu of "locking up" the widow was resorted to by Maranydjalk, the clan brother of Burala's deceased husband. His stated intention was to care for and control the children, isolate them from their mother, and thereby coerce Burala to return to her children and home community.

Burala said that her brother-in-law "cannot let go". She described him as a "traditional man" and further explained that some Yolŋu like him "look only one way" but others can "look outwards to other cultures". Burala felt that her married sister conspired with her husband to keep the children from communicating with her and from visiting her in Darwin.

This married sister had reason to uphold her husband's stance as kin commented that he initially took his anger out on her. Burala's sister's concern was not confined to a need to preserve harmony in her own marriage. As a woman whose life revolved around the domestic life of husband and children, who had never held paid employment or had much interaction with Balanda and who had very little experience of travel to and life in the city, she found her sister's behaviour incomprehensible. She was dismayed by the decisions her sister had taken to break out of mourning, quit her teaching job and leave her family behind in order to migrate to Darwin and live with a Balanda. From the perspective of this sister and her husband, the children were doubly bereft of a father in death and of a mother who absconded to the city.

When I re-visited Burala's community of origin in January 1990, some six months after her husband's death and her permanent move to Darwin, Burala's married sister asked me if a lawyer could help them in some way so as to force her sister to return to her home community and to her immediate family of children and grandchild. They wanted to know if there was some "legal action" they could take to effect her return. The Yolŋu-way of sanctioning the widow who eloped was not working and the sister and brother-in-law speculated whether an appeal to Balanda law might be more effective.

The widow's breach of mourning practice and elopement to Darwin and her Balanda lover constituted mari (trouble). In terms of the compromise between Yolŋu and Balanda jurisdictions, such matters were "little trouble", which were ordinarily managed by Yolŋu themselves according to 'kin-defined rights or duties' (Williams 1987:127-8). Typically such disputes among the Yolŋu did not come to the attention of the police, lawyers and the courts and this case was no exception. In any event, from a Balanda point of view the
widow was entitled to exercise her personal autonomy by migrating to the city and living with the man of her choice. Furthermore, Burala would have been entitled to the help of Balanda law in gaining access to her children and protection against the harassment and violence of her brother-in-law.

Time, tact and distance saw the mari (trouble) ended. Some twelve to eighteen months later Burala and her Balanda 'de facto' spouse went their separate ways and she set up her own household in a rented Housing Commission house in the suburbs. Even before the dissolution of this union, relations between Burala and her kin in her home community, especially between herself and her married sister and brother-in-law improved. She and her children began to communicate freely and to travel without fear of sanction between the remote community and the city.

While Burala opted out of a Yolŋu system of marriage by moving to the city and marrying a Balanda (cf. Burbank 1988:11-12; Keen 1994:299), she apparently sought to minimise the constraints and to maximise the benefits of a Yolŋu system of familial governance. During this time of marital unrest, Burala drew on the support of at least two of her wāwa (brother(s), the one a clan and community leader in northeast Arnhem Land and the other in white-collar employment in the city, as she sought to distance herself from the control of her Yolŋu dhuway (husband), then later of her dhuway (brother-in-law).

In moving to live in Darwin, Burala sought to exercise greater personal autonomy, distance herself from the concentration of kinship expectations and sanctions in her home community and find the company of less censorious kin in Darwin, including that of kinswomen who had themselves had inter-ethnic affairs and marriages. In Burala's case, her inter-ethnic and 'de facto' marriage was quickly and, in the end, quietly over. Among her kin and confidants in Darwin, however, were Yolŋu women who continued to live in enduring marriages with Balanda and with men of mixed-Aboriginal descent.

Although the brother-in-law lost the opportunity to exercise care and control over the widow who left for Darwin, he temporarily gained that chance over his wife's youngest sister, Wurrpan, when as a new and single mother she returned to her remote community after the birth of her mixed-descent child. In the following chapter, this same man and other mature aged Yolŋu men are seen to mark out their interests as socially determined fathers for Yolŋu women's children, who are born outside of Yolŋu marriage and as a result of casual affairs and more enduring unions, including inter-ethnic marriages in the city.
5.6 Conclusions.

Increasingly from the 1970s onwards, Yolŋu women and girls have been opting for alternatives in and to Yolŋu marriage, for example to defer marriage and reject promised marriage in favour of educational and employment opportunities, choice in sexual-marital partners and the security of pension incomes. They have also been rejecting polygynous marriage in favour of monogamy and re-assignment in marriage in favour of autonomous widowhood, and some Yolŋu women are moving away from remote communities and clan lands and marrying men from other Aboriginal groups and moving to urban centres and marrying inter-ethnically.

Yolŋu men have their own times and reasons for choosing to be monogamous, to renounce their claims to young promised wives and deny paternity and responsibility for women's children born outside of Yolŋu marriage and in casual and inter-ethnic relations in urban centres. Yet there were senior Yolŋu men who would not "let go" of Yolŋu women and their children, and "all the families" were concerned that women and their children did not get lost to strangers and the Balanda way in Darwin.

To what extent then did Yolŋu men hold Yolŋu women and women's children in their care and control when Yolŋu women moved to Darwin? As discussed earlier (see 2.5.1, 2.5.2), in African contexts, polygynous marriage systems are seen to be transformed under new conditions and to survive in subtle and covert forms, and polygynous men have been able to add to their patilineages and extend their influence from rural village into urban centres by having wives and children in the city as well as in the country (Parkin 1978:7-11; Parkin & Nyamwaya 1987:11-13; Karanja 1987:257-58).

Among Yolŋu women in Darwin, there were some who said that they were still married to their Yolŋu husbands after he had taken another wife and even when they themselves lived separate from him and in the city. To this extent then, some Yolŋu men did have a Yolŋu wife in town as well as another in the home community. Yet it was not that Yolŋu men extended their practice of polygyny by marrying women in the city. Rather, it was absconding wives who initiated the movement and put social and geographic distance between themselves and their polygynous husbands. Typically, these Yolŋu women did not apply for legal divorce even when they formed 'de facto' unions with non-Yolŋu men whom they met in the city.

Women who separated from but had not sought legal divorce from their Yolŋu husbands, whether from monogamous or polygynous marriages, still called these men dhuway (husband) but said that they "never went back to them". Other, younger women frequently said that their "promised" dhuway had died and they would not go in marriage
to their *dhuyay* who were his surviving actual or clan brothers. Other young women and girls said that their "promised" *dhuyay* was "married already" and they would not join him in polygynous marriage. Widows, including those who were still interested in sexual-marital relations were not re-assigned in marriage to their *dhuyay*, who were the actual and clan brothers of their deceased husbands.

Some of these Yolŋu women had sought sexual-marital partners of their own choosing, were "married now" to outsiders, including to Balanda and urban Aboriginal men, and had children by casual partners and in inter-ethnic marriages in Darwin. Yet when Yolŋu women severed connubial ties, had not established them and were not likely to do so with men to whom they were "promised", they still related to promised and former Yolŋu husband's, to their sister's husbands and their husband's brothers as *dhuyay* (husband, brother-in-law). To this extent, I argue that it is the Yolŋu kinship system rather than residual forms of or a covert expression of polygynous marriage, which continues to shape, 'to govern' the lives of Yolŋu women in Darwin.¹³

When senior Yolŋu men in remote communities who are *dhuyay* (husband category) to women they call *galay* (wife category) said that they were "looking out for", "minding" women and "locking up" widows, they were not making realisable marital claims on these women, but rather a wider claim to care and control in a Yolŋu system of governance. Yolŋu women in Darwin typically continued to be 'governed', both nurtured and sanctioned by kin-defined rights and obligations even where the authority of men as *dhuyay* (husband, brother-in-law) was attenuated or inoperative.

Men who were *wäwa* (brother) exercised interests in *yapa* (sister) in a delicate etiquette of avoidance, sanction and support in conjunction with other men's marital interests in their sisters. Again, as argued earlier and in other ethnographic contexts (see 2.5.1, 2.5.2), there are differences between the 'detachability' of women in patrilineal systems (cf. Strathern 1987:271-300; Hakansson 1994:516-38). Where women retain their 'social identity as sisters' after or irrespective of marriage, their rights in natal kin, clan and country are 'constitutive rights' whereas rights in marriage are contingent and negotiable (Hakansson 1994:516-517; see also Goodale 1981:275-305).

Among the Yolŋu, brother-sister relations and etiquettes of avoidance highlighted the strength of bonds of consanguinity and of affection between Yolŋu brothers and sisters and the need for diplomacy in affinal relations. Even though Yolŋu women are addressed as *bambay* (blind, by extension out-of-sight) and as *wakingu* (lit. without kin) by and in

¹³ By contrast, Parkin (1978:7-11) argues that Luo polygyny and the unambiguity of patrilineal descent rather than the 'optative' nature of relations of kinship account for the persistence of Luo solidarity and cultural distinctiveness between country and city.
the hearing of their brothers, Yolŋu women do not lose their kinship, their clan, their country when they marry exogamously and move away.

From the perspective of a Yolŋu system of governance, marital change, urban migration and altered life circumstances makes the futures of Yolŋu women and their children indeterminate. The attrition of women from the Yolŋu system of marriage by migration to the city has the potential to threaten clan exogamous marriage and clan alliances in remote Yolŋu communities. The loss of women's children, to other men and to the city, would also threaten Yolŋu men's ability to perpetuate patrilineages, even if there were no immediate threat to the demographics of particular clans and particular remote communities.

The indeterminacy in Yolŋu women's marital futures and of their children's affiliations to kin and country is the focus of the following chapter. By bestowing names which affiliate children with deceased ancestors, living namesakes and ringitj (sacred place) in clan country, Yolŋu kin in remote communities map out the potential and socially determined patrifiliation, as well as actual matrifiliation, of children born outside of Yolŋu marriage and to Yolŋu women in Darwin.
Chapter 6

Singing names, signing for children
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6.1 Introduction.

There are senior Yolŋu men in northeast Arnhem Land who are prepared to take up responsibilities for children who are born outside Yolŋu marriage and to Yolŋu women who live in Darwin. Yolŋu men first exercise their responsibilities in care by "singing names from country", that is by bestowing Yolŋu personal names on babies soon after birth whereby they affiliate these children with ancestors, kin and country. These Yolŋu men are also said to "sign for children", not in a legal or bureaucratic sense but in terms of accepting kinship responsibilities for them and indicating their potential paths of affiliation and Yolŋu way of "growing up".

Senior Yolŋu men in northeast Arnhem Land take on this obligation of care for the children of Yolŋu women in Darwin because, as Narritj, a clan and community leader in a remote Yolŋu community said, "djamarkuli' (children) are important". In this chapter, I examine the ways in which infants born outside Yolŋu marriage and to Yolŋu women who live in the city are aligned within Yolŋu society by moiety, Dhuwa or Yirritja, by mālk ("skin", subsection), by Yolŋu yāku (Yolŋu names) of a personal kind, and by bundurr (family or clan name, surname) and in terms of actual matrilateral and classificatory patrilateral links to kin and country. In particular, I investigate how certain mature age Yolŋu men in northeast Arnhem Land indicate their willingness to act as social fathers for children whose actual paternity is problematic, even suppressed, because they were conceived in "wrong-side" or casual affairs, in inter-ethnic liaisons and marriages, and were born to Yolŋu women who moved to live outside of Yolŋu marriage and in Darwin.

Yolŋu elders, both men and women, are concerned because their young people are not marrying dhunupa (straight, right side, correct practice) and that the younger generations are having sexual-marital relations which are djarrpi (crooked, left or wrong side, incorrect practice) and otherwise not socially and culturally condoned, and that they are giving birth

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1 In a different argument altogether, Watson and Wade Chambers (1989) in their book entitled, Singing the land, signing the land, also emphasise the significance of naming and assigning paths among the Yolŋu. For the Yolŋu, the metaphoric sense of 'singing names from country' and 'singing up the country' are about affiliation and nurturance, about belonging and care.

On the other hand, signing for children and signing for land have Western legal connotations. Yet at one level of meaning and in ceremonial contexts, for the Yolŋu the juku (signs, tracks, footprints) are the 'foundation' which holds people to the land and the land to the Wanyurr (ancestral creative beings) according to Yolŋu rom (Yolŋu law, culture, right way) (cf. Keen 1994:135). To this extent, when a Yolŋu man sings names for children he affiliates them with kin and country and when he is said to "sign" for children he legitimates them the Yolŋu way in terms of his responsibilities towards them in kinship and later in ceremonial life.
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to children as a result of casual affairs and inter-ethnic liaisons and unions.²

Yolŋu are anxious to ensure that the children of Yolŋu women in Darwin develop both a 'father's path' and a 'mother's path' (cf. Shapiro 1979:46) of affiliation to kin and country and of socialisation into the Yolŋu-way of life. Shapiro (1981:42) says of the Miwuyt (Yolŋu) that 'path' used as a metaphor, 'refers to any father-child or mother-child sequence of kin terms, no matter how long' and therefore the 'father's path' does not specifically mean 'patriline'. When children are born outside Yolŋu marriage, the 'father's path' is not clear, the child's link with the biological father may be suppressed or problematic from a Yolŋu perspective, because the child was conceived in a casual affair, between Yolŋu whose kin relations are "wrong-side" and preclude Yolŋu marriage or in inter-ethnic sexual-marital relations. In circumstances of social change in remote communities and including those of movement to the city, Yolŋu have "to track very hard now" to find how to align children with kin, clan and country.³

The pāndi-waku (mother-child) relationship provides an infant with an immediate identity in terms of moiety, subsection and kinship at birth largely irrespective of the child's actual paternity (Warner 1969:108-109; Shapiro 1979:36). The bāpa-gātu (father-child) link on the other hand is one which sometimes requires manipulation (Warner 1969:27; Shapiro 1979:18), particularly so in contemporary circumstances. Warner's representation of Murngin genealogical generations and of patrilineal descent (1969:48) is typically a Western model and Shapiro (1981:43) argues that, 'my informants invariably show the succession of generations in a patrisequence as an "upward" movement'. To this extent, it can be argued that the child comes first and a father in the correct relationship to mother and child must be found. This puts a somewhat different construction on the 'finding' experience because an appropriate father must be found. Shapiro (1979:18) says that while Miwuyt (Yolŋu) fathers are said to 'find' their children, they can and do 'rig' the 'finding' experience.

In this chapter, the focus is on the relations of gurruṯu (kinship) and the mechanisms of social organisation by which Yolŋu assign new-born infants to their rightful place among kin and in country even when the children are born outside Yolŋu marriage and to Yolŋu women in Darwin. The three relationships to be considered first are those between pāndi

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² Among the Yolŋu and other Aboriginal groups "wrong-side" refers to sexual-marital relations between men and women in the same moiety or other relationships that are considered to be incestuous or otherwise prohibited (cf. Warner 1969:27; Shapiro 1981:15-16).

³ In an ordinary sense luku (tracks, footprints etc.) are signs left on the surface which indicate who or what went where, and "tracking" is to interpret and sometimes to follow those signs. At a deeper level of meaning, the concept luku links the land to the Wajar (creative ancestral beings) (Keen 1978:52) and as Keen (1994:106) says, 'the Wajar left traces in the land and waters which the Yolŋu referred to as the "feet", "footprints", or "tracks" (luku) of the ancestors'.

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The Yolngu system of kinship has two main dimensions, namely the moieties, *Dhuwa* and *Yirritja*, and the generations, particularly the alternate generations of *märi-gutharra*. According to *Yolngu Rom* (Yolngu law, culture right way) sexual-marital relations must be "straight way", that is moiety exogamous. Therefore parents must be of opposite moieties to each other, and the children belong to the moiety opposite that of their mothers and the same as that of the *märi* (mother's mother, mother's mother's brother). The *märi-gutharra* relationship is particularly significant in the affiliation of children with kin and country, in their socialisation and in cultural transmission and is a relationship in which rights and responsibilities in kin, land and in ceremony are developed over time and distance (Williams 1986:38-39, 52-55; Keen 1994:108-9). Even so, Yolngu social organisation is overtly one of patrilineal descent; affiliation of children to kin and land is ideally linked through both matrikin and patrikin, and, where necessary, the paternal link is socially contrived (see Warner 1969:37; Shapiro 1979:18).

A related focus in this chapter is on how Yolngu kin in northeast Arnhem Land develop for children born to Yolngu women in Darwin links to kin and country by bestowing on them *Yolngu yäku* (Yolngu names) associated with deceased ancestors, living kin and clan country. Yolngu personal names are said to be "sung" by the name bestower and to come from *ringitj* (place sacred to specific people) that is a particular place on clan land to which particular kin are strongly affiliated (Williams 1986:42, 88-89; see also Warner 1969:62, 88-89; Keen 1994:79). These names ideally signal a relationship between both patrikin and matrikin, especially between the grandparent and grandchild generations, although parents and kin in the parent generation often in fact bestow names.

In the event of unmarried maternity, of children born of "wrong-side" relations which are culturally prohibited and in inter-ethnic marriages and to Yolngu women in Darwin, the bestowal of Yolngu personal names is seen to have taken on additional significance. Among Yolngu in Darwin, there is evidence of strategies to provide not only names which link the new-born to matri-determined kin and country but names which signal a socially constructed patrilineal connection. In this way, kin who bestow Yolngu personal names on young children...
map out, as it were, the children's actual matrifilial and in cases where actual paternity is suppressed, classificatory patrifilial rights in kin and country.

In particular, I was interested in how Yolŋu men who were neither the connubial husbands of women nor the biological fathers of women's children came to bestow Yolŋu names on the children of Yolŋu women in Darwin. My research reveals that some senior Yolŋu men, and other close classificatory patrikin and matrikin in northeast Arnhem Land declare their kinship responsibilities in children who are born outside of Yolŋu marriage and to Yolŋu women in Darwin, by naming and thereby affiliating children with ancestors, kin and country.

6.2 Background.

6.2.1 The Yolŋu and Balanda ways at birth: naming and affiliation.

Most Yolŋu babies are born in urban hospitals, either at the Gove District Hospital in Nhulunbuy or at Royal Darwin Hospital, the city's public hospital. In earlier times in Northern Australia, European personal names were given to Aboriginal infants by mission or hospital staff (Goodale 1980: 29; Hamilton 1981:37). Today, Aboriginal people have taken the initiative and Yolŋu give their infants a Balanda personal name as well as Yolŋu yâku (Yolŋu names).

Yolŋu mothers tend to provide their infants with a Balanda personal name while they are still in hospital. In doing so, Yolŋu women concede the utility of giving their infants a European name in order to facilitate interaction with hospital staff, bureaucratic agencies and later in life with Balanda society in general. In a Foucauldian sense, relations of power are expressed in such bureaucratic processes as the registration of children at birth and the recording of the marital and economic status of women at maternity (McHoul & Grace 1993:22). Birth is a time when both Yolŋu and Balanda systems of law and social organisation align the newborn and the mother in terms of family units and relations of dependence.

When remote-dwelling Yolŋu mothers and their new born infants are discharged from hospital, they are repatriated under the Patients Assistance Travel Scheme (PATS) to their Yolŋu communities of origin. Here, among kin and in country the infants will have Yolŋu names bestowed on them. Yolŋu women who live in Darwin also take their infants back to their homelands and communities of origin to introduce them to kin, have names bestowed on them and to affirm their children's affiliations with kin and country. Often, however, it is not practical for an urban-based Yolŋu mother to take her baby back to her community of origin immediately, in which case remote-dwelling kin who come to the city to help the
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mother with the new baby will "bring that name" from *riggitj* (place sacred to particular people) into town to bestow on the infant in Darwin.

Children of Yolŋu mothers are registered soon after birth by a European given name, by a Yolŋu personal name associated with kin and country and if their mothers are married "straight way" to Yolŋu men, the children also take their Yolŋu fathers' *bundurr* (family name, surname). On the other hand, their mothers retain their own *bundurr* (family name, surname) after Yolŋu marriage and the birth of children, even though urban bureaucracies often do not respect this fact. If the Yolŋu mother is living with a spouse who is a Balanda or an Aboriginal man of mixed-descent who has a European surname, the child born into this union may be registered with the non-Yolŋu father's surname. Otherwise, as with single mothers, children are recorded for Balanda and bureaucratic purposes by their mother's Yolŋu family name.

Some Yolŋu women in Darwin are not offered and others do not accept for themselves or for their children the surnames of their 'de facto' non-Yolŋu husbands, typically Balanda and men of mixed-Aboriginal descent. Collman (1988:119-123) says that Aboriginal women in Alice Springs revealed how committed they were to 'de facto' or "kangaroo" marriages, including inter-ethnic unions, by their use or disuse of the spouse's surname, depending on whether they accepted or suppressed patrifiliation and men's surnames for their children. 4 Similarly, Yolŋu women who live with their children in inter-ethnic 'de facto' marriages in Darwin choose either to use or not to use their spouses' European surnames, depending on the nature of the marital relationship and of the household economy.

There were Yolŋu women and their children who bore the surnames of non-Yolŋu men, respectively their husbands and fathers, and who used these surnames for bureaucratic purposes and in all inter-ethnic contexts in the city. These women and their children typically lived in inter-ethnic marriages in male-headed households where the non-Yolŋu spouse was regularly employed or had a reliable pension income. The composition of these households was determined primarily by the non-Yolŋu spouse in his capacity as the major and regular income earner and household head. Although the household might be extended by the influx of visiting Yolŋu kin or by co-resident kin, the non-Yolŋu spouse exercised discretionary power over household composition (cf. Gale 1972:173). Whether or not Yolŋu women in

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4 Collman (1988:121-125) says of Aboriginal families in Alice Springs that, 'some families have adopted a kinnamning system in which male and female children carry their mother's surname and socially repress the significance of fathers in the family system altogether.... these changes have accompanied and legitimate the emergence of isolated, female-dominated domestic groups as one major social unit of contemporary Aboriginal social life in Alice Springs' (see also Collman 1979:392).
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Darwin suppressed the surnames of their non-Yolŋu spouses and fathers of their children, they still sought Yolŋu names for their children of full Yolŋu and of mixed-descent Yolŋu.  

Yolŋu personal names are to an extent sacred because they relate directly to the totemic site to which the newly born, living kin and deceased ancestors are affiliated by name. Warner says that names are derived from the totemic complex, which is the source of life from which infants are created and to which the dead return (Warner 1969:380; Keen 1978:119). Warner (1969:26, 88) says that a male receives his secret, ceremonial name(s) from his märi'mu (father's father) and his every day name(s) from his märi (mother's mother's brother) but that both patri and matri-determined names 'reflect totemic affiliation'. The bestowal of Yolŋu personal names in infancy typically signals a relationship between the grandchild and grandparents, between märi'mu (father's father) and marratja (son's child) and between märi (mother's mother, mother's mother's brother) and gutharra (daughter's child, sister's daughter's child) (Warner 1969:62).  

Often however, the grandparent is deceased or gives names to appropriate kin in the parent generation to pass on to the new born. Williams (1986:73) says that both the parent and the grandparent generation and both patrikin and matrikin are responsible for name bestowal and that, 'name givers in relation to the name receivers are most often father, father's sister, mother's mother, mother's mother's brother, and mother's mother's father'. Although both matrikin and patrikin are name givers, Williams (1986:73) notes that, 'Yolŋu assume that all names have root meanings that can be translated to some aspect of patrifiliation'.  

Williams (1986:73) says that each gutharra receives a Yolŋu name in common with a living or a deceased märi and this name sake relationship forms a basis for inheritance in clan land. The bestowal of märi name(s) on the newly born gutharra is an early indication of the ongoing importance of the märi-gutharra relationship in the life of gutharra as a child, throughout life and even in death. In contemporary circumstances of marital change and when biological paternity is not culturally acknowledged, it might be expected that the märi-gutharra relationship might gain further prominence in the way in which infants, born outside Yolŋu marriage and to Yolŋu women in the city, gained their personal Yolŋu names and affiliation with kin and country.  

Yet Yolŋu men and women insisted to me that būpa (father) is especially responsible for the passage of names from ancestors to the new generation. A mature-aged Yolŋu widow who lived in Darwin explained that in the Yolŋu way a man who is būpa (father) "sings" the infant's names from ringitj (place sacred to particular people) and men in remote communities do this for infants born to Yolŋu women in Darwin.
6.2.2 Following the 'mother's path' and the 'father's path'.

Warner (1969:108-109) says that while the Murugin (Yolŋu) kinship system is both patrilineal and matrilineal, 'the subsection system in descent...is purely matrilineal' and in the event of a 'wrong marriage', the 'father is thrown away' and the child's subsection is reckoned from that of the mother. Shapiro (1979:36) distinguishes between matrilineal and matrilineal and says that among the Miwuyt (Yolŋu), in cases of intra-moiety sexual relations which are strictly prohibited and cannot result in marriage, there is not a problem with the assignment of a child to the appropriate moiety as, 'moiety membership is matrilineal, though not matrilineal: assignment is to the moiety opposite to that of the mother'.

The mother-infant relationship is typically a natural relationship which is culturally reinforced when Yolŋu children gain their first identity at birth by their mālk ("skin", subsection) name which is reckoned from their mothers. In circumstances of rapid social change and geographic dislocation, this principle of reckoning the infant's identity from the mother is especially significant in that Yolŋu women's children born of "wrong-side", casual and inter-ethnic unions can still be correctly aligned by moiety, subsection and in relations of kinship.

By contrast with the obvious basis for the mother-child relationship, the father-child relationship is more culturally determined. Warner (1969:24) says that spiritual not biological conception is paramount, and Keen (1978:55-6) says that social paternity and spiritual conception, rather than the physiological equivalents, are the foundation of Yolŋu clan membership and land ownership.

Warner (1969:27) says that children of irregular Yolŋu unions, that is of "wrong-side" relations have their descent traced via the father as a 'fiction' of correct marriage as well as via the mother. As mentioned above, Shapiro (1979:18) says that Yolŋu men could 'rig' the 'finding' experience, 'so that it occurs on the father's lodge estate, even when conception actually takes place elsewhere'. When senior Yolŋu men in remote communities take upon themselves the role of social fathers to children born outside of Yolŋu marriage and to Yolŋu women in Darwin, this manipulation of the father-child relationship is not expressed as 'finding' so much as "naming", "signing for" and "growing up" these children.

Apart from the mother-child and father-child affiliations, there is another way in which children acquire rights in kin, clan and country, that is via the māri-gutharra (mother's mother-daughter's child, and mother's mother's brother's-sister's daughter's child) relationship between alternate generations, expressed through agnatic links. Williams (1986:52) says that the māri-gutharra relationship 'reckoned through women' provides for 'continuing links to
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land'. The Yolŋu themselves describe the märi-gutharra relationship as "the backbone" (Williams 1986:52).

The importance of the continuities between the märi generation and the gutharra generation, between the märi and the gutharra clans is most significant in marriage alliances, in rights and obligations in country and in ceremonial life, especially in mortuary rituals. For among the Yolŋu, it is the märi-gutharra relationship which symbolises and shapes, par excellence, the cycle of Yolŋu social and cultural reproduction.

Why then would Yolŋu bother to establish socially determined patrifilial links for children born outside of Yolŋu marriage and to Yolŋu women in Darwin, when the pändi-waku (mother-child) and the märi-gutharra relationships provide children with rights in kin, clan, country and ceremony? As the Yolŋu are a patrilineal clan-based society, they must uphold the cultural imperative to have patri-defined as well as matri-determined rights and responsibilities in kin, country and ceremony. To follow both a father's and a mother's 'path' to kin and country (cf. Shapiro 1979:46) is Yolŋu Rom (Yolŋu law, culture, right way), that is the social, moral and jural order of things.

6.2.3 The 'social father' and the 'promised' husband.

Shapiro (1976:57) says of the Miwuyt (Yolŋu) that the presumptive genitor of a child (ideally the mother's husband) is the 'finder/malkmaranamirri' and 'although a "finder" is a special kind of "father", he is not more of a "father" than is, say, a father's brother'. Myers (1986:212) says of the Pintubi, an Aboriginal people of the Western Desert, that a man becomes 'really father' when he 'looks after', 'holds' and 'grows up' a child. In a general Aboriginal sense, a real father is not necessarily a genitor but he who nurtures the child.

Scheffler (1974:744-93) describes 'fatherhood' as comprised of many components, only one of which is that of genitor, while others may include mother's husband, he who rears you, ritual guardian and social and cultural mentor. Keesing (1975:13) says that paternal roles and responsibilities can be 'assigned to different people in less than ideal circumstances'. 'Social fathers' need not be genitors but in their enactment of some of these roles they validate their status as father (Keesing 1975:13). Kin-based societies are described

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5 Williams (1986:52) says that, 'in the Yolŋu gesture-language which uses body parts to signify kin relationships, the region of the upper back and the backbone in particular signify gutharra or the märi-gutharra relationship'. Williams (1986:56 fn.9) further suggests that bone symbolises man, land, land ownership in the märi-gutharra relationship.

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as having a 'reservoir-system', in which alternative or additional kin are available to replace or supplement the roles of father and indeed of mother (Schneider 1984:37).

In pre contact times, the Yolŋu system of "promised" and polygynous marriage would have largely obviated any difficulties now associated with finding appropriate fathers for children born of premarital and extra-marital relationships. Long-enduring marriage alliances meant that Yolŋu females were "promised", that is betrothed in marriage early in life, even before they were conceived and born, and they went to live with their promised husbands before or at the onset of pubescence (Warner 1969:64-65; Keen 1994:87-88 & 188). Therefore, there was little likelihood of single maternity and illegitimate children even if women and girls as connubial or promised wives did have children via pre and extra-marital affairs. The Yolŋu system of marriage in any event defined paternity via the lawful husband (Warner 1969:64-65; cf. Hart & Pilling 1960).

In the 1990s, when an adolescent Yolŋu girl fell pregnant to a boyfriend, her "promised" husband or some other senior man who is her dhuway (husband category) might decide to let it be known that he is "minding" her, until she married a younger clansmen the "straight way" at some time in the future. In these circumstances, the "minding" typically does not entail sexual-marital relations or any form of co-habitation, but presages a socially determined 'father's path' (cf. Shapiro 1979:46) for the children of unmarried mothers.

This does not necessarily mean that young women are under extra pressure to marry their "promised" husbands or under any coercion to marry the men who were otherwise said to be "minding" them. Rather, the intended purpose appears to be that the single mothers will marry these men's younger actual or clan brothers in the future. In the meantime, these "promised" husbands and "minding" men give names to the infants born to women and girls who are, from a Balanda and bureaucratic perspective, single mothers and entitled to supporting parent pensions. If a young woman remains in the status of "minded" but not "married now" long enough, the senior man, whether "promised" husband or another minder, might continue his responsibilities as a social father to the extent of arranging for the initiation of her sons (see Ch. 7).

As discussed in the previous chapter (see 5.2.1), not all men as "promised" husbands were prepared to make this type of commitment, and Yolŋu women and girls could rebuff a promised husband's gestures of interest in themselves and their children. Where formerly the promised husband would account for any children born pre-maritally, by the 1990s the role of the promised husband in claiming social paternity was evidently in decline. While Yolŋu men might take up their options in arranged and polygynous marriage in the future, at any given time these same men disavowed any responsibilities in paternity for the infants
of women who are "promised" to them and who have babies by other men. Often, neither the man who is the arranged husband nor the young single mother is willing to accept their status as "promised" in marriage to legitimate the paternity of children born outside Yolŋu marriage.

In the late 1980s and early 1990s, Yolŋu women and girls in Darwin, whose children were born outside of Yolŋu marriage, said that their "promise" was "passed away" (deceased), "married already" or was yātkurruru (no good). In any event, their "promised" husbands in northeast Arnhem Land typically did not claim social paternity over Yolŋu women's children when they were conceived in casual relations with Yolŋu and other Aboriginal men and in inter-ethnic sexual-marital relations in Darwin. It was not Yolŋu women's promised husbands but other Yolŋu men who gave Yolŋu names to their children. Yolŋu men in the appropriate relationship to mother and child could and did present themselves as potential Yolŋu fathers for children born outside Yolŋu marriage and to Yolŋu women in the city.

6.2.4 Suppression of actual paternity.

Children of full Yolŋu descent who were conceived in sexual relations which did not lead to marriage, did have biological Yolŋu fathers but patrilateral links with these genitors were typically suppressed. Shapiro (1981:15-16) says of the Miwuyt (Yolŋu) that intra-moity unions are considered to be 'left-handed', 'crooked' and subject to extreme social sanctions which in the past included being put to death. Today, such unions incur ostracism and other sanctions including exile from local communities to urban centres, typically do not result in culturally recognised marriage and almost inevitably lead to the relationship ending. Other forms of culturally inappropriate sexual-marital relations which are defined as incestuous are also censured and tend to meet the same fate.

In the case of "wrong-side" sexual relations and affairs otherwise not condoned as well as casual liaisons where a stable union is very unlikely to emerge, the Yolŋu natural father is not in a position to claim social paternity for his child(ren) so conceived. Yolŋu men who relate to Yolŋu women "wrong-side" are also not in the correct bapa-gathu (father-child) relationship to bestow names on children for whom they are the genitors. Yolŋu children born in other circumstances where sexual relations between Yolŋu partners are not culturally defined as "wrong-side" but are casual and youthful liaisons are also unlikely to be named by their natural Yolŋu fathers. In sum, Yolŋu women and girls do not receive Yolŋu names for their children from the various Yolŋu partners who happen to father their children outside contemporary Yolŋu marriage. Mixed-descent children of Yolŋu women in
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Darwin cannot receive Yolŋu personal names from *ringitj* (place sacred to particular people) via their biological fathers because these men are not Yolŋu. Nevertheless, Yolŋu women and girls who have children outside Yolŋu marriage in Darwin want their children to have Yolŋu personal names. They look to significant kin in remote communities to bestow names on their children and to accept responsibilities for their children as actual matrikin and socially determined patrikin.

For children born and raised outside Yolŋu marriage and in the city, actual matrikin and socially determined patrikin, particularly mother's sister's husband, provide the social insurance necessary to offset the inadequacies, from a Yolŋu perspective, of single maternity, "wrong-side" Yolŋu unions and inter-ethnic marriages. Yolŋu women in Darwin explain these kinship interests in and responsibilities towards their children more in terms of the potential filiation and socialisation of their children than they do in terms of seeking economic support for themselves and their urban households.

The bestowal of Yolŋu names indicates the 'father's path' and the 'mother's path' of affiliation of those children with living kin, deceased ancestors and with clan lands but is not enough to ensure that the children will be brought up the "Yolŋu-way". The following case studies illustrate how Yolŋu women in Darwin and concerned kin in remote communities, including actual matrikin and close classificatory patrikin, initially indicate children's affiliations by bestowing Yolŋu personal names on infants soon after birth. Later, these relationships, rights and responsibilities have to be further developed in the socialisation of children in every day kinship contexts and in ceremonial life.

6.3 Case studies.

I turn now to actual case studies to illustrate how children born outside of Yolŋu marriage and to Yolŋu women in Darwin receive Yolŋu personal names from actual matrikin and from close classificatory patrikin. The father-child connection was most commonly made by Yolŋu men in remote communities who were related to Yolŋu women in Darwin as *dhuyway* (husband category) to *galay* (wife category) and these men were related to the women's children as classificatory *bapa* (father) to *gathu* (father's child). The child's link to patrikin might also be made in a previous and non-adjacent generation via a classificatory *māri'mu* (father's father) and, in addition, by classificatory female patrikin, *momu* (father's mother) and *bapa mukul* (father's sister).

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7 On the other hand, Collman (1979:149 & 1988:119-123) emphasises the economic dimension and says that where Aboriginal women in Alice Springs suppressed their children's patrifilial connections and lived in matrifocal households, they had a unilateral, narrow socio-economic base in kinship.
6.3.1 Wurrpan, a young unmarried mother and her infant.

The reader has already been introduced to the young single woman, Wurrpan, and her brothers in their home community who tried to dissuade her from returning to live in Darwin after the death of their mother (see 5.4.1, 5.5.1). Wurrpan, however, returned to Darwin and lived in a suburban household with other kinswomen who were unmarried mothers of children of Yolŋu descent and of mixed-descent. Sometime later, Wurrpan became pregnant as a result of a casual sexual relationship in Darwin, but she was not prepared to identify the father.

Wurrpan intended to stay in Darwin for the birth of her child but another death in the close family precipitated her return to her community in Arnhem Land for the funeral rites. As she was well advanced in pregnancy, she remained there until she was medically evacuated to the hospital in Nhulunbuy for the birth. One day kin in Darwin received a phonecall from a Yolŋu kinswoman who was working as an Aboriginal health worker at the hospital in Nhulunbuy. She gave the news that Gamanydjan was born and that mother and baby were well.

Gamanydjan, not a personal name but a subsection name, revealed immediately that the new-born was a girl and identified her within relations of kinship. The infant's subsection name was reckoned from the mother, as is the normal Yolŋu practice, and in this way her kin relationship to all Yolŋu could be worked out irrespective of her paternity. Later it was confirmed that the infant was "lighter coloured", not simply the pallor of the newborn but evidence of mixed-descent, and that the young mother's sister's husband was said to have "signed for" the new baby.

Wurrpan's brother-in-law, Maranydjalk, did not actually sign the infant's birth registration form and he was not in any legal or bureaucratic sense recorded as the father of this child born to a single mother. When Yolŋu women in Darwin said that he "signed for" that baby, what they meant was that he indicated his willingness to accept some of the responsibilities of social paternity. He stood in the relationship of dhuway (brother-in-law) to his galay (wife's sister), the single mother and of bäpa (father category) to his gäthu (father's child), the new baby.

As the husband of mother's sister he was in a good position to proclaim his socially derived paternal interests in his wife's sister's child. He initially signalled his intention to do so by bestowing names from riggitj (sacred place) on the newborn. He bestowed three names on the infant, one of which was a name of the child's deceased mūri, the maternal grandmother and another was a name from the mūri clan homelands. The third name was that of the infant's bäpa mukul (father's sister) and was therefore a Yolŋu patri-determined name.
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A Yolŋu bapa (father), in this case classificatory father, can pass on not only patrifilial names but also matrifilial names when as a son-in-law he passes on the names of his mother-in-law, especially if she is deceased and cannot bestow the names directly. The act of bestowal of names by this Yolŋu man indicated his willingness to accept the role of social father and his potential to map out the child's affiliation with kin and country. The extent to which he might continue to exercise his interests in the child and to shape the child's future would depend upon the future co-operation of the child's mother.

Wurrpaŋ, the young mother, was initially placed in some dependence on her married sister and her sister's husband. Wurrpaŋ and her baby moved in to a household of young single kin, the young adult and adolescent children of her sister Burala, the widow who moved to Darwin to live with a Balanda. This household was economically autonomous to a large extent because, with the addition of Wurrpaŋ as a single mother, it was now based on two supporting parent pensions as well as the educational subsidies of the adolescents still at school.

By moving into this household, Wurrpaŋ came to live next door to her sister and brother-in-law, Maranydjalk, who had taken it upon himself to be responsible as bapa (father), not only for his own children but also for the children of his wife's two sisters, Burala who was recently widowed and living with a Balanda in Darwin and Wurrpaŋ, who had conceived her child in a casual inter-ethnic liaison in town but had returned with the baby to her remote community. Although he was monogamously married with four children of his own, Maranydjalk assumed something like the role of father which he would have held had he been married to the three sisters in sororal polygyny. As far as I was aware, he did not claim sexual-marital interests in his wife's two sisters.

Maranydjalk and his wife "looked after" the young people and took particular care of the young mother and her infant. The wife helped her young sister in the ordinary dimensions of child rearing while her husband was called upon for his specialist skills as a marrggitj (traditional healer) when the infant was ill. His interests in the mother and child were always genuinely nurturant but as a locally renowned marrggitj and ritual leader he was also a man whose authority could not be easily overlooked. As a senior, traditionally oriented man in a relationship of nurturance and authority over her, the single young woman might well have been 'governed' by him in some respects but no-one ever said she was married to him.

Just as he had not been able to directly control the widow, Burala, nor prevent her migration to the city and 'de facto' marriage to a Balanda, similarly he was not able to control the movements or affairs of his wife's unmarried sister, Wurrpaŋ. The single young mother
again moved to Darwin where she lived in Aboriginal hostels and in various households of
kin and before long she was pregnant again after another casual relationship in the city. At
the time I asked, Wurrpaŋ said that her sister's brother had not yet given her second child
Yolŋu names but a classificatory momu (father's mother) gave the girl baby her first name,
the same as the child's classificatory bapa mukul (father's sister). While her sister's husband
initiated the father-child link when he gave Yolŋu personal names to and was said to have
"signed for" her first child, subsequently other socially determined patrikin followed the
'father's path' and gave Yolŋu personal names to Wurrpaŋ's second infant.

Senior Yolŋu men who set out to "mind" women from a distance, socially as well as
geographically, and to "look after" the children of single mothers have to adopt a position
of waiting to see which way things will eventuate. Yet Wurrpaŋ's sister's husband did more
than wait and watch. He took the initiative when he bestowed names from actual matrikin
and socially determined patrikin on the first baby and he was said to have "signed for" this
mixed-descent infant. The child thereby had both a Yolŋu 'mother's way' and a Yolŋu 'father's
way' of affiliation with kin and country which was followed when the second child was born.

6.3.2 Minhala, the older woman who remarried and her child.

Minhala, who was briefly introduced earlier (see 5.4.3), and her Yolŋu husband raised
their children in a community in northeast Arnhem Land. After years of monogamous
marriage, her Yolŋu husband took a young "promise" as his second wife but Minhala refused
to be a co-wife in a polygynous marriage. As her children by him were no longer young nor
primarily dependent on her, Minhala migrated alone to Darwin in the early 1970s. She was
living at the YWCA when Cyclone Tracy devastated Darwin in December 1974, and, like
many Aboriginal people who were staying or living in Darwin at the time, she was evacuated
to her remote community. This was very awkward for Minhala as her Yolŋu husband was
still "angry" because she had left him and refused to accept the traditional role of the senior
wife in polygynous marriage. She stayed with her sister and brother in-law in her remote
community until such time as she was able to return to Darwin, when post-cyclone
restrictions were lifted on entry to the city (see 3.6.1).

Back in the city and while staying at a hostel, Minhala met and formed a relationship
with a man who had recently arrived in Darwin from a southern state. This man claimed that
his grandmother had suppressed the Aboriginal side of his family and said that their 'colour'
came from Mauritian forbears. He explained that he himself was keen to re-identify as
Aboriginal. Minhala became pregnant to this man and after the birth of their mixed-descent
daughter, the relationship settled into an enduring 'de facto' marriage.
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When Minhala first established an inter-ethnic marriage, her former Yolŋu husband was so angered that he made "too much mari (trouble)" and even made it difficult for her to return to her community of origin for the funeral ceremonies of close relatives. After the birth of her mixed-descent daughter, however, relationships between the Yolŋu husband and his first wife improved and she and her de facto husband and their infant visited Minhala's home community.

During this visit, the elderly Yolŋu husband made friends with his estranged wife's new spouse and gave the younger man a sub-section name and "adopted" him as a brother. In consequence, the two men stood in the important relationship of wāwa (older brother) to yukuyuku (younger sibling). It could be argued that the senior Yolŋu man was acting much as he would in the custom of the levirate when a younger brother formed a relationship with one of his wives, that is concede to what had already happened and give his approval to their marriage.

On the other hand, the relation of kinship between the two men was a key issue and the new marriage was only legitimated, from a Yolŋu perspective, when the senior Yolŋu husband in northeast Arnhem Land decided to "adopt" the younger man from Darwin as his brother. To this extent, I would argue that it is the ability to co-opt strangers as kin which shaped the cultural correctness of Minhala's second marriage rather than a residual form of polygynous marriage.

Minhala's first husband also demonstrated his kinship responsibilities as a socially determined Yolŋu father when he bestowed Yolŋu personal names on the mixed-descent child of his former Yolŋu wife and his non-Yolŋu 'brother'. When Minhala's former Yolŋu husband gave the child names from ringitj he indicated her affiliation with deceased ancestors, living kin and with clan lands. As he was already aging and in poor health, it was unlikely that Minhala's former Yolŋu husband who lived in a remote community, would exercise a continuing influence in "growing up" this child the Yolŋu way considering that she lived with her biological parents in Darwin.

In the city, the couple and their child lived as a nuclear family unit and the household was rarely and then only briefly extended by the visits of Minhala's female kin. The Housing Commission flat was in a large block of flats supervised by a manager, who ensured that tenants complied with tenancy agreements in as much as flats could not be conspicuously over-extended by visiting kin. Minhala's non-Yolŋu husband was also selective about who of Minhala's kin might stay with them and for how long. Although she and her infant daughter rarely had the company of co-resident kin, Minhala always preferred to spend as much of the daytime as possible with groups of Yolŋu women and children which daily
formed for social purposes and for specific activities in and around Darwin. From time to
time, she also took her young daughter to her community of origin to visit kin and to
participate in ceremonies. Despite her inter-ethnic marriage and her residential circumstances
in Darwin, Minhala was making sure that the Yolŋu component of "growing up" her daughter
was not neglected.

Minhala's preference for the company of Yolŋu kin was something of an issue
between husband and wife. As an unemployed pensioner he was at home most days but his
wife and child regularly went out with Yolŋu women and children, to visit kinswomen in
hospital, in hostels or suburban homes, to card-gambling groups which sit down in suburban
parks or on hunting excursions in Darwin's estuarine and bushland environs. Sometimes he
used to go along with his wife and child on the foraging trips and although he took no active
part himself he was made welcome to the company and the meal of bush or marine foods.

The husband also wanted Minhala to keep him company in contexts of his own
choosing, for example he tried to get her to bring their child along and join him for
afternoons at the local municipal swimming pool. Minhala declined to join him in such
contexts and said that she was "too shy" and there were "too many Balanda". Her de facto
husband had a medical disability which required regular medication and medical review. He
made use of the medical support services and recreational amenities associated with
Tamarind House, a medical treatment and rehabilitation centre in Darwin. For a long time
Minhala was "too shy" to accompany him to the centre and she did not use the services
which were available to help her in the care of their infant, who was born with a disability.

Minhala was approached by various agencies in Darwin which offered support
services, including an early childhood play group, to help parents and families with children
who have disabilities. She declined to become involved saying that it would be "too much
trouble". While her child was young she would "bring her up with families", that is in the
company of Yolŋu women and children in daytime sociality in Darwin.

On the other hand, Yolŋu kin used to criticise Minhala for not "sitting down" with
them as she should. Because she was conscious of balancing her time with kin and with her
husband, Minhala seldom stayed in the company of Yolŋu kin beyond daylight hours. When
there was some trouble or worry in kinship circles in Darwin, her ability "to sit down with
families" during the crisis was limited by her obligations to her non-Yolŋu husband. Even
so, Minhala upheld her kinship obligations to "keep company" with kin in Darwin as best she
could. Her de facto husband accepted that she and the child needed to return to Minhala's
community of origin from time to time, to visit kin and participate in funeral ceremonies and
he helped with the air-fares.
While her inter-ethnic marriage was stable over the years there were times when Minhala and her child had to find shelter with Yolŋu kin for a while, often for only a night or two. Her husband was constantly on medication and prone to sudden mood changes which could be quite threatening. When this happened, Minhala and the child left him for a day or two and booked into a room in an Aboriginal hostel in the city, moved in with kin in suburban homes and sometimes went to stay with kin on campus at Batchelor. When her husband sought help to readjust his medication and to regain his composure she and the child would return to him and to their flat.

Minhala did not place much reliance on her de facto husband for child-minding and she also lacked the help of co-resident kinswomen. At the same time she avoided Balanda child support services. Yet she was frail and relatively old to have such a young child, especially one who required extra care and attention. When Minhala became seriously ill and was hospitalised, she was anxious about who would look after her little girl. Yolŋu kinswomen in Darwin rallied to her bedside and kin flew in from the remote community to help, but the non-Yolŋu father maintained his right and ability to take care of the child during this family crisis.

The Welfare State aims to provide a 'safety net' for vulnerable citizens and many agencies of government sought to care for the father, mother and child in their individual and family needs in terms of pension incomes, housing, health, child-support and educational services. It was during this crisis that the Balanda style of care for the child came to the fore. Minhala's husband took charge of their child when she was in hospital and he listened to the advice of various government agencies about how his daughter would benefit from specialist schooling. He enrolled his daughter in Ludmilla pre-school and proudly described her as being "in the mainstream". By this, he meant that she was going to a suburban school and was not separated on account of her Aboriginality or of her disability. He seemed to be confident that this projected school career would lead his daughter into the mainstream of multi-ethnic Darwin. Later their daughter went to Nemarluk, a school for children with special needs. For the time being, it would appear that the non-Yolŋu father and the Balanda-way had prevailed in the socialisation of this part-Yolŋu descent child in Darwin.

Minhala recovered her health, her daughter continued to go to school and Minhala persisted in keeping her child involved with Yolŋu kin. In general, she accomplished this in after school hours when Yolŋu women and children gathered in the late afternoon for ordinary sociality and to gamble at cards in suburban parks. There were also occasions when Minhala kept her daughter home from school so that she could spend time with kin who were visiting town, and so that she could join in with groups of Yolŋu women and children on
hunting and gathering trips in and around Darwin. In this way, Minhala continued to work at developing the Yolŋu-way of "growing up" her daughter in Darwin.

6.3.3 Gandayala, a single mother and her children of "wrong-side" relationships.

Gandayala had been diagnosed as suffering from Hansen's disease (leprosy) when she was about ten years old and had to go to Darwin and stay at the East Arm hospital for at least two years (see 3.3.3). Micro surgery saved her foot, minus a toe, and the long-term treatment of the disease was successful. Gandayala was a good role model for other leprosy sufferers from remote communities and especially for other Yolŋu. She was regularly asked by medical staff to speak with frightened patients about the treatment and likely successful outcomes. Gandayala was discharged and returned to her family and her community of origin but had to continue to come into Darwin for regular checkups. During these years and in her youth, Gandayala became used to urban hospital and out-patient services and familiar with life in hostels and in the city.

As a single young woman, Gandayala conceived her first born son at her home community in a casual relationship which did not lead to marriage. She raised her child with ample help from kin in her home community, especially from her married sister and her sister's husband. When the boy was in mid childhood, Gandayala migrated to Darwin and left him in the care of this couple who, as close classificatory mother and father to him, brought him up with their own children. When the time came, this 'social father' organised for Gandayala's son to be initiated in dhapi' (circumcision rituals) (see 7.3.2).

In Darwin, Gandayala formed a long-term relationship with a Yolŋu man who was "wrong-side", that is related to her in such a way as to preclude Yolŋu marriage. Over a number of years, Gandayala had two children by this man who was her "boyfriend" as he was not related to her as dhuway (husband). This man, the Yolŋu genitor of the two children born in Darwin, did not bestow names on his children. Gandayala explained that he could not do so as a father has to have the right miilk ("skin name", subsection name) to be able to bestow Yolŋu yäku (Yolŋu names) on his children.

None of Gandayala's three children was named by their biological Yolŋu fathers and neither of these men, the one who fathered a child in a youthful and casual relationship in a remote community, the other who fathered two children in Darwin, was a continuing influence in the children's lives. Gandayala explained that these men had not helped to raise the children and she said that the natural Yolŋu fathers could "stay away" now that the children were "getting bigger", because they did not exercise paternal care of them in their infancy. Instead, Gandayala said that her sister's husband gave her children their Yolŋu
names, "signed" for them and was a continuing paternal influence in their lives. She explained that her brother-in-law "signed for" her children in the way he responded to their birth but he did not sign "papers", such as birth registration forms.

There was more opportunity for Gandayala's sister's husband to act out his responsibilities as 'social father' to the boy who was left behind in his care when Gandayala migrated to Darwin. He and his wife had much less contact with Gandayala's younger children, Burralaj and Galiyan, because they were living with their mother in Darwin. Even so, when Gandayala took her two youngest for a holiday or to attend a funeral in her community of origin, she and the children stayed with her sister and brother-in-law and their children.

The two young children and especially the boy, Burralaj, who was of primary school age, enjoyed these protracted visits to their mother's home community. There, the young boy enjoyed the company of his classificatory siblings and especially that of his older half-brother. This youth especially looked after his young brother from the city and introduced him to predominantly male activities such as fishing and hunting with spears. Apart from these visits to the remote community, Burralaj had lived most of his childhood with his mother and infant sister in a hostel room and had played in day-time circles of Yolnu women and young children who gathered together in Darwin. He went to a suburban primary school but his attendance was very irregular.

Burralaj often joined his mother and other Yolnu women and children when they hunted for shellfish, mudcrabs and mangrove worms in the mangroves of the Elizabeth River, at Buffalo Creek or some other site in and around Darwin. Such contexts were to an extent conducive to the Yolnu-way of "growing up" in Darwin. In such settings, Burralaj met a wider range of kin, played in a Yolnu peer group and at hunting much in the same way as small boys do in remote communities. However, his early childhood in Darwin conspicuously lacked the influence of male kin. The choices and compromises his mother had to make in "growing up" her son in Darwin are taken up in the next chapter (see 7.3.2).

6.3.4 Giyapara and Miku, two sisters and their children.

The sisters, Giyapara and Miku, were introduced in the previous chapter (see 5.4.1, 5.4.2). They were young single women when they originally left their Yolnu father and younger siblings in a remote Yolnu community and followed their mother to Darwin. Their mother had earlier left her Yolnu husband, family and remote community for life in the city where she lived in a series of 'de facto' relations with Balanda men and joined predominantly Aboriginal alcohol-drinking circles.
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While the two young women initially came to Darwin to keep in contact with their mother, they did not live with her and her current de facto partner. The sisters stayed in various Yolŋu households in the suburbs and during their time in Darwin, first one sister then the other had a child by different Aboriginal men of mixed-descent. In each case the liaison had been casual and the infants and their mothers had no lasting contact with these men. Both sisters took their new born babies back to the home community where the single mothers lived with their father and younger siblings. Over time, Giyapara and her sister Miku and their children made several trips to Darwin so as to maintain contact with their mother, although they typically stayed with other urban-dwelling kin.

Once again, Miku fell pregnant but this time to a Balanda man in a brief encounter and he had no further influence on the young Yolŋu mother and the child she bore. Again Miku returned home with her latest baby and her first child to live in her Yolŋu father’s household in northeast Arnhem Land. There were now three infant girls of mixed-descent living with their mothers and their mothers’ siblings in the household and in the care of their gathi (mother’s father).

Although they were conceived and born in Darwin, these three young children were given their Yolŋu names when their mothers returned soon after each birth to her community of origin. The infants had Yolŋu yâku (Yolŋu names) given to them by their gathi (mother’s father). It was their maternal grandfather who took them in charge when their mothers again went to live in Darwin. He provided the framework for care of his infant grandchildren although the mothers’ younger sisters who lived at home with their father performed the actual tasks of mothering.

So far this was a typical example of the matrifiliation of infants of unmarried Aboriginal mothers; but Maranydjalk, a senior Yolŋu man introduced earlier, took up his kinship responsibilities as a classificatory mär’imu (father’s father) for the three young mixed descent children and he bestowed Yolŋu personal names on them. As described previously, Maranydjalk was monogamously married and he and his wife had four children of their own, but he also took an active part in his social responsibilities as bāpa (father) towards the children of his wife’s two sisters, the widow Burala who moved to Darwin and her younger sister, Wurrpan, a young unmarried mother (see 5.5, 6.3.1). Maranydjalk lived in the same camp, now a housing area, as did Giyapara and Miku when they returned as single mothers to live with their children in their father’s household in their remote community of origin. He related as waku (father’s sister’s husband) to the two unmarried mothers, as he was the husband of their father’s half-sister, and he was mär’imu (father’s father) to these children of single mothers.
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Maranydjalk was a traditionally oriented man, a locally renowned marrggitj (traditional healer) and a leader in ceremonies. He had little formal education and did not have a career in paid employment or a role in introduced contexts of local self-government. He sought power and influence in more traditional ways including by recruiting otherwise fatherless children into his care and control. Maranydjalk took the initiative by providing names from kin and country and patrifiliation for the young children of close kinswomen who were single mothers, and, in this case, he did so as a socially determined paternal grandfather. In this way, he came to exercise kinship responsibilities as bāpa (father) for the four young adult and adolescent children of his wife's widowed sister, Burala, and the two children of his wife's unmarried sister, Wurrpaŋ, and as māri'mu (father's father) for the three children of his wife's brother's two daughters, Giyapara and Miku, who were single mothers.

One of the sisters, Miku, was apparently emulating her mother to the extent that she pursued various men friends and an alcohol-drinking lifestyle in town. Because of the lifestyle she chose to lead in Darwin and later in Nhulunbuy, Miku yielded her two young daughters of mixed-descent into the care of her father and younger sisters in her community of origin. At that time, she was living in a long-term relationship with a young Yolŋu man in Darwin, and later in beach camps at Nhulunbuy. This man, a number of years younger than Miku, related to her as dhuyay (husband category) and he was a younger brother of two men who had already married two of Miku's own sisters. He was not Miku's "promised" husband but he was in the correct marital relationship of dhuyay (husband) to galay (wife).

The extended family and wider kin in Miku's community of origin made overtures to the couple to come home, and implied that if they did so and settled down together they would be recognised as "married now". The couple persisted with their drinking lifestyle in beach camps at Nhulunbuy and in these circumstances, it was unlikely that the children would be surrendered into the care of their mother and her Yolŋu "boyfriend", even though the latter was in the correct relationship. Miku's two children continued to be cared for by matrikin, by their maternal grandfather and later by mother's sisters when the old grandfather died.

It was not certain to what extent close classificatory patrikin, especially the māri'mu (father's father) who bestowed names on Miku's children, would be a continuing influence in the lives of these two mixed-descent children, who were being cared for by matrikin in the remote community and in the absence of their mother. Yet the two little girls potentially had a Yolŋu father's side as well as mother's side of belonging and care, as indicated by the Yolŋu personal names which their actual gathi (mother's father) and classificatory māri'mu (father's father) gave them soon after birth.
By contrast, the other sister, Giyapara, did eventually marry "straight way" when her mixed-descent daughter was about five years old. Giyapara married a Yolŋu man who stood in the correct relationship to her as dhuway (husband). This same man was her "promised" husband but when she was younger she did not know him well as he lived in another community and was "married already". However, another of her sisters had married correctly to this man's brother and in the following years Giyapara had opportunities to meet and get to know her dhuway, that is her sister's husband's brother, particularly when she left Darwin and returned to her community of origin for the funeral ceremonies for her adolescent brother (see 9.5). Giyapara's "promised" husband came from Galiwin'ku to the funeral ceremonies and helped the grieving family and apparently it was at this time that the relationship blossomed. After the funeral ceremonies for her brother were completed the young woman and her "promised" husband came into Darwin and stayed for a few days together in a city motel and urban-dwelling kin declared them to be "married now".

The couple returned to live in his community of origin where there were some difficulties with his first wife, who did not take readily to the introduction of a second and younger wife and her young child into the marital household. How the affairs of this polygynous marriage resolved themselves I am not certain; in any case they go beyond the scope of my research. It is important to note that this was one example in the sexual-marital careers of Yolŋu women in Darwin where a young Yolŋu woman as a single mother who had experienced love affairs and life in the city chose to accept promised and polygynous marriage to a Yolŋu man in a remote community. This man was in an ideal relationship to be bäpa (father) to the child, conceived in a casual affair with an Aboriginal man of mixed-descent in Darwin. Because the mother married "straight way", there was no conflict in the child's affiliation with her mother's new husband. The child retained both the names her actual gathí (mother's father) and classificatory māri'mu (father's father) gave her soon after birth as the latter had mapped out the child's appropriate 'father's path' of affiliation to kin and country.

6.3.5 Guŋurrú and Her Children Born into an Inter-ethnic Marriage.

Guŋurrú was a mature-aged Yolŋu woman who had worked as a school-cleaner in her community of origin. She and Burrmalala, an older woman, were co-wives in a polygynous marriage in a remote community. When their Yolŋu husband died, Guŋurrú, who was the younger of the two widows, became the centre of mari (trouble, argument) over her sexual affairs. She chose to escape the constraints of life in her own community, to leave her maturing children behind and to migrate to Darwin, and the older widow, Burrmalala,
decided to join her.

Not long after she came to Darwin, GuJurru formed a sexual-marital relationship with an Aboriginal man of mixed-descent. When she had a child by him, this couple set up household in a Housing Commission house in the northern suburbs. They had two more children in Darwin and although this inter-ethnic marriage endured, the Aboriginal husband's co-residence was intermittent, his economic contribution unreliable and the Housing Commission house was held in GuJurru's name.

GuJurru was effectively head of the household, which was based on her supporting parent income plus the supporting parent pension of the widow Burramalala, her close classificatory sister and co-wife in a former polygynous marriage. Moreover, GuJurru's suburban household hosted a changing procession of Yolŋu visitors and more permanent co-residents, especially matrikin. In many ways, GuJurru's household was a Yolŋu matrifocal household rather than a marriage based household, even though her Aboriginal husband, the father of her three mixed descent children, was a continuing presence and influence in their lives.

GuJurru's husband was long-term unemployed and he tended to wander between the household of his Yolŋu wife and children in Darwin and those of his siblings and other relatives of Aboriginal descent, whom he described as "scattered" throughout the Territory. He stayed away for weeks, sometimes months at a time, when he was visiting a sister, attending the funeral of a relative or staying with a grandmother in Alice Springs.

The Aboriginal husband had been heard to say that he felt like a stranger in his own home among all the Yolŋu kin. The Yolŋu spoke in Yolŋu matha (Yolŋu language) among themselves and regularly went out to socialise, to hunt and gather and gamble at cards without him. He complained that it was all right for his wife and her Yolŋu kin, because the Yolŋu have retained their language, culture and kinship solidarity. He himself could only speak English; he believed that he had "lost" his Aboriginal culture and what kin he knew and could trace were widely "scattered" in the Northern Territory and elsewhere in Australia.

He was typical of the many Aborigines in Darwin and elsewhere in Australia whose historical circumstances were shaped by the now infamous 'half-caste' policy, which led to young children being taken away from their Aboriginal mothers and kindred and brought up in institutions and in foster care to bring about the assimilation of Aboriginal children of mixed-descent (see Cummins 1990).

There seemed to be little danger that the mixed-descent children he had fathered would be separated from their Yolŋu mother, GuJurru, and her kin, nor that the children would lose their Yolŋu cultural inheritance. To begin with, she and her children did not take
the European surname of the mixed-descent Aboriginal man who was respectively her husband and their father. Most importantly, the children born within this de facto marriage had Yolŋu personal names bestowed on them by a classificatory märi'mu (father's father) and the names were brought into Darwin for them by a classificatory bäpa (father), their mother's sister's husband. In this way, these urban-dwelling children not only had matrifilial links to kin and clan lands but they also had a classificatory Yolŋu father and father's father, who indicated their interests in them by bestowing Yolŋu personal names on them.

Moreover, these mixed-descent children born and raised in early childhood in Darwin were living in a typically extended family unit and Guurrurr had the regular and co-resident support of Burrmalala, her close classificatory sister and former co-wife, as well as of visiting kin including the now young adult daughters of her former polygynous marriage. In this way, Guurrurr and her children had the support of kin in Darwin and those who visited her from her community of origin.

Yet Guurrurr explained that she was unable to take her Aboriginal husband and her children by him back to her community of origin for prolonged visits or to live there permanently. He liked to drink alcohol and her home community was 'dry', that is an area of alcohol prohibition (see also 3.6.2). Moreover, although she was born, grew up, married and brought up her first family in this community, it was not her clan country. Since her Yolŋu husband was dead and she had chosen to migrate to the city and marry inter-ethnically, Guurrurr found that her claim to return to live in this particular community was weakened and so therefore was her claim to return with her non-Yolŋu 'de facto' husband and her children by him. She had better claim on kin at another Yolŋu community, Ramingining, in her märi (mother's mother, mother's mother's brother) country.

It was kin who lived in Guurrurr's märi country at Ramingining who bestowed Yolŋu names from riggitj (place sacred to particular people) on her mixed-descent children in Darwin. For it was in her märi country that Guurrurr's sister went to live in marriage and to raise a family and it was this sister's husband who gave Yolŋu names to his wife's sister's mixed-descent children in Darwin. Guurrurr began to visit her märi country and kin at the community of Ramingining for holidays and for funeral ceremonies and to take her children and Aboriginal de facto husband with her. As discussed in the following chapter, when their first born son of mixed descent was of a suitable age, about nine or ten, Guurrurr and her Aboriginal husband left him at Ramingining and in the care of his socially determined Yolŋu father, who thereby had the time to prepare the mixed-descent boy for his circumcision ceremonies (see 7.3.4).
Chapter 6. Singing names, signing for children

6.4 Further discussion and conclusions.

6.4.1 Perpetuation of the lineage and classificatory kinship.

The above case studies indicate how concerned kin in remote communities with the active co-operation of Yolŋu women in Darwin set out to name and map out children's actual matrifilial and socially constructed patrifilial ties to kin and country, whether the children are of full Yolŋu descent, of mixed descent, born to single mothers or to women married to non-Yolŋu partners and living in Darwin. The case studies illustrate how Yolŋu consciously set out so as to align children, as if their mothers had married "straight way" and how particular senior Yolŋu men in remote communities take it upon themselves to "sing names from rîngitj" and "sign for" children born outside of Yolŋu marriage and to Yolŋu women who choose to live in Darwin.

A further consideration needs to be examined; that is, whether the incidence of Yolŋu women having children as single mothers in casual and "wrong-side" relations with Yolŋu men, which do not lead to Yolŋu marriage, and in inter-ethnic liaisons and marriages in Darwin, posed a long-term threat to the Yolŋu system of patrilineal descent and to the reproduction of individual patrilineages.

As discussed earlier (see 2.5.2), the 'longevity of lineages' is a matter of concern to Aboriginal men in southeast Arnhem Land where Burbank and Chisholm (1989a:7-8) say that men count children as 'wealth'. In northeast Arnhem Land, Keen (1978:34) says that Yolŋu men manipulate the 'finding' experience and spiritual conception so as to recruit children into patri-determined clan membership and country of affiliation, and in particular they employ this strategy of patrifilial recruitment when their lineages and clans are declining (Keen 1978:375).

In the 1980s and 1990s, there was some evidence that residual forms of promised and polygynous marriage continued to pattern the way in which children born outside of Yolŋu marriage to Yolŋu women in Darwin gained a Yolŋu 'father's path' to kin and country. As discussed in the previous chapter, however, one of the reasons why Yolŋu women moved to Darwin was to exercise greater personal autonomy, and to escape the pressures which still apply in remote communities for them to accept promised and polygynous marriage. In all the relationships which could possibly be interpreted as covert forms of polygyny, Yolŋu women in Darwin insisted that they were not "married now" to these men. Yet Yolŋu men who were women's "promised" husbands, former husbands, and sister's husbands accepted at least some dimensions of social paternity for these children and recruited them into their
own patrilineages, although they did not co-habit with or claim connubial rights to the children's mothers. While the father-child relationship was typically dependent upon the kinship relationship between biological mother and social (classificatory) father, socially contrived paternity did not depend on sexual-marital relations.

The Yolŋu system of gurrutu (kinship) has mechanisms whereby mulkuru (strangers) can be co-opted as kin (cf. Keen 1978:103). By the giving of mālk ("skin", subsection) names and by "adopting" strangers into specific relations of kinship, children born outside of Yolŋu marriage and their non-Yolŋu fathers can be aligned correctly within the Yolŋu kinship system. Gurrutu (kinship) imposes 'orderliness' on the 'relations of individuals and groups' to each other and to land (Watson & Wade Chambers 1989:37).

My evidence suggests that it is specific relations, genealogically close kin and affines, for example where father's brother and mother's sister's husband are bāpa (father), rather than the broad and more diffuse 'optativity' of classificatory kinship in general (cf. Parkin 1978:7-11), which shapes how children born to Yolŋu mothers and outside of Yolŋu marriage 'find' their Yolŋu patrikin and country. Once children were identified within a patrilineage and patriclan, their patrifiliation endured and was not something which was lost when children's mothers re-married and moved away (cf. Keen 1978:33, 1994:66).

6.4.2 Various perspectives on children's futures.

In Darwin where the Balanda way is pervasive, and especially in Yolŋu women's matrifocal urban households and in inter-ethnic marriage-based households where Yolŋu men as spouses and fathers of women's children are absent, Yolŋu women have to more consciously work at the Yolŋu way of naming, affiliating and socialising their children. Among the Yolŋu themselves there are mixed opinions about whether it is possible to bilaterally affiliate children with kin and country, that is by actual matrifiliation and socially constructed patrifiliation, when they are born outside of Yolŋu marriage and in the city.

For example, ɲarritj, a senior man and clan and community leader in northeast Arnhem Land was sceptical about the ability of other senior Yolŋu men in northeast Arnhem Land to be able to offer a 'father's path' of affiliation and to shape the Yolŋu-way of "growing up" children, who were born and raised outside Yolŋu marriage and in Darwin. Perhaps ɲarritj would have thought differently if the Yolŋu women and their mixed-descent children in Darwin were women and children in whom he had obligations respectively as dhuyaw (husband) and as bāpa (father).

In different circumstances, ɲarritj had been prepared to provide a socially determined 'father's path' for the male child of one of his "promised" but not "married now" wives, who
as an unmarried mother lived with her young son, not in the same community as Žarritj but in a small homeland centre in northeast Arnhem Land. Žarritj claimed his right as father of the boy even though he never exercised connubial rights to his promised-wife, the unmarried mother, and was most unlikely to do so in the future. He explained to me that he was "minding" the young mother so that she might marry one of his younger brothers in the future.

Žarritj said that he had named the boy in infancy and that the lad was "growing up" in the Yolŋu way in the small homeland community in which he lived with his mother and her extended family. As a socially determined bapa (father), Žarritj was already planning for the circumcision rituals for this gathu (father's child). In all of this, his role and influence as a socially-determined father was carried out at a social and geographical distance from the boy and his single mother.

There are different opinions among Yolŋu about whether children born outside of Yolŋu marriage and in inter-ethnic relationships can develop a Yolŋu "father's path" of affiliation and a "Yolŋu way" of socialisation. These various points of view tend to reflect the degree of kinship closeness involved as well as divergent male and female and remote and urban understandings.

While māri (mother's mother, mother's mother's brother) and gathi (mother's father) provide the actual matrilineal links for children born outside Yolŋu marriage and to Yolŋu women in Darwin, there are also close classificatory kin who as māri'mu (father's father), bapa (father), momu (father's mother) and bapa mukul (father's sister) provide these children with patri-determined ties to kin and clan land. These interests are initially declared when actual matrikin and socially determined patrikin bestow Yolŋu personal names from living and deceased namesakes and from rirritj (place sacred to particular people) on children who live with their Yolŋu mothers and in some cases also with their non-Yolŋu fathers in the city.

However, Žarritj, who regularly visited Darwin but lived in his remote community, had strong reservations about the future directions of the mixed-descent children who were living with their Yolŋu mothers and non-Yolŋu fathers in Darwin. He considered it more probable that the non-Yolŋu husband and father, typically a Balanda or mixed descent Aboriginal man, would give his children European personal names and his own surname and that he would cause the children to be brought up as Balanda or as Darwin "coloured", that is as urban Aborigines of mixed descent. Žarritj said that elders had to "track very hard now" to determine the appropriate affiliations of children born of "wrong-side" and inter-ethnic relations. In the latter case, he did not know "what way they might go. They might follow the father's way, the Balanda way".
In early childhood, it may not yet be apparent which "way" the children of Yolŋu mothers and inter-active non-Yolŋu fathers might be affiliated and socialised, especially when they are being raised in Darwin and other urban centres. Being a senior man and clan and community leader in northeast Arnhem Land, Ċarriritj was of the opinion that, "miyalk (woman) must follow dirramu (man)". I understood him to mean that a Yolŋu woman should follow her husband's wishes and that in the case of an enduring inter-ethnic marriage, this would mean that the non-Yolŋu father's wishes would be upheld in the naming and socialisation of his part-Yolŋu child(ren).

As I foreshadowed earlier (see 6.2.1) and illustrated subsequently in the case studies, Yolŋu women in inter-ethnic, marriage-based households in Darwin consciously uphold the Yolŋu dimensions of their children's lives and they first signal this intention by seeking and accepting Yolŋu personal names for their children from their children's actual matrikin and socially determined Yolŋu patrikin. There is, however, much more to "growing up" children the Yolŋu way than merely naming them and mapping out their affiliations with kin and clan lands.

Yolŋu have to do more than correctly align children with kin and country when children of full Yolŋu descent and of mixed descent are born outside of Yolŋu marriage and to Yolŋu women in the city. Yolŋu women and their concerned kin must actively foster the Yolŋu-way of bringing up children in the company of wider kin within and without the urban household, in culturally focused gatherings such as form for purposes of sociality, hunting and gathering and mortuary rituals in Darwin and by return visits to kin and to participate in ceremonies in remote communities.

The following chapter reveals the choices Yolŋu women in Darwin must make if they are to foster the bûpa-gâthu (father-father's child) relationship, the Yolŋu way of socialising children and in particular the Yolŋu way of transmitting cultural knowledge and of initiating boys into male solidarities and ceremonial life.
Chapter 7

Growing up children, making men
Chapter 7. Growing up children and making men

7.1 Introduction.

Yolŋu in Darwin and their remote-dwelling kin recognise that the social and ceremonial contexts that foster the Yolŋu-way of "growing up children" and "making men" of boys are most fully developed among kin and in country in northeast Arnhem Land. Even so, Yolŋu women in Darwin seek to raise their children the Yolŋu way by living in extended kinship households, by keeping their children with them in daytime social contexts and culturally focused activities in the city, by ensuring children regularly visit kin and remote communities for holidays and to participate in ceremonies, and by minimising their children's engagement with Balanda institutions for the socialisation of children, especially creches, pre-schools and primary schools.

As discussed in chapters 1 and 2, Donzelot (1979:48-95) suggests that both the family and the State recognise that children, and how they are raised, are the key to the future in terms of the transmission of culture and the direction of social change. Writing about an Aboriginal system of governance, Keen (1989:37) argues that socialisation is a powerful and long term mechanism of social control and of 'government'.

Keen (1978:10) proposes that a Yolŋu 'system of social control or government' is based on kinship and religious law and that senior Yolŋu men 'govern' women, children and youth in social and ceremonial life in general, but specifically within the institutions of marriage and initiation (cf. Rose 1987). Among the Yolŋu, the social context of marriage for young females and the ritual context of initiation for young males were traditionally and to an extent still are the two contexts that bring about separation from the 'family of orientation' and shape new solidarities with the 'family of procreation' (Warner 1969:5). In an African context, Gluckman (1970:57) describes customs and ceremonies such as marriage and initiation as institutionalised 'estrangements' within the family which are 'important in building the cohesion of the larger society'.

The question I explore is what happens to the cohesion of Yolŋu society when the institutions of marriage and of male initiation are threatened by social change in general and by urban migration in particular. In the two preceding chapters I have examined how social change has led to the decline of traditional marriage, especially the "promised" and polygynous dimensions, but it needs to be stated at the outset that among the Yolŋu, marital change has not been paralleled by a comparable erosion of male initiation.

In this chapter, I examine how social change and urban migration impact on the Yolŋu way of "growing up children" and "making men" of boys. Although the ritual circumcision of Yolŋu boys is challenged by the alternative of the surgical procedure, and
school, sport and Western 'youth culture' offer alternative norms, goals, peer groups and routes to knowledge and status change, in the main Yolŋu boys continue to be initiated into ritual peer groups and male ceremonial life in dhapi' (circumcision ceremonies).

Yolŋu recognise the need to develop the appropriate relationships and contexts of kinship and ceremony in which to raise their children and initiate their boys. Herein lies the difficulty, for the appropriate social and ceremonial contexts in which children and youth are socialised the Yolŋu way are not readily available in the city.

In this chapter, I investigate the choices that Yolŋu parents in Darwin face in socialising their children, introducing them to wider kin-based sociality and to ceremonial life, passing onto them cultural knowledge and ensuring that they "grow up" the Yolŋu way. These choices include whether to send their children to suburban schools, to take or send children back to remote communities to live with kin, attend bilingual, bicultural schools and in time for young boys to be prepared for their circumcision rituals or some compromise between these two alternatives. Ideally, Yolŋu seek a balance of "two ways, both ways", the Yolŋu and Balanda ways of "growing up children" and "making men" of boys.

7.2 Background.

7.2.1 Social change and "growing up" children the Yolŋu way.

In the city, Yolŋu children have few opportunities to develop familiarity with the extended family, wider kin, significant male kin, and they tend to fail to learn the complex etiquette, rights and obligations involved in Yolŋu relations of kinship. When they grow up in nuclear family units, in Yolŋu women's matrifocal households and in inter-ethnic marriage based households in Darwin, Yolŋu children are said to learn "only humbug" not "proper respect".¹

¹ Yolŋu use the English expression "humbug" to describe the behaviour of kin who fail to observe "proper respect" in relations of kinship, make unreasonable demands on kin and who pay little or no attention to their own obligations in kinship (cf. Sansom 1980:161-175).
Plate 5
Collecting pandanus, Rapid Creek

Plate 6
Painting up for funeral ceremonies, Milingimbi
about preparing boys for their "man making" ceremonies.

There are several measures that Yolŋu in Darwin and their remote-dwelling kin take to overcome these deficiencies in "growing up" children the Yolŋu-way in Darwin. Firstly, despite original rental agreements Yolŋu suburban households are recurrently extended by kin who visit Darwin, stay in Yolŋu households and make specific and incidental contributions to the care and socialisation of urban-dwelling children. Yolŋu women and children who live in rented rooms in Aboriginal Hostels also replenish their contacts with kin from home communities as remote-dwelling kin stay in hostels while they have purposes in town.

Yolŋu social groups regularly form in parks and on foreshores for outdoor sociality and cultural activities and children are included in ways which foster their socialisation into wider networks of kinship and into the Yolŋu way of life in the city. For example, Yolŋu women and children take every opportunity to hunt and gather in Darwin's coastal, estuarine and bushland environs.

Even if Yolŋu children are enrolled in school, they are often absent from school especially when visiting kin are in town and when hunting and gathering excursions are planned. The social group of kin, the natural environment, and the cultural focus of hunting trips in combination provide a context which is conducive to the Yolŋu way of "growing up" children in Darwin.

However, if boys are to be socialised the Yolŋu way, they need more than the company of women and children and opportunities to play at hunting in Darwin. As a boy matures, he needs male kin as role models and mentors but Yolŋu men are typically missing from Yolŋu women's matrifocal urban households. On weekends, Yolŋu men who have private or work-related vehicles take women, children and visiting kin on hunting trips in and around Darwin and further afield. In these contexts, young boys have rare opportunities to learn from and model themselves on Yolŋu male kin because in Darwin, children typically grow up in Yolŋu women's matrifocal family units in hostel rooms, in suburban housing and in inter-ethnic marriage based households where Yolŋu men are typically not co-resident.

There are contexts of Yolŋu sociality and focused activities in Darwin in which the presence of children is not encouraged and indeed where children are considered by adult kin to be a distraction and those in which children are thought to be at risk. Yolŋu women have become active in Aboriginal card-gambling circles which form in parklands in the city and suburbs and Yolŋu women describe this as "card-djäma" (lit. card-work), which requires their concentration and not too much distraction from children (cf.

These contexts differ from specifically Yolŋu gatherings and activities in many respects. Firstly, in card-gambling circles in suburban parks, Yolŋu have tended to become "all mixed up" with other groups of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Secondly, the children's mothers and other female kin are pre-occupied and not consciously setting out to enrich their children's experience of the Yolŋu way, as they do for example in hunting and gathering trips in and around Darwin. Thirdly, children play while the adults gamble at cards and they play with children from other groups and the language common to all children in these mixed groups is English, whereas in exclusively Yolŋu gatherings Yolŋu mātha (Yolŋu language) prevails.

Another context, again one which tends to be ethnically mixed, is well known by Yolŋu to put children at physical and cultural risk and that is gānitji (alcohol-drinking). Typically children are not welcome and rarely present among Yolŋu who drink at hotels, in parks, on foreshores, in vacant allotments and in the "long grass" camps in and around Darwin. Yolŋu children are more likely to be regularly and less visibly at risk from the problems associated with gānitji (alcohol-drinking) in suburban households and in the Bagot Aboriginal community where from time to time, Yolŋu households are troubled by kin who are binge drinkers or regular substance abusers.

If a Yolŋu woman does expose children to these drinking scenes her sober living kin may refer to her as yātjkurru miyalk, yātjkurru gāndi (bad woman, bad mother). Concerned kin, especially those who visit Darwin from remote communities are liable to threaten and actually take the child(ren) away from her to be raised by other kin in the mother's community of origin. Yolŋu like to do this before Balanda police and welfare agents take action.

Even when children's welfare is not at risk in the city, Yolŋu parents and concerned kin still see the need to take or send children back to remote communities for regular visits. Young children of three years of age and under can travel free on regional airlines provided they are small enough to sit on the knee of adult kin. If children are small in stature, they may still travel by air with accompanying kin and free of charge until their age or size attract attention and then airfares are involved. After infancy, the high cost of airfares inhibits the movement of Yolŋu children between Darwin and Yolŋu remote communities.

From about six or seven years of age, Yolŋu children become conspicuous as of school age and absent from school when they live at AHL hostels and in Housing Commission houses in Darwin. Urban housing and education authorities begin to
pressure parents and guardian kin to have children enrol and attend suburban schools. For this reason, children from about middle primary school age are often sent to live with kin in a remote community while their parents stay in Darwin. This last strategy is resorted to when Yolŋu parents, often on the advice of remote-dwelling kin, conclude that the Yolŋu dimensions of raising children are not being properly developed in Darwin.

In some circumstances Yolŋu parents and their children return permanently to remote communities. Otherwise, only the children are sent home so that they may "grow up" the Yolŋu way in social and ceremonial life and attend local bilingual, bi-cultural schools. In their own communities in northeast Arnhem Land, Yolŋu are still perfecting techniques to reconcile the "two-ways", the Yolŋu way and Balanda way in the socialisation and education of children.²

In the city, Yolŋu children do not have access to bilingual, bicultural schooling, nor to Yolŋu teachers, as they do in their remote communities. Yolŋu as well as other Aboriginal people in Darwin often view suburban schools as threatening places in a social and cultural sense (cf. Howard and Carter 1993; Harris & Malin 1994 especially Ngarritjan-Kessaris:1-7). Most Yolŋu parents realise intuitively that early childhood is the most influential time when children learn the foundation of their language skills, conceptual development, social relationships and cultural values. Yolŋu parents in Darwin typically choose to delay enrolling their young children in school for as long as possible past the mandatory age for children to begin school and they rarely introduce their very young children to creche and pre-school.

When they do enrol their children in suburban schools, Yolŋu parents and guardian kin allow, sometimes even encourage and often cannot avoid, their children being irregular in school attendance. This is because suburban schools are perceived by Yolŋu, children and adults, as sometimes hostile environments where children are lonely, "teased" and misunderstood and always as places where the English language and the Balanda way predominates. Moreover, important contexts for "growing up" children the Yolŋu way lie outside the school experience, indeed separate even from Yolŋu sociality in the city and in ceremonial life predominantly held in remote communities and on clan lands.

Perhaps the most serious inhibition on the socialisation of children the Yolŋu way in Darwin is the limited opportunities children have to participate in Yolŋu ceremonial life when they live in the city. Although Yolŋu do hold mortuary rituals in the city (see

² For further discussion of "two-ways, both-ways", as a philosophy of cross-cultural interaction and in particular applied as a methodology in bi-lingual, bi-cultural education in northeast Arnhem Land see (Yunupingu 1991:98-106; cf. Harris 1990).
Chapter 7. Growing up children and making men.

Chapter 9), these are comparatively infrequent and small scale rituals which cannot compare with the wealth of ceremonial life in remote communities. Many Yolŋu express the view that in order for their children to truly "grow up" in the Yolŋu way, their children need to return to remote communities to participate in ceremonies and develop ties to kin and country.

In ceremonial life, Yolŋu children are introduced to the complex of belonging to "all the families, all the bąpurrú (clan group for ceremonies)" (see Keen 1994:141). The contribution of ceremonial life to socialisation and cultural transmission is not something which can be readily achieved in the city nor by short visits to remote communities. When children grow up in Yolŋu remote communities they are continually exposed to ceremonial life, especially to funeral ceremonies which are major and relatively common events in Yolŋu communities, especially in the five larger population centres. Yolŋu children from infancy onwards are encouraged to participate in public ceremonies, including funeral ceremonies, and when children who are being raised in Darwin go home with their mothers or other kin for funeral ceremonies, they too are "painted up" with moiety, clan and totemic designs.

As soon as they can stand and walk, very young children join in the ceremonies open to women and children and in their own peer groups children also play at buggul ga manikay (lit. dancing and singing, ceremonies) (cf. Goodale 1960:2(4):4-13, 1971:306). Nowadays, Yolŋu children in remote communities also learn about traditional skills and ceremonial life in bicultural studies in their local schools (Matjarra, Manydjarrayi, Warmbirr & Djambutj 1987:145; Harris 1990: 137-142). Yolŋu ceremonies are redolent with symbolism that encodes the relations of people to clan land and the ancestral world (Warner 1969:272) and ceremonies provide the context and the media in which these relations are internalised (Morphy 1977:13). Morphy (1977:94) says that, 'miny'tji as ancestral designs, buggul as ancestral dances and manikay as ancestral songs are the three major media for expressing the sacred law or madayin' of a clan.

Yolŋu funeral ceremonies convey much the same symbolic themes and in similar

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3 Yolŋu funeral ceremonies occur frequently, are prolonged affairs and are open to the whole community and to the full participation of women and their children (Clunies Ross & Wild 1984:212). Yolŋu funeral practice is therefore a major vehicle of cultural transmission and the ceremonial context with which Yolŋu children are most familiar.

4 For the perspectives of Yolŋu teachers and school principals on bicultural schooling and the development of a bicultural curriculum for local schools in northeast Arnhem Land see articles by Djuwandayngu Rosalind Ruluminy, Shirley Nirpurrumydyi, Bakamana Yunupingu and Dayngawa Ngurrruwuthun in edited volume (Henry & McTaggart 1991).
ceremonial forms as are used in dhapi' (circumcision rituals) and other revelatory ceremonies (Keen 1994:141). While the Yolŋu hold some sequences of mortuary rituals in Darwin (see Chapter 9), they must return periodically to remote communities in order to participate more fully in ceremonial life. In particular, their young boys have to return to live with kin in remote communities in time to prepare for and be initiated into ritual peer groups and male ceremonial life at the time of their dhapi' (lit. foreskin, circumcision rituals).\(^5\)

7.2.2 Circumcision ceremonies and social change.

The Yolŋu have come to accept that there are circumstances of a boy's history, health and well-being in which circumcision by medical procedure in hospital is an alternative to ritual circumcision on clan land. Even when Yolŋu parents and guardian kin decide not to have boys ritually circumcised, the Western option of circumcision by surgery in hospital is generally taken because the circumcised penis retains its significance as a social mark of manhood in Yolŋu society (cf. Warner 1969:126).

Yolŋu parents and concerned kin are not only faced with the alternatives offered by Western medical procedures for the circumcision of their sons, but also with Balanda norms, goals, educational agendas for the growing boy and maturing youth. While agents of the State do not directly threaten Yolŋu rituals of circumcision and the initiation of boys into male life, welfare government sets out to provide for the health, education and well being of children and youth. Medical and educational services offer 'alternatives' to the Yolŋu way of "making men" of boys.

While the Western medical procedure of circumcision is an 'alternative' service which has the potential to undermine the Yolŋu way of "making men", it is the Balanda school system in its least compromising form in urban schools, which is devoted to the transmission of the dominant culture and thereby in conflict with the "Yolŋu-way" of "growing up" children and youth.

For Yolŋu married couples and Yolŋu women who live as widows, estranged wives, unmarried mothers and in inter-ethnic marriages and raise their children in Darwin the Balanda alternatives, of circumcising boys in hospital and of raising boys in town and in school, may appear convenient and persuasive. Yolŋu in Darwin have to consciously choose between these alternatives and in time if their young sons are to return to remote communities to prepare for and to be initiated in dhapi' (circumcision rituals).

\(^5\) Warner (1969:59) says that boys were circumcised 'at from six to nine years' and more recently Keen (1994:173) notes a later and longer age range for boys being ceremonially circumcised, 'usually between 8 and 15 years'.
Yolŋu boys who are candidates for ritual circumcision ordinarily start preparing for their ceremonial participation some twelve months or more before their *dhapi'* (Morphy 1977:129). This lead up time in the preparation of boys for their circumcision ceremonies is particularly critical for boys who have spent much of their childhood in Darwin and almost exclusively in the company of women and children. The socialisation of Yolŋu boys towards *dhapi'* and the father's promotion and organisation of *dhapi'* require an appropriate context, time frame and level of commitment. These latter circumstances are not readily achievable at a distance and in Darwin, nor by urban kin's practice of making periodic visits to their community of origin.

In northeast Arnhem Land, social and ceremonial life in general and *dhapi'* rituals in particular, provide both the content and context for the transmission of social mores and cultural knowledge to young males, while bilingual, bicultural schools go some way towards providing a school context which reflects Yolŋu society and culture. Moral tales and myths about the relationship between people and other species are now available to Yolŋu children in print and other media and in use in local Yolŋu schools.

Jarritj, who was introduced earlier (see 6.4.2), described the significance of the song and dance sequences which were performed in the preliminary stages of one particular complex of *dhapi'* ceremonies. These songs were of the cautionary or moral tale genre and they conveyed mythological ratification of social norms and social sanctions. Jarritj explained that these *manikay* (songs) emphasised right behaviour, co-operation, filial piety, the relationship between people and species and the moral implications and social retributions which were entailed if Yolŋu *Rom* (law, culture, right way) was not followed. These stories and the public meaning of many ceremonial songs and dances were available to Yolŋu children in regularly recurring ceremonies. Jarritj also said that children learnt Yolŋu stories, songs and dances as part of the cultural content of bilingual education in the local community school.

While in Yolŋu remote communities, schools have made some progress towards reinforcing Yolŋu culture, the same cannot be said of mainstream schools in Darwin, where there is no accommodation to Aboriginal languages, educational priorities and culture. Even in remote communities, Balanda school priorities and schedules tend to compete with Yolŋu social and ceremonial obligations to "grow up children" and "make men". For example, *dhapi'*, the public climax of circumcision rituals is nowadays commonly scheduled for weekends and school holidays to accommodate school and employment regimes (Keen 1994:172-74).
Plate 7
Playing at
Hunting
Buffalo Creek

Plate 8
"Painted up"
for Dharpi'
ceremonies,
Milingimbi
Chapter 7. Growing up children and making men.

7.2.3 The cultural significance of circumcision rituals.

Social change and introduced time schedules and commitments have seen Yolŋu adjust the timing and abbreviate the major cycle of Djurguyan (revelatory ceremonies) in which, dhapi', the climax of circumcision rituals is but one component element. Djurguyan is a large cycle of regional ceremonies which Yolŋu perform for circumcision and mortuary ceremonies (cf. Keen 1994:141-42 & 173).

The circumcision rituals of dhapi' are the first and prerequisite stage in the transmission of cultural knowledge between the ritual grades of Yolŋu males. Warner (1969:262 & 279) says that it is old men who formally explain the significance of dhapi' to the young initiates as the ceremonies proceed and give them the secret/sacred names of their totems. Yolŋu males acquire cultural knowledge and social status as they progress through ritual stages and participate in ceremonial life (Keen 1977:49).

Warner (1969:114-121) says that boys who are initiated together form a ritual age-set and are identified by an age-grade term and by the initiation ceremonies which they experience in common. As a result of their rituals of circumcision, the status of the initiants changes from that of djamarrkuju (children), of gadaku (uncircumcised male) to that of yawirriny' (circumcised bachelors) and henceforth male status is determined by age and ceremony (Keen 1978:20;1994:172).

Keen (1994:189) says that male initiation is not simply a 'process of separation and incorporation' but also a 'technique of socialisation' and part of 'a broader process of control'. Circumcision ceremonies and other 'revelatory rites' are 'instruments of socialisation' and the Yolŋu themselves think of such rituals as 'Aboriginal school', in which boys are made 'quiet' and 'knowledgeable' (Keen 1994:189).  

Hamilton (1981:113) suggests that Western and Aboriginal socialisation practice are particularly at variance over the onset of intensive learning and of discipline in a child's life, with relative informality in early childhood followed by a sudden change in discipline and status, especially for boys in their rites of initiation and presumably for girls in pre and early contact times when they went in marriage to a senior man's polygynous hearth-hold.

When Yolŋu boys are initiated in dhapi' ceremonies, they move towards an expanded social and cultural environment, which includes complex norms of behaviour and relations with wider kin as well as new knowledge. At the same time, boys begin to move out from the more restricted circle of the natal family and close consanguines.

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5 See Keen, (1994:190, n.8) for further discussion of 'the relation of ceremonies of initiation to processes of socialisation'.
Chapter 7. Growing up children and making men.

Warner (1969:6) says that the ritual stages in a male's life, 'correspond roughly' with his social development within the 'family structure'.

Boys who are socialised in Yolŋu kinship contexts are made aware early in life of the etiquette of avoidance relations, especially towards sisters and mothers-in-law, but it is only at their initiation that avoidance relations become binding (cf. Warner 1969:91 & 116; Keen 1994:177). The period of tutelage by male kin which culminates in ritual circumcision weans a boy away from the indulgence of childhood, the company of women and children, and obligates him to exercise social restraint, show respect for elders, aspire to ritual knowledge and status and adhere to moral precepts (Warner 1969:272; Keen 1977:33; cf. Hamilton 1981:102 & 113).

In Aboriginal Australia, rituals of initiation are understood to be an initial stage in a sex, age and ceremony graded hierarchy of cultural knowledge, as mechanisms of social control by senior males over the loyalty and energies of their juniors and as a way of orienting youth to wider kin and affines (cf. Hart & Pilling 1960:95; Goodale 1963:11-17; Rose 1972:200-208; Avery 1985; Keen 1977:33, 1994:189-91). The segregation of initiates from their Aboriginal community at large, especially from women and children, provides an intensive learning milieu in which the initiates acquire new knowledge or new applications of existing knowledge. For example, the initiates hear secret/sacred names, have esoteric meanings of words, designs, dances explained to them. Keen emphasises that in their circumcision ceremonies, Yolŋu boys have impressed upon them their own status as beginners at an initial stage in a hierarchy of ritual knowledge (Keen 1978:171).

7.2.4 Roles and responsibilities in circumcision rituals.

If Yolŋu boys are to "grow up" the Yolŋu way and be ritually "made into men", they must return to remote communities at the appropriate time and for a stay sufficient to allow significant kin to prepare boys for dhapi' (circumcision rituals). Yolŋu women as gāndi (mother), being the primary care-givers in early childhood, and other significant female kin who are responsible for the early socialisation of young boys are consulted as to the readiness of a Yolŋu boy for his circumcision rituals (cf. Warner 1969:86).

Among Aboriginal groups in the Roper River area, which borders Arnhem Land, a mother's permission is ordinarily sought for her son's initiation to proceed (Avery 1985:242). In west-central Arnhem Land, male kin may dispense with a mother's permission and seize the boy for his ceremonies if the mother is considered to be tardy or negligent (Hamilton 1981:68).
Chapter 7. *Growing up children and making men.*

For Yolŋu women who are estranged from their Yolŋu husbands, widows, unmarried mothers and married inter-ethnically in Darwin, the onus lies more heavily on them to recognise when it is time for their young sons to return to remote communities, live with kin there and prepare for male initiation. In urban circumstances such as inter-ethnic marriages, women’s matrifocal households and where housing regulations restrict household size and composition, Yolŋu women and children live in family units in which adult Yolŋu men are either missing entirely or rare visitors.\(^7\)

In order for Yolŋu mothers to hand over their responsibilities in the growing boy to significant male kin, they must first recognise the boy’s stage of physical and social maturation and make sure that he has appropriate access to significant male kin. This latter invariably involves the movement of the boy to stay for a year or two and sometimes more permanently with kin in Yolŋu remote communities. In such urban circumstances, Yolŋu mothers have an accentuated role in the recognition of a boy’s readiness for his circumcision rituals. Even so, it is primarily *bapa* (father) who plans for the circumcision of *gāthu* (man’s child) and Yolŋu fathers are conscious that their sons’ *dhapi’* should be arranged while they themselves have the health, time, motivation and kinship contacts to make the necessary arrangements. Ideally, actual biological Yolŋu fathers “grow up” their sons, pass on cultural knowledge to them and introduce them to ceremonial life (cf. Keen 1978:339-40). Because of the ‘equivalence of brothers’ (see Warner 1969:43), there are, however, alternative men as *bapa* (father) if a biological father is not able to organise for his son’s *dhapi’*.

While Yolŋu men as *bapa* (father) ordinarily organise for their sons to be initiated, life circumstances, marital change and urban migration often necessitate that a ‘social’ father substitutes for a genitor in the organisation of a boy’s initiation. A father’s brother (whether an actual, close classificatory or clan brother) may substitute for a biological father in preparing a boy for and organising his initiation. Warner (1969:43) says that a father’s brother is as much a father as is a genitor. He also explains that a man’s social skills and networks develop more widely when he organises the initiation ceremonies for his actual and classificatory sons (Warner 1969:59).

Scheffler (1974:744-93) describes ‘fatherhood’ as being comprised of many components, only one of which is that of genitor, while others may include mother’s

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\(^7\) In inter-ethnic marriages among Aborigines in Adelaide, Gale (1972:113) says that the non-Aboriginal husband accepted Aboriginal female kin as co-residents in and visitors to the household but restricted the contact his Aboriginal wife and children had with Aboriginal male kin. In Alice Springs, Colman (1988:105-125) argues that Aboriginal men were marginal to Aboriginal women’s matrifocal households.
husband, he who rears you, ritual guardian and social and cultural mentor. These component roles may be assigned to men other than genitor in circumstances which are not ideal, including as previously discussed when children are born outside of Yolŋu marriage and to Yolŋu women living in Darwin (see 6.2.3).

Shapiro (1979:14) suggests that among the Miwuyt (Yolŋu), men are 'brothers' in 'ritual lodges' and this brotherhood makes individual paternity redundant to a certain extent. As discussed in the previous chapter, while biological paternity is recognised, social paternity is highly valued among many Aboriginal people of Australia and a man is "really father" if he cares for, looks after, "grows up" children (Myers 1986:212).

Yolŋu men say that a man will "take care of" the dhapi' arrangements for the son(s) of a real or classificatory brother in a number of circumstances. If a boy's father has died or is old, infirm or incompetent, then father's brother will be responsible for his dhapi'. Even a Yolŋu father who is healthy and active may delegate the organisation of his son's dhapi' to a biological or close classificatory brother.

Where Yolŋu women have children outside of Yolŋu marriage, a senior man who is dhuway (husband category) as a promised husband, sister's husband, actual or clan brother of a deceased Yolŋu husband may "take care of" the dhapi' arrangements of single women's sons, whom they call gäthu (man's child) as they would their own sons. Yolŋu women who leave their sons with kin in a remote community when they migrate to Darwin, or return with them or send them back to Yolŋu communities, thereby provide their young sons with the opportunity to develop relations with Yolŋu men, especially as bäpa (father), and with wider kin and clan. These circumstances in turn provide the context in which the sons of Yolŋu women in Darwin may join a ritual peer group in dhapi' (circumcision rituals).

It is not the sole responsibility of men as fathers to "grow up" children and "make men" of boys as both matrikin and patrikin and the parent and grandparent generations have responsibilities in children. Warner (1969:88-89) says that gathi (mother's father) is very concerned for daughter's son and that he and his wife märi (mother's mother) teach him manners and correct his behaviour. Typically, it is märi who has most influence on the early socialisation of her gutharra (daughter's son) (Warner 1969:90). Older women, especially märi and momu (father's mother) have an active interest in the socialisation of boys and roles to play in the dhapi' rituals of their gutharra (daughter's child) and gaminyarr (son's child).

Among the Yolŋu, as elsewhere in Aboriginal Australia, the essential symbols, rights and responsibilities included in the 'ritual life of males' is largely handed down by
male and patrilineal transmission, yet Shapiro (1979:28) says that there are important links through women in 'the ritual life of males'. Men who are māri (mother's mother's brother) and gathi (mother's father) play significant roles in the dhapi' of boys who are their gutharra (sister's daughter's son) and gaminyarr (daughter's son) respectively. These male matrikin are obliged to help promote the dhapi' of their young matrikin and to assist fathers, whether genitor or social fathers, to achieve that end. At the time of his circumcision rituals, a boy's female māri takes a prominent ceremonial role in the women's group (Warner 1969:262) and a male māri leads the rituals and calls out the powerful names of ancestors.

It might be expected that for urban-reared boys who do not have Yolŋu genitors, or whose Yolŋu fathers are deceased or not acknowledged, that the significance of male matrikin in "growing up" boys and in promoting their "man making" ceremonies assumes additional importance. Yet as socially determined Yolŋu fathers were 'found' to bestow names on children, affiliate them with kin and country and establish the bāpa-gāthu (father-father's child) relationship, often the same men or others in similar socially derived father-child relations will organise dhapi' ceremonies for their gāthu.

Yolŋu circumcision ceremonies re-orient Yolŋu boys, not only away from women and children towards male associations and ceremonial life but also outwards from his consanguines to his future marriage and affines (Warner 1969:5). This new orientation towards affines is subtly evident in Yolŋu dhapi' ceremonies, whereas among other Aboriginal groups there is a more dramatic shift evident in male initiation. For example, Avery (1985 198-99) says that among Aboriginal people in the Borroloola area, the father-in-law is the circumciser and the initiation ceremonies represent both the extreme boundary of kinship relations and bridge the social divide between consanguines and affines.

By contrast, the Yolŋu role of circumciser is based more on skill as a 'doctor' (Keen 1994:177) than on a particular relationship to the candidates for circumcision. Even so, affines do play important roles in Yolŋu circumcision ceremonies. Young bachelors who are dhuvway (brother-in-law) to the boy novices support them throughout the ordeal, carry them from the 'place of blood' and comfort and mind them as they recover (Keen 1994:174-177).

A boy's male māri (mother's mother's brother) takes a prominent ceremonial role in the circumcision rituals for the young boy, gutharra (sister's daughter's son) and later in life will help the young man in his relationship with his mukul rumaru' (mother-in-law), who will provide him with his future galay (wife) (Warner 1969:88-90, 102). A
daughters of his male māri is his prospective mother-in-law and she and her husband, gapipi (mother's brother), will provide the youth with one or more of their daughters as his galay (wife).  

Warner (1969:64) says that a boy has his promised wife first pointed out to him at the time he is ready for initiation. After his circumcision rituals, a Yolŋu male becomes strictly subject to avoidance relations with his sisters and with his mother-in-law (Warner 1969:42, 91) and he looks beyond his consanguines towards his affines and future marriage and 'family of procreation' (Warner 1969:6).  

While the initiation of boys in dhapi' ceremonies is still prevalent among the Yolŋu today, the fulfilment of predetermined marriage paths has declined under the combined pressure of introduced ideas and of socio-economic change. Even though Yolŋu males are increasingly unlikely to marry their "promised" galay (wife), there is still a cultural imperative for them to marry "straight way", that is to a Yolŋu woman to whom they relate as dhuway (father's sister's son, husband category) to galay (mother's brother's daughter, wife category) or acceptable variant in clan and moiety exogamous marriage. At the time of their dhapi', Yolŋu boys are oriented towards, if not the precise person as wife, at least the "straight way" of marriage and the support of prospective brothers-in-law and the rituals initiate them into wider Yolŋu society and male ceremonial life.

7.3 Case studies.

In one extended case study and a number of brief studies, I discuss the continuing importance of dhapi' (ritual circumcision) among the Yolŋu who live long-term in Darwin. These studies focus on the choices which Yolŋu make today for their sons, whether they will be circumcised in dhapi' ceremonies on clan lands or medical procedure in an urban hospital. I distinguish between the influences on parents and kin who make the decisions, in terms of whether these influences are generally applicable in Yolŋu communities today and whether there are additional constraints or different responses, which are evidence of changing circumstances, including marital change and urban migration.  

The following brief case study indicates that some of the conditions, which predispose Yolŋu parents to have their sons circumcised in an urban hospital rather than in ceremonies in remote communities, are features of life in Yolŋu communities in

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* Among the Yolŋu, affines are kin as the Yolŋu marry matrilateral, cross-cousins in clan and moiety exogamous marriage (Warner 1969:7; Shapiro 1981).
northeast Arnhem Land and not simply alternatives available to Yolŋu who live in urban centres.

7.3.1 An interrupted dhapi' and subsequent medical procedure.

Nyoka had been a renowned teacher in his own community but he was retired, elderly and in poor health by the time his youngest son, by his second wife, was of an age for ritual initiation. The dhapi' ceremonies for this boy and his ritual age-set were begun in the January school vacation of 1990, but the monsoons arrived and the incessant rain made it impractical for the outdoor ceremonies to continue. The old man was very distressed by the postponement of dhapi' as his own health was precarious and his son was maturing rapidly. The boy was subsequently circumcised in an urban hospital because, according to my senior male informant, he was showing signs of pubescence and associated volatility in behaviour. The father wanted to "finish up" by medical procedure what had been started as ceremonial initiation. The father's age and poor health and the boy's development and temperament were compelling reasons for the decision not to recommence the dhapi' ceremonies after the rainy season but to opt for medical intervention. Among the Yolŋu, circumcision is 'mandatory' (Keen 1994:172 n.2) and the surgical procedure in an urban hospital is better than none when there are circumstances which prevent a boy from being circumcised in ceremonies.

7.3.2 An unmarried mother and her two sons.

An unmarried mother, Gandayala, was first introduced as living in Darwin with a young son and baby daughter (see 6.3.3). In fact, she had three full descent Yolŋu children as she had an older son, fathered in a youthful and casual affair in her community of origin. The younger two children were born into a longer-term but ultimately unsuccessful relationship with a Yolŋu man in Darwin. The first son, however, lived all his life in his mother's community of origin even when his mother decided to live in Darwin.

When Gandayala moved to the city, she left her first son behind in the care of her sister and sister's husband, who were close classificatory mother and father to him. This couple brought him up as one of their own children and when the time came, this social father organised that the lad was initiated in circumcision ceremonies.

In 1990, Gandayala's second son, Burralaj, was of an age for Yolŋu dhapi'

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9 The weather is a significant determinant in the timing of ceremonies such as circumcision rituals, which can be planned ahead, and the dry, cooler months are most favoured (Warner 1969:249).
ceremony but his mother had him circumcised in Darwin hospital. She arranged for his surgical circumcision just prior to his annual stay with kin in her community of origin. Gandayala took the medical option for her younger son even though he was a healthy lad and her first son had been ritually circumcised. She was aware that Burralal was fast approaching the physical maturity which ordinarily signals a boy's readiness for dhapi'. In her community of origin, wider kin would notice her son's growth and the boys of comparable age had already had their dhapi' or were preparing for it. By opting for the medical procedure, Gandayala sought to avoid a potentially difficult situation in her community of origin. She said that Burralal might be teased by his peers for not being circumcised. Moreover, kin would pressure her to leave him with them for long enough for him to join the next age-set of boys to be ritually circumcised.

Burralal and his little sister, Galiyan, had lived with their mother in Yolŋu women's households in the suburbs and in hostel rooms. These residential circumstances and his mother's single status meant that Burralal had not lived with a co-resident 'father' nor even with other male kin during his childhood in Darwin. His life in the city, almost exclusively spent in the company of Yolŋu women and children, had not prepared him to trust significant male kin nor to accept the period of tutelage, discipline and the ordeal, which comprises Yolŋu boys' experience of dhapi' in northeast Arnhem Land.

Burralal was socialised predominantly in Yolŋu kinship circles in Darwin as he regularly missed school in order to accompany his mother, other female kin and their children to Buffalo Creek and the like for a day's foraging in the mangroves. Yet for a Yolŋu boy of his age there was much more to be learnt than could be gained from the company of Yolŋu women and little children and playing at hunting on a beach in Darwin. In the Yolŋu-way, he should have moved more into the company of boys of his same age and of older men and have been prepared for his circumcision ceremonies (cf. Hamilton 1981:105).

Burralal and his older brother are both full descent Yolŋu and sons of the same mother. They both lacked a socially acknowledged biological father and in the person of mother's sister's husband both had a 'close' social father who showed paternal interests in and responsibilities towards them. Yet the two brothers had different residential histories and thus contexts of socialisation during their childhood. The brothers had different opportunities to interact with close and wider kin and in particular with a socially determined father. These disparate life circumstances resulted in the elder son being initiated within the ceremonial context of dhapi' held in a remote Yolŋu community, while the younger boy, Burralal, was circumcised by medical procedure in Royal Darwin
Hospital. Different outcomes were reached, not because of their mother's unmarried status but because one boy had been brought up by a 'social father' and in a Yolŋu community, whereas the other had been raised by his mother and female kin in the city.

7.3.3 A widow and her "big boy".

Burrrmalala was introduced earlier as a senior wife in a polygynous marriage who, together with a younger co-wife, Guŋurrru, had moved to live in Darwin after the death of their husband (see 6.3.5). They both had children by their Yolŋu husband and they left them behind with close kin when they migrated to the city, except that Burrrmalala decided to keep her youngest boy with her.

In Darwin, Burrrmalala's young son grew to the age of eleven or twelve years. He was conspicuous in size and age among the younger children who kept company with Yolŋu women in residential groups, daytime sociality and in parties formed for women's hunting and gathering in Darwin's environs. An Aboriginal boy's physical and social maturity is ordinarily indicated by his preference for the company of older boys and of men and in his interest in their talk and activities rather than that of his mother, younger siblings and of women's groups (cf. Hamilton 1981:105).

When the time comes to send a boy to prepare for his dhapi' rituals in a Yolŋu community in northeast Arnhem Land, an urban reared boy has not had comparable experience of male kin and of wider kin, nor is he as independent of his parents or mother as are his rural-dwelling peers (cf Keen 1978:171). Yolŋu boys growing up in Darwin often have little opportunity to move away from their mothers, the company of female kin and little children to that of older boys and men, because the latter tend to be missing from hostel accommodation and women's households in the suburbs.

Burrrmalala's son was frequently absent from school and he complained of being lonely, of not having a friend of his own and that when he did go to school he was 'teased'. He disliked it when he and his mother lived at Bagot, where the Aboriginal children there would also tease him. He spoke wistfully of the company of an older brother who would take him fishing and hunting wallaby when he visited his home community, but again he complained of being teased, this time by his Yolŋu peers. Burrrmalala's son was sensitive to the fact that he did not quite 'fit in' anywhere, neither with women and young children in Darwin, with ethnically mixed peers in urban contexts, especially at school, nor among his same sex and age peers in his Yolŋu community of origin. His physique indicated that he was rapidly approaching puberty and in the older age range at which Yolŋu boys are typically circumcised in rituals (see
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Warner 1969:59; Keen 1994:173). His Yolŋu and other Aboriginal peers teased him because he was too old and too big to be so dependent upon his mother and the company of female kin and of their younger children.

Burrmalala was conscious of her son's predicament and also of her own altered circumstances since her 'close' classificatory sister had set up house and started a family with an Aboriginal man in Darwin. It seemed to me that she found that she could not in fact go her "own way" in Darwin, but that she and her son had need of wider kin. Mother and son returned to live in their home community so that his clan 'fathers' could prepare the "big boy" for his dhapi'. Yolŋu men did not have to force the issue as it was the mother who made this decision.¹⁰

In both the case of Gandayala, the unmarried mother and her younger boy, and that of Burrmalala and her big boy, the circumstances of the boys' lives in Darwin had led to their prolonged dependence on their mothers and the company of women and little children, in ways which were inconsistent with their age, kept them apart from their Yolŋu male peers and was evidence that the Yolŋu-way of "growing up" boys was severely handicapped in Darwin.

Warner (1969: 279) comments that the older the boy the more they experience the pain of circumcision rituals, but for Burrmalala's son, who was big for his age, his dhapi' marked the end of his social discomfort and the beginning of his integration into the social and cultural life of initiated Yolŋu males. After his initiation, now a young bachelor rather than a "big boy", he stayed on with close kin in his community when his mother again returned to live in Darwin.

7.3.4 An urban marriage and a mixed-descent boy.

Guŋurrurru and the children of her second marriage were introduced in the previous chapter (see 6.3.5). After her Yolŋu husband died, Guŋurrurru, a relatively young widow, had been involved in mari (trouble) in her home community over her sexual-marital affairs. She decided to move to Darwin and in town she met and formed a 'de facto' marriage with an urban Aboriginal man of mixed-descent and had three children by him.

When Guŋurrurru wanted to take her 'de facto' husband and her children by him back to her community, she found that her claim to return to live there was weak. She had better claim on kin at another Yolŋu community, Ramingining, in her māri (mother's

¹⁰ Hamilton (1981:68) describes the seizure of an Anbarra boy for ritual circumcision, as a reaction by male kin to the 'scandal' of the boy's dependence (for his age) on his mother, who had conceived him in Darwin and as a widow who had not re-married. The clan 'brothers' of her deceased husband were the ones who took this initiative.
mother, mother's mother's brother) country. This was of particular importance when she wanted her mixed-descent son, who was born and brought up in Darwin, to be initiated with his ritual age-set in circumcision rituals.

When their eldest boy was about nine, Gujurruru left him behind when she, her 'de facto' and the younger children returned to Darwin after staying with kin and attending funeral ceremonies at Ramingining. This young boy from Darwin stayed in the care and household of his mother's sister and her husband, who were close classificatory mother and father to him. When the time came, his 'social father' prepared him for and organised his dhapi' ceremonies.

The boy's actual father, an urban Aboriginal man, considered himself to be one of the 'lost generation' of mixed-descent Aboriginal children who had been deprived of their Aboriginal inheritance, when assimilationist policies dictated how and where they were to be brought up, away from kin, country and ceremony. Accordingly, he was pleased that his son was completing his "growing up" among Yolŋu kin and in clan country, and that he was ritually circumcised and thereby more fully integrated into Yolŋu social and ceremonial life.

7.3.5 Two young men of mixed-descent in a remote community.

In the early 1970s when Latjin formed a liaison with a Balanda man who was employed in her home community, mission administration and Yolŋu community opinion were opposed to sexual-marital relations between full-descent Aborigines and other ethnics. The Balanda man was expelled from the mission and Latjin followed him, first to Darwin and later to another Aboriginal community in Arnhem Land where he was able to obtain work. There, he and Latjin started a family and raised their four children.

Over the years, Latjin took her young children back to her community of origin to visit kin and attend funeral ceremonies, but for many years her Balanda husband, and the father of her children was not welcome in her home community. As a result, the children were reared for most of their childhood in an Aboriginal community in west central Arnhem Land, where they were exposed to Aboriginal society and culture but where they were not fully integrated.

Latjin taught her children to be fluent in Yolŋu matha (Yolŋu language) and visits to their mother's Yolŋu community reinforced the Yolŋu component of their upbringing. At the same time, their Balanda father socialised them into Western norms and values and both parents were keen to have their children well-educated in the Western sense. These mixed-descent children went to the Aboriginal community school and later they pursued
higher education and vocational training in Darwin and southern capital cities.

Meanwhile, mission policy and government legislation which had tried to prevent inter-ethnic marriages and miscegenation in remote Aboriginal communities had been abandoned (see 3.3.3, 3.3.4). In all the years of exile, Latjin maintained for herself and tried to develop for her family, ties to and rights in kin and country. These ties, together with her strong personality and remarkable determination enabled Latjin to eventually reinstate herself and introduce her Balanda husband and mixed-descent children to her community of origin and clan lands.

By the early 1980s, Latjin and the entire family were apparently well integrated into Yolŋu life. One daughter had married a Yolŋu man and gone to live with him in his community and the rest of the family had gained employment in Latjin’s home community where she had strong rights in country (cf. Keen 1994:100). On the surface, Latjin’s sons were well integrated into the remote community and had found scarce local employment.

The family had returned to live in Latjin’s home community when her two sons were growing up but they had missed their age-grade time for dhapi’ (circumcision rituals). Senior Yolŋu men explained to me that older boys and even grown men have historically and can still today be circumcised later in life and in appropriate ceremonies. Age and missed opportunity are not barriers in themselves. As a Balanda, their father was not in a position to organise the ritual initiation of his sons, yet it was possible for Yolŋu kin to “take care of” the mixed-descent boys of Yolŋu mothers in the same ways in which kin showed their interests in the full-descent children of unmarried Yolŋu mothers.

However, Yolŋu men are unlikely to usurp a Balanda father’s role and interests in his own sons. Djarrir, a senior man and clan and community leader, explained to me that Yolŋu are reluctant to pursue kinship responsibilities in children of mixed-descent, until it is determined “which way they will go, Yolŋu-way or Balanda-way”.

Even though at the time of my fieldwork the young men had been resident for many years on clan land, they still had an ambiguous status within their Yolŋu mother’s community of origin. Among Yolŋu, male status is marked by ceremonial induction in circumcision rituals and is thereafter built upon by a man’s increasing age and social and ceremonial participation (Keen 1978:386). Because Latjin’s sons had not been initiated within Yolŋu rites of circumcision, they were only able to participate in the open aspects of ceremonies and could not participate in ceremonial contexts and roles which were
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restricted to initiated males. For example, a senior Yolŋu woman said that these young men did not "go in" the latest Gunapipi ceremonies, as did other Yolŋu adolescents and young men of their age. Gunapipi is a regional ceremony which is ideally the next ceremonial stage for initiated boys and young men, and a context in which among other cultural 'lessons' that of male sexuality and moiety exogamy are emphasised (Keen 1977:35 & 46).

At the time of my fieldwork, the young men of mixed-descent were still single and therefore had not achieved via marriage, affinal relations and the birth of children, a wider social inclusiveness in Yolŋu kinship beyond that of their mother's close kin. On the other hand, Latjin's sons had achieved status in the introduced contexts of Western education and in wage-employment. This status was not well matched by their ambiguous position in Yolŋu social and ceremonial contexts. This mismatch gave rise to the ridicule and envy which was directed against the young men by other kin factions in the same community, though not by those closely associated with their mother. While Latjin's sons had matured and gained Balanda status in education and employment, they had not been socially and culturally "made into men". How their status would fare if they married Yolŋu women and brought up their children in Yolŋu remote communities was not known at the time of writing.

7.4 An extended case study.

7.4.1 Banađi and his dhapi' (circumcision ceremonies).

Banađi lived with his parents, Warraga and Mulunda, for much of his early childhood in Darwin. His parents migrated to Darwin in the early 1980s, taking with them their five young children including Banađi, their first son. The father, Warraga, had a salaried position in town and the family lived in a Housing Commission house, first at Palmerston and later in the northern suburbs.

Some years after the family had settled in Darwin, it became obvious to the parents and to wider kin that the older children's circumstances in town were less than satisfactory from a Yolŋu perspective. Both Banađi and the next eldest his sister, Banađitjan, were of middle to late primary school age yet despite an initial attempt, they never attended school in Darwin because they and their mother were "shy" and the children feared to be "teased". The children were always at home with their mother or out in the company of female kin, but when the lad, Banađi, was observed to be "getting big now" and to be "too much for gama' (mother), his development precipitated a decision about his future. He was about ten years of age when his close patrikin urged that Banađi
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should return to live among them at his parents's community of origin. There he would be brought up the Yolŋu way and prepared for his initiation in *dhapi'* (circumcision ceremonies).

When he returned to his parents' community, Baŋadi lived in the household of his father's brother, Nyirrk, who was married to his mother's sister, Wāk. During this time, Baŋadi was as much in the bosom of his family at the remote community as he was with his biological parents in Darwin, for according to Yolŋu classificatory kinship, father's brother and mother's sister are father and mother to him and their children are his brothers and sisters.

If there were deficiencies in his earlier socialisation into the Yolŋu way of life, because of urban residence, there was time for his close classificatory father and mother to expose Baŋadi to wider relations of kinship, to ceremonial life and to the tutelage of significant male kin. By the time of his initiation ceremonies, Baŋadi was on familiar ground, among well known kin and he was able to approach his *dhapi'* with confidence.

In July 1991, approximately two years after he left his natal family in Darwin, Baŋadi was initiated in *dhapi'* ceremonies in company with three classificatory brothers and in his parents' community of origin.

The four candidates including Baŋadi are closely related to each other as *wāwa* (brother). Two of the boys are actual brothers who lived with their parents in the same remote community to which Baŋadi returned. Baŋadi, whose parents live in Darwin, regards them as brothers because they are children of father's brother and of mother's sister, which makes them siblings in the Yolŋu way of kinship.¹¹

When Baŋadi moved into the same household as his two "close up" classificatory brothers, he played in their company and went to school with them. These three boys were able to bond as brothers as well as boyhood peers. This basis for their mutual trust was further built upon when they were ritually initiated together in the same *dhapi'*. The fourth boy, who ordinarily lives with his parents at Galiwin'ku is also *wāwa* (brother) to the other three. His father is a close classificatory brother of the other two fathers because his mother is an actual sister to their mother. In this way, the boy from Galiwin'ku is related to the other three initiates as *wāwa* (brother) as traced from *momu* (father's mother). In his *dhapi'* ceremonies, Baŋadi had the company of like age and same sex peers who are related to him, not in his case as biological brothers, but as socially and culturally construed *wāwa* (brother).

¹¹ Warner (1969:50) says of the Murngin (Yolŋu) that, 'own brothers through one father and one mother or father's brothers and mother's sisters are one's best friends, and most like one socially'.

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At the time of their dhapi' ceremonies, Bagaji and his brother initiands changed status from djamarrkuli (children) to that of yawirriny' (circumcised bachelors) and joined a ritual peer group which is sex, age and ceremony specific (cf. Keen 1978:20; 1994:172). This shared experience in initiation ceremonies further cemented the strong identification which Bagaji already had with his classificatory and clan brothers (cf. Warner 1969: 114-121).\(^{12}\)

Bagaji owed his confidence and preparation for his circumcision rituals to the care and organisation, not so much of his own father in Darwin as of his father's brother in the home community. Nyirrk said that he had to "take care of" the sons of his actual and clan brothers as well as his own sons and that Yolŋu men are not content until they have discharged these obligations.

Nyirrk explained that although his youngest son could have waited a few more years to be initiated, it was best to organise the one dhapi' whilst he himself enjoyed good health and all other circumstances were satisfactory. It was often expedient for a father to arrange for more than one son, both real and classificatory, at the same time and within the one dhapi' if the age and development of the boys allowed. In this particular case, the candidates for initiation ranged in age from eight to twelve years. Three of the boys were of a like age and physical development but one boy was younger and smaller in stature.

The three sets of biological parents of the four initiates lived at three widely separate locations. One boy's parents were long term resident in Darwin, having migrated there from one of the major Yolŋu communities which was also the place of residence of two of the novices, and the fourth boy lived with his parents at Galiwin'ku. All four boys are of the Yirritja moiety and of the Gupapuygu mala (clan) or clan-aggregate, three are Gupapuygu-Daygurrurr while the fourth boy from Galiwin'ku is Gupapuygu-Birkili. Although the four initiands did not have a community of residence in common, nor a community of origin in common, they did have their fathers' clan-aggregate lands in common (cf. Keen 1978:27-28). They also shared the same māri (mother's mother; mother's mother's brother) clan lands in common and they were about to participate in the same initiation ceremonies.

In the days preceding the culmination of dhapi', the boys were flown by charter flight to a small homeland centre in the Cape Stuart area where their matrikin including their māri and their gathi (mother's father) lived. It was there in the initiates' māri country, that the sequence of ceremonies was begun which would later finish at the major

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\(^{12}\) Hamilton (1981:104) says of the Anbarra of north-central Arnhem Land, that from the time of his initiation a boy typically forms a friendship with an age-mate who is a classificatory brother and this friendship might last a lifetime.
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Yolŋu community, where the ritual circumcision of the boys was to take place. After they had signalled the start of the ceremonies in the māri country, the matrikin then moved as a group of visitors to the major community where the circumcision rituals were to be performed.

The principal organiser of the dhapi' ceremonies and one of the fathers, Nyirrk, explained that the whole complex of dhapi' ceremonies should really have been held at the small homeland centre in the māri country of the four initiands. However, it was easier for kin dispersed in various Yolŋu communities and for kin in Darwin to visit his home community than it was for "all the families" to travel to the small and isolated homeland centre on Cape Stuart.

Two close classificatory fathers of Bauagi, both senior men in the host community acknowledged that it was not the fathers alone but also men who related to the boys as māri-gutharra (mother's mother's brother-sister's daughter's son) and gathi-gaminyarr (mother's father-daughter's son), who were responsible for raising boys and staging their initiation ceremonies. Ñarrjitj, a close classificatory father of the initiates and community leader at the community hosting the ceremonies, said that it is the male māri who has, "the power of Rom (Law) to finish up the dhapi". Nyirrk, the father who was most involved in the organisation for dhapi' said that he "worked together" with māri (mother's mother's brother) and gathi (mother's father) to organise the dhapi'. Warner (1969:59) emphasises the father's role and says that the father 'confers' with older men about the arrangements. Whatever the emphasis, it is clearly not the sole responsibility of fathers and of the patrikin to organise for the initiation of boys and significant matrikin have major responsibilities in dhapi'.

7.4.2 The ceremonies and their significance.

On the day of the climax of the ceremonies, Bauagi and his fellow initiates were constantly supervised in the bough shade at one side of the ceremonial ground. The boys were under the close observation if not the actual care of two of the fathers, one of whom proudly video-recorded his son's dhapi'.

The boy novices were decorated for their dhapi', firstly with body paint and brightly coloured loin cloths and in the final stages with strings of lorikeet feathers. The orange-red feathered strings gulikulimirr (feathered, fluffy) have multiple meanings in sacred, ceremonial contexts, one of which is to symbolise body hair (Keen 1977:43). In

13 Warner (1969:279) says that from the onset of their initiation ceremonies, the boy candidates were constantly supervised and given every care by male kin, so as to keep them segregated from women's groups and to place a positive emphasis on their ceremonial role.
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the dhapi' ceremonies this association between the sacred feathered strings and body hair symbolises the physical and cultural maturation of boys in their circumcision ceremonies.

A totemic design of the Gupapuygu-Daygurrgurr clan was painted on the chests and abdomens of the three boys, while the fourth boy was painted with a Gupapuygu-Birrkili clan design. These designs identified the initiands with their totemic and clan affiliations (cf. Warner 1969:272). In their dhapi' ceremonies, Bajadi and his brother initiands were involved in an educative and integrative experience in which songs, dances, body paint designs and the whole ceremonial context were powerfully significant (cf. Morphy 1977:13 & 94).

The songman who led the song cycles is māri (mother's mother's brother) to the initiates, who are his gutharra (sister's daughter's sons). Younger men who are māri took each boy gutharra by the hand and led him onto the ceremonial ground in the Yirritja dance of manbiri (eel-tailed catfish). Senior male informants said that when the māri probed the ground with their spears, they were searching for cat-fish in muddy water and they were testing if a man is a man or mokuy (ghost, spirit of the dead). My understanding is that just as fish in muddy water and ghosts are symbolic of ambiguous status, the boys as neophytes in ritual initiation were in a liminal status between the life of childhood and the life of uninitiated men. It was also significant that māri and gutharra went hand in hand in this dance sequence, because the māri-gutharra relationship is a bridging relationship which spans non adjacent generations and is responsible for social and cultural reproduction over time.

Two gathi (mother's father) were also present and prominent during the ceremonies. One of these elderly men is the actual father of two of the mothers who between them had three sons in the dhapi'. Jathi and his wife māri (mother's mother) were among the party of visiting kin who came from the homeland centre in the Cape Stuart area to participate in the dhapi' ceremonies. At the time of his dhapi', both gathi were old men who did not take energetic roles in the ritual but their participation was evidently significant.

Mother's fathers and the fathers of the initiates did not take part in ceremonial roles in the dhapi' but neither were they merely onlookers. They moved across the ceremonial space for closer observation and to give advice and directions to others in more active roles. While the fathers were unobtrusive, the two gathi were more conspicuous in their verbal contributions to the proceedings. The two gathi periodically traversed the ceremonial ground from the semi-circle of onlooking kin, past the group of female kin who circled the site prepared for the circumcision, to the bough shelter on the
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far side. 14

The female märi, an actual mother's mother of three of the initiands and classificatory märi of the fourth boy had a major role in the women's involvement in the dhapi' ceremony. She led the group of senior women who circled the mattresses and blankets which marked the site where the circumcision rite would take place. As well as märi (mother's mother) and momu (father's mother), other mature aged women who are related to the initiates as gändi (mother, mother's sister), bāpa mukul (father's sister) and yap a (older sister) take an active part in dhapi'. 15

One woman exercised her responsibility as gändi (mother) for her own two sons and for Bānaqī, her sister's son, in the climax sequence of dhapi'. Bānaqī's own mother did fly from Darwin to attend her son's initiation ceremonies, but because of her frail health kinswomen advised her to stay away from the actual climax of circumcision rituals so as not to be distressed.

When the songman, male dancers and novices advanced together across the ceremonial ground towards the circumcision site, this group of women increased the tempo of their circular movement and began to sing aloud in anticipation of the climax of dhapi'. The procession of men and initiands formed behind the songman and behind a long stick, which was held horizontally between the foremost male dancers. The dance sequence is called dalkarra or dalkarramirr(i) after a Yirritja word for leaders of Yirritja ceremonies. The older men who led the dancers were said to be full of knowledge of Rom (the law), of songs and sacred business. The line of dancers is "really" the tide line of flotsam, the leaves and sticks from the mangroves which form a line with the movement of the tide. This sequence of the ceremonies is also used in funeral ceremonies when the deceased has to be moved, for example from a vehicle to the "shade" or bough shelter on the ceremonial ground.

Based on this Yolŋu exegesis, my understanding of the dalkarra sequence is that its symbolic meaning includes that of movement, separation and change in status. It is this sequence which advances the neophytes to the place and moment of their initiation and therefore to a change in status, altered relations with female kin and access to male realms of knowledge and power.

14 The initiands prepared for their part in the ceremonies within the shade of the bough shelter. From there, they advanced with the troupe of male dancers onto the ceremony ground and they were carried back to the bough shelter after their ordeal of ritual circumcision.

15 Warner (1969:256) says that only older women are entrusted to the role of encircling the place of initiation, because as his informant stated 'they are better for the boys', and old women are much the same as men, they are like the creation figures, the "Wongar (Wanjarr) women" and they know and enact Rom (the Law). The initiate's māri (mother's mother) takes a prominent role in the ceremonies (Warner 1969:262).
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It was the dalkarra sequence which closed the gap across the ceremonial ground between the group of male dancers and initiands and that of the female kin who were circling the bedding, the 'place of blood' (Keen 1994:174), where the actual circumcisions were to be performed. It is in dhapi' ceremonies that the separate interests of male and female kin in boys come together. At dhapi', female kin hand over the care and control they have exercised over the boy in his childhood to male kin to take over into his manhood.

7.4.3 The ceremonial roles of female kin.

Although female kin were excluded from sight of the actual cutting rite, because men formed a closed circle with their upright bodies and blankets held around their backs, yet the female kin circled the site of bedding in anticipation and encircled the men and initiates at the ceremonial climax. They raised their voices in loud ululation both to cry for the boys in their ordeal and to prevent themselves from hearing the boys if they cried in pain.

After the cutting, each initiate was carried by young bachelors, their dhuvay (brothers-in-law), back to the bough shade to recover and the group of women began the women's ritual response. Father's mother, momu, armed herself with a stick, assumed a threatening demeanour and stalked the male dancers with her raised stick. The other female kin, including märi and gändi circled the male dancers and drove them onto the mattresses and blankets, which had just been used as an arena for the ritual circumcision of boys.

Yolŋu informants explained this dance sequence, saying that the women were hunting for fish in the shallows, driving garkuyi (mullet) into the shallows to be caught when bul'manydjī (shark) smelt the blood and moved in to feed on the trapped fish. In this anticlimax, women symbolically captured men (as mullet), while men had in fact captured boys for initiation. 16

It seemed to me that this inversion of ceremonial roles and outcomes signified the ambiguity of contesting claims of men and women for the boys. The symbolism also explicitly revealed that women had responsibilities in bringing boys to dhapi'. Women circled and entrapped the men as mullet, drove them to the shallows and witnessed the blood-letting by the shark, in much the same way as female kin encircled men and initiates and were "witness", though not eye-witness, to the rite of circumcising boys.

16 Keen (1994:180) documents a similar sequence of rituals in which a Dhuwa moiety shark eats Yirritja fish and he suggests that 'eating' is a metaphor both for initiation and marriage. The boys have been 'eaten' in their circumcision ceremonies as later in life they will be 'eaten' in moiety exogamous marriage.
These mature-aged female kin were not merely compliant in but party to the painful transition of male children from the domain of women to the sphere of men. The female kin were resolute that boys must be "made into men" in circumcision ceremonies but a woman's wail acknowledged the pain of separation of boys from their female kin and of the boys' ordeal. The initiation ground emptied to the sound of an old woman's lament. It was father's mother momu who wailed for her son's son gaminyarr.

Later in the day, when the resumption of men's manikay (singing) indicated that the newly initiated boys had taken their first sip of water for the day, māri (mother's mother) drew a piece of bush string across the tongues of female kin. Her actions lifted the prohibitions on talking, eating and drinking, which were incumbent on mothers' mothers, mothers and sisters of the initiates to observe. The prominent roles of mature female kin, especially of momu (father's mother), māri (mother's mother) and of gāndi (mother, mother's sister) in the initiation of boys in dhapi' comes as a culmination of their responsibilities in the childhood of boys. Among the Yolŋu, dhapi' (circumcision rituals) are definitely not just "men's business".

7.4.4 Delegation of duties and decisions to be made.

When Baŋadi was of an age for dhapi', there were a complex of circumstances which led his father, Warraga, to delegate his responsibilities in large measure to Nyirrk, one of his brothers in his community of origin. Nyirrk was better placed than his brother in Darwin to organise the ceremonies because he was the man on the spot, in the most appropriate place on clan land, with appropriate access to the material and social support of wider kin. His role as father and principal organiser of this dhapi' was an exercise in resource management and social networking.

Nyirrk was able to call upon the help of those of his brothers who lived in his community to ensure that the patrikin were well prepared to host an influx of visiting kin and to stage the ceremonies. He and his eldest brother, Đarritj, a clan and community leader, were the main organisers while a number of younger brothers had either ceremonial roles or specific tasks, such as to meet kin as flights arrived or to ferry the visiting matrikin by motor boat and drive them overland to the ceremonies.

For his own part, Baŋadi's own father in Darwin was pleased that his brothers in his home community had taken charge of his son's dhapi'. Đarritj, the eldest brother said that the brothers took care of Baŋadi because their brother in Darwin still had younger sons to come. They anticipated that these younger sons would provide Warraga with another opportunity in the future to take upon himself the important social role of a father
who organises his son's *dhapi'* (cf. Warner 1969:59).

The brothers did not volunteer that because Baŋadi's own father, Warraga, was long-term resident in the city he was poorly situated to organise his eldest boy's *dhapi'*.

His urban residence and employment had made him peripheral to the organisation of his son's *dhapi'* and even made it difficult for him to attend the ceremonies. Close kin said that Baŋadi's own father was "angry" that the *dhapi'* was not timed to coincide with a public holiday, a long weekend, which would have enabled him to attend without taking special leave from work.

Although Nyirrk, the father who lived in the home community, was better able to balance his commitments to employment and to ceremony, he too was faced with constraints which limited the timing of the climax of *dhapi'*.

It was the end of the school vacation and the term timetable and Balanda teachers were about to reassert influence on Yolŋu children and the conduct of every day life within the Yolŋu community. The next long weekend was not an appropriate time for the *dhapi* ceremonies, because many remote-dwelling kin planned to visit Darwin on the Darwin Show Day weekend. In the 1990s, the timing of *dhapi'* (circumcision rituals) is not only determined by the growth of boys, their father's ability to organise for ceremonies and weather conditions as Yolŋu also have to accommodate introduced time schedules such as school term, employment commitments and a calendar of rival events.

Other commitments also played a part in the fact that Warraga, the father who lived and worked in Darwin, did not attend his first son's circumcision ceremonies. Earlier, Baŋadi's parents had discussed with me the future of their younger sons. They indicated that perhaps they would have the boys circumcised in Darwin hospital and that they would certainly take this option for the boy who at the time was their youngest child. The youngest boy was born with a congenital disorder which required immediate surgical intervention and ongoing monitoring by medical specialists who were based in urban hospitals. However, there were no medical grounds for the parents to choose the option of surgical circumcision for their second son who also lived much of his childhood with his parents in Darwin.

After the success of the ceremonies for their eldest son, Baŋadi, the parents in Darwin began to reconsider their earlier position on whether to have their second son prepare for his initiation or not. Although Baŋadi's own father did not attend, he had the favourable reports of his wife who did, of his brothers who were the principal organisers and also had a copy of his son's ceremony on video.

Close female kin who were present at the initiation ceremonies for Baŋadi and his
ritual peers, had already begun to talk about what boys were next due for dhapi'. Bagadjí's youngest brother (at the time) was excluded because of his medical history, but the boy next in birth order after Bagadjí was counted in with other boys being proposed by female kin as the next cohort for initiation. It may be inferred that these positive circumstances of their eldest son's dhapi' and the plans of wider kin for the future of the upcoming age-set predisposed Bagadjí's parents in Darwin to reconsider their earlier intentions. Subsequently, they sent their second son to live with father's brother and mother's sister in their community of origin for a number of years and in 1994 this boy and his ritual peer group were initiated in circumcision rituals held at Ramingining.

7.5 Further discussion and conclusions.

7.5.1 Male initiation, social change and urban life.

If the urban-reared sons of Yolŋu in Darwin are to be initiated in dhapi' ceremonies in Yolŋu communities on clan lands, they need meaningful contact with a Yolŋu father, whether genitor or pater, involving trust, bonding and cultural communication and similarly sustained contact with significant kin at a critical period in their childhood.

Mother's sister's husband and father's brother, sometimes the same man, are ideal substitutes for own father when a boy has to leave Darwin and return to a remote community to prepare for and be initiated in dhapi' (circumcision rituals). Alternatively, clan 'brothers' of a deceased Yolŋu husband may take responsibility for the initiation of a widow's son. These are likely to be the same socially determined father-child relationships, and in some cases the same men, that provided the 'pathways' of affiliation to kin and country for children who were born outside of Yolŋu marriage to Yolŋu women in Darwin (see 6.2.2, 6.2.3).

However, the active agency of Yolŋu 'social fathers' in the lives of Yolŋu women's mixed-descent children and growing sons in Darwin is more problematic when a Balanda father is a consideration. Even when Yolŋu women return to live with their Balanda spouse and mixed-descent sons to the mother's home community, Yolŋu kin may be reluctant to bypass the Balanda father and proceed with the Yolŋu way of making boys into men.

While in the main, Yolŋu in Darwin continue to recognise circumcision as a cultural imperative for their urban-reared sons, they are also aware that urban life has not well prepared their sons for ritual circumcision. The option of surgical circumcision appears to be acquiring a wider application than that determined strictly by a boy's
medical history. There is some evidence that the medical procedure acquires new significance in Darwin because it is so accessible, so convenient. There is, however, little evidence that Yolŋu women's circumstances of marriage and urban life are the main factors which lead to the medical option being taken. Even in Yolŋu marriages in Darwin and in remote communities, some Yolŋu parents choose to have their sons surgically circumcised in an urban hospital rather than have their sons initiated in dhapi'.

Because the surgical procedure in hospital is a well-known contemporary option available to remote-dwelling Yolŋu, urban-dwelling Yolŋu who take this option for their sons are not singled out for kinship censure as a result. None of my Yolŋu confidants, senior men and women, was prepared to make distinctions between the life chances of those Yolŋu males who were initiated in dhapi' ceremony and those who were circumcised by medical procedure in hospital. ¹⁷

When a Yolŋu boy grows up in a Yolŋu community he participates in ceremonial life from infancy. In Yolŋu remote communities, where funeral ceremonies are regularly recurring events, Yolŋu children have many opportunities to learn the public meanings of ceremonial songs, dances and painted designs, and much of the symbolism and meaning conveyed in circumcision rituals is also conveyed in funeral ceremonies. ¹⁸

In contrast, when a Yolŋu boy grows up in the city, his exposure to ceremonial life and to the learning experiences and the cultural transmission which ceremonies entail are limited to the visits he makes to his Yolŋu parent(s) community of origin and his possible involvement in the irregular and small scale mortuary rituals which Yolŋu hold in Darwin.

In remote communities, Yolŋu boys have many opportunities to learn the significance of ceremonies and the public meanings of body paint designs, ritual paraphernalia and ceremonial song cycles and dance sequences. To this extent, a boy is educated in ceremonial life even if some reason, possibly a medical condition, precludes him from the actual rite of circumcision in favour of the surgical procedure in hospital. If a boy is not ritually circumcised and thus initiated into male ceremonial life, he is unlikely to proceed to higher orders of knowledge and participation in ceremonies which are exclusive to initiated males. While he is not excluded from public ceremonies and the cultural knowledge they encode, a Yolŋu man who has not been ritually initiated is not

¹⁷ The experience of the Kikuyu of East Africa suggests that when ritual circumcision is replaced by medical procedure, then the socialisation and educational functions of initiation rites are lost (Worthman and Whiting 1987:145-65).

¹⁸ For further discussion of the Djunguwan complex of ceremonies for the initiation of boys and as funeral ceremonies for the dead see (Morphy 1991:115-141; Keen 1994:111-191).
able to become a ritual expert.

7.5.2 The contemporary experience of bachelorhood.

In remote communities, there are few ways for Yolŋu youth to form peer groups and few opportunities for Yolŋu males to gain knowledge and status other than in ceremonies. Yolŋu youth, although initiated men, have no role in modern life as warriors and little as hunters, are not ready for marriage and family life and yet they have few introduced opportunities in remote communities. Some Yolŋu youth vent their frustrations in violence, vandalism, self-injury and substance abuse (cf Robinson 1992, 1994).

Apart from the Western 'youth culture' pursuits of sexual adventuring, sport, popular music and the like, many Aboriginal adolescents and young adults of both sexes in remote communities have time on their hands after school hours and after their school years and very limited opportunities in further education, training and employment. Their frustration is not only that they do not have access to new opportunities but also that the more traditional avenues to status, wider responsibilities and personal fulfilment via arranged marriage and ritual initiation are partially if not wholly blocked by social changes.

Burbank (1988) argues that the effect on Aboriginal girls in southeast Arnhem Land of social and economic change and the school system has been to prolong their dependence on the natal family, indefinitely delay their marriage and to introduce a new category of single womanhood into Aboriginal society where none had existed. By contrast, in northern Australia Aboriginal youth traditionally had a prolonged bachelorhood which began with their ritual initiation as boys and ended with men receiving their first wife in their maturity. Among the Tiwi of Bathurst and Melville Islands where rituals of initiation have ceased altogether, Tiwi youth have tried to fill their bachelor years with school, sport, recreational activities, sexual adventures and in youth peer groups, but the incidence of violence, self injury and substance abuse among Tiwi youth indicates that their contemporary transition from boyhood to manhood, bachelorhood to marriage and from the natal family to wider kinship society is sorely troubled (Robinson 1992a:556 ff.).

Among the Yolŋu, where the ritual circumcision of young boys is still valued and commonly practised, these rites of passage continue to signal the interests of wider kin in them and of the movement of boys outwards from the natal and extended family to wider kinship horizons (see Warner 1969:6). Many Yolŋu customs are still in force at the time
of a boy's ritual initiation which prize him loose from his natal family in order to tie him to wider kinship society and clan solidarity (cf Gluckman 1970:58).

Western ideology and the intervention of the State in the family by means of economic, medical, educational policies and the like has forced the natal family unit (or recognised guardians) to assume responsibility for a prolonged childhood and has largely not recognised the value of Yolŋu social organisation and ceremonial life in the "growing up" of children and the "making of boys into men".

In the face of these changes, Yolŋu Rom (Yolŋu law, culture, right way) and a Yolŋu system of governance by "all the families" in social life and "all the bāpurru (clan group)" in ceremonial life continues to chart the right way, the Yolŋu way for the younger generations. In this way, young women and youth experience the lure and the frustrations of social change as well as the social pressures and cultural imperatives as the Yolŋu way of life is upheld in remote communities.

As discussed in the previous chapter, Yolŋu girls are no longer 'governable' within promised and early marriage, although family pressures continue to be exerted on them to marry, if not their promised husbands, at least the "straight way" of culturally prescribed marital relations and not simply to boyfriends of their own choosing.

Yolŋu women and girls have yielded their former group strength as co-wives in promised and polygynous marriage in favour of marital autonomy, single women's pension incomes and women's matrifocal households. In the main, however, Yolŋu males retain their traditional male peer groups, at least in ceremonial life.

Yolŋu girls and young women have acquired government assistance to be socially and economically autonomous of marriage, if not of "the families", and the means to be able to move to the city. On the other hand, young Yolŋu males typically lack the means to travel to Darwin and the 'work for the dole' payments, which they are eligible for via the Community Development and Employment Program (CDEP) tie them to local and limited work in remote communities. While Yolŋu bachelors might want to escape the frustrations and limitations of remote communities for the excitement of the city, they typically lack the means to do so, and they are still 'governed', to an extent, by circumcision rituals and their initiation into male social and ceremonial life in remote communities.
7.5.3 Reverse mobility, from town to country.

Yolŋu parents and remote-dwelling kin who have particular responsibilities in children living in Darwin recognise the importance of wider kin, ceremonial life and homeland on children's social and cultural development and particularly on the initiation of boys into male solidarities and ceremonial life.

It is by returning to remote communities for funeral ceremonies that urban-dwelling Yolŋu most commonly affirm their ceremonial obligations to kin, clan and country. Much of the symbolic content of Yolŋu ceremonial life is represented in funeral rituals so that when Yolŋu women and their children return to kin and country in northeast Arnhem Land for funeral ceremonies they are also working at "growing up" their children the Yolŋu way. In particular, when Yolŋu in Darwin take or send their boys to remote communities for dhapi' (circumcision rituals) and to Gunapipi, regional and revelatory ceremonies, they confirm that ceremonial life is a major component of a "Yolŋu-way" of living and learning.19

While it is primarily up to Yolŋu parents and Yolŋu mothers in Darwin to send their sons back to kin and country in adequate time for their initiation, this decision is typically not left to the parents and urban kin to make in isolation, as remote-dwelling kin have interests in the ceremonial life of urban-dwelling boys. This is in part due to affective relations between urban and remote-dwelling kin and specific kinship roles in the development of the young; but it is also a process of political recruitment of boy novices to perpetuate patriclans.

Morphy (1990:327) says that the composition of Yolŋu clans wax and wane and so too the strength of claim to land but that, 'whatever demographic shifts occur there are pressures for the group actually "owning" the land to maintain the ...links'. Morphy (1990:312-344) argues that clan knowledge and representation of myths and totems maintain the links between the living clan, the deceased ancestors, ancestral beings and the land. The transmission of this cultural knowledge and the particular form of clan succession is imparted to males in ritual stages, which begin with the initiation of young boys in dhapi' ceremonies.

Urban and remote-dwelling kin are vitally interested in the transmission of clan knowledge and the succession of rights in land. Urban parents wish to develop their sons'
social and cultural inheritance among kin and in country in northeast Arnhem Land, while remote-dwelling kin do not wish to lose kin and clansmen of the future to the Balanda-way of life in the city.

Jarritj compared the return of Yolŋu boys from Darwin to kin, country and for ceremony in northeast Arnhem Land to the practice of Balanda parents of sending their children to boarding schools in their state and town of origin. It was his belief that Balanda parents made this decision for their children so that they would grow up in the "home country" and close to their parent's kin. Hart and Pilling (1960:95) also likened the seclusion of Tiwi youths during their initiation to the Western custom in which sons are 'sent away to college'.

However, the pattern of movement of Aboriginal children is in many respects reverse that of the white population, where children raised in the country are sent in their adolescent years to boarding schools in the city so as to give them a better education and an introduction to wider society. By contrast, Aboriginal children who are being raised in urban centres and capital cities are taken or sent back to remote communities in their childhood, the better to be raised according to their Aboriginal social and cultural identity among wider kinship society and in the communities and 'country' of origin of their parents and grandparents.

In a nation-wide study of Aboriginal migration to Australian cities, Gray (1989:133) found that in the eastern states there was strong evidence of migration from city to country for Aboriginal children aged 5-14 years of age. This would suggest that the need for Aboriginal children to establish their cultural roots in kin and in country was a major influence in the direction of their mobility. Young and Doohan (1989:114) note that in Central Australia, Aboriginal children are residentially mobile within a region as they move about between remote communities and Alice Springs so as to visit their wider kin and to get away from adverse family circumstances. Yolŋu children who are growing up in Darwin visit their parents' community of origin so as to get away from urban circumstances which are inimical to the Yolŋu way of "growing up children", so as to develop their social and cultural roots among wider kin and in country and to participate in ceremonial life.

On the other hand, when Yolŋu children have reached their adolescent years, are confident in their Yolŋu identity and can receive educational and travel subsidies, then Yolŋu parents and kin in Darwin sometimes re-consider bringing them back to the city to further their Western style education at a boarding school or by attending suburban high schools and staying with kin in suburban housing. This need not conflict with the timing
of Yolŋu boys rituals of initiation as Yolŋu boys are typically circumcised earlier in their childhood, before pubescence and their secondary schooling.

For example, in 1994, some years after his dhapi' rituals Bana. Q. i returned to Darwin to attend Kormilda College as a boarding student in his last year of school. In 1995, he enrolled in a course at the Faculty of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (FATSIS) at the Northern Territory University. With the help of his own parents and his bapa mukul (father's sister) in Darwin and his close classificatory father and mother and wider kin in his remote community of origin, Bana. Q. i had come a long way in terms of being "grown up" and "made into a man" in both the Yolŋu and Balanda ways.

In the Northern Territory, it is government policy to subsidise the education needs of children in isolated communities and to enable parents to send children to urban schools to better their opportunities in Western education. There is, however, no complementary policy to subsidise the movement of urban-dwelling Aboriginal children to remote communities in order to further the Aboriginal dimensions of their education. When Yolŋu children living in Darwin return to remote communities to benefit from the care of wider kin, to attend bilingual, bicultural schools and to participate in ceremonies, this direction of movement typically does not receive government recognition or subsidy. These urban-rural movements of Yolŋu children are typically organised and supported by a Yolŋu system of familial governance.

From a Balanda perspective, 'good government' consists of providing remote-dwelling people, including Aboriginal people, with financial entitlements and subsidised travel so that they can move to urban centres and capital cities, there to obtain the best government can offer in terms of the concentration and comprehensiveness of services, especially education, health and housing services. There is little or no recognition by government policy makers and administrators that an Aboriginal system of 'good governance' is also involved in sponsoring rural-urban movements, including reverse direction of movements from town to country, from city to remote communities. In the following chapter, I examine the government generated and family generated movements of Yolŋu to Darwin for care of the sick and the implications for kinship households in the suburbs when remote-dwelling kin travel to the city to "keep company" in good times and in family crises.
Chapter 8

Keeping company
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8.1 Introduction.

In the previous chapter, some Yolŋu parents were seen to opt for the medical solution rather than the customary ritual when there were decisions to be made about the circumcision of their sons. Nathan and Leichleitner Japanangka (1983:90) say of many Aboriginal people that they, 'have become addicted to medical care as a solution to all problems. People have lost their responsibility for fundamental life processes'.

Following Foucault, McHoul and Grace (1993:61) argue that government assumes responsibility for 'life processes'. Foucault (1979:143) says that 'power' is about the management of 'life' and argues that 'government' directs the conduct of individual lives, of family life and in particular intervenes at critical times within the family and the life of the individual, including in times of sickness and death (cf. Foucault 1986:221).

In the Northern Territory and elsewhere in Australia, Aboriginal people in and from remote communities have had their responsibility for health, illness and death largely taken out of their hands by a government system of service delivery in which birth, accident, sickness and death are largely 'taken care of' in urban centres, particularly in urban hospitals. Yolŋu have little choice but to trust that urban hospitals offer the best health care and medical services available to them in the Balanda way (see also Reid 1983:124).

Despite these interventions, the Yolŋu make adjustments in order to retain and develop their own culturally distinct social and ceremonial responses to 'fundamental life processes', from birth through childhood, in initiation and marriage and, as will be seen in this and the following chapter, in health, sickness and death. When Yolŋu come to Darwin to seek urban hospital and health services and transient accommodation and permanent housing, they have recourse to two systems of service provision, to that offered by kin as well as that provided by government.

This chapter focuses on how Yolŋu rely on the care of the family and of the State when they seek health and housing services in Darwin. As Donzelot (1979:6) has emphasised, State forms of government intersect with government by the family precisely in this area of 'health, modes of subsistence and lodging'. The problem is that the two systems which attempt to look after Yolŋu in ordinary circumstances and in times of crisis, the one as citizens, the other as kin, are often out of synchronisation and their articulation is so little understood.

In the early 1970s, Gale (1972) documented the link between centralised and comprehensive health and hospital services and the transience and migration of
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Aborigines from remote areas in South Australia and in the Northern Territory to a southern capital, Adelaide. The late stage in the disease cycle when medical intervention typically occurs means that Aborigines from remote communities in the Northern Territory are more likely than Aborigines from urban areas to be transferred from a regional hospital in the Territory to southern capitals, most commonly to Adelaide from Alice Springs hospital and to more diverse destinations from Darwin hospital (Brummitt 1987).

Young and Doohan (1989:170-177) note that in the Northern Territory, the 'comprehensiveness' of health services 'increases with the degree of centralisation' so that remote-dwelling Aboriginal people are drawn to urban centres for hospital and health services. More recently, a Territory wide report notes that, 'Aborigines are well documented as having poorer health status than non-Aborigines' and 'hospitalisations will inevitably continue to increase for as long as there is so much unmet need' (Plant, Condon & Durling 1995:x).

Moreover, it is not simply Aboriginal patients who are being brought into urban centres. Kin who accompany a patient to hospital stay in the urban regional centre or the capital of Darwin, wherever the patient is hospitalised, as they "keep company" with patients and anxious family members. They wait in town, often for as long as the patient is hospitalised and for those who are transferred to hospitals in southern cities. In either circumstance, the prolonged stay of the support group of kin impacts heavily upon urban-dwelling kin who help and often house them for the duration of their stay.

Case studies of individual Yolŋu households reveal the recurring, cumulative and often times coincidental circumstances which see Yolŋu householders in the suburbs face crises in health and housing. When Yolŋu have transient purposes in town as diverse as recreational pursuits and accompanying a patient to hospital, and they rely on kin who are more permanently resident in Darwin to help and house them, the result is frequently an overburdening of Yolŋu households in the suburbs. This chapter examines the impact on Yolŋu households in Darwin when recurring crises in housing and in health disrupt suburban living, as Yolŋu kin attempt to provide a familial response in articulation with bureaucratic forms of service provision.

A Yolŋu system of care for the sick has been overlayed and to an extent overwhelmed by the delivery of Western medical and health services, especially by the system of bringing the patient into urban centres to be hospitalised or attend outpatient clinics, thereby taking the sick away from kin and country. Nonetheless, in northeast Arnhem Land, Yolŋu retain several dimensions of caring for their sick, including the
specialist services of *marrggitj* (traditional healer) and ritual components of ceremonial life which emphasise healing, cleansing, protection from or removal of dangers in the physical, social and spiritual dimensions of life (Reid 1983; Keen 1994:139-140).

Moreover, Yolŋu and especially Yolŋu women, have enthusiastically taken up careers as Western trained health workers in remote community health clinics, where they interface between a familial system of health care as they act as agents of an introduced and Western medical system of health service delivery. Apart from these specialists in the Yolŋu dimensions of care for the sick, Yolŋu also hold that close family and wider kin are culturally and morally obliged to care for and "keep company" with their sick, even when this means accompanying them to Nhulunbuy, Darwin and sometimes to southern cities, when their sick are hospitalised and transferred between hospitals.

### 8.2 A Yolŋu system of care for the sick.

Reid (1983) notes that the Yolŋu in northeast Arnhem Land retain their own socio-medical theory and practice in the management of wellbeing, sickness and death not in opposition to but in conjunction with Western medical ideas and services. While the Yolŋu understand there are natural causes of ill-health and loss of well-being, they believe in the ultimate agency of supernatural forces in sickness and death (Scarlett, White & Reid 1982:166). The Yolŋu believe there is always a moral and spiritual cause underlying the physical cause of accident, illness, loss of well-being and death (Reid 1983:56). Although the Yolŋu accept Western diagnosis as one level of explanation, the deeper, more culturally satisfying explanation involves sociological and spiritual causation attributed to, 'a failure to observe the laws of behaviour governing the relationship between people, the land and the supernatural (Reid 1983:54-55)."
available for their children, first in their own remote communities and if need be in urban hospitals. This may involve them seeking a range of services including those of kin who are traditional healers and others who are Western trained health-workers in their own remote communities, as well as more comprehensive and specialist medical services in urban hospitals.

8.2.1 The young mother, the sick baby and the marrngjitj.

Wurrpan was introduced in earlier chapters when she lived in Darwin as a single young woman and fell pregnant as a result of a casual sexual encounter in the city (see 5.3.2, 5.5.1) and later when she sought to have her child and a subsequent baby named and affiliated with kin and country even as she chose to live in Darwin (see 6.3.1). Wurrpan had returned to live in her remote community several months prior to and stayed for several months after the birth of her baby. When I visited her home community in the very wet month of January 1991, her infant was about four months old and Wurrpan was worried because the baby had diarrhoea.

The health-worker was a known kinswoman who reassured the young mother and advised her to give the baby boiled, cooled water with rehydration salts and she gave Wurrpan the bottle and sachet of salts. Wurrpan had little idea about how to sterilise the bottle, and the fully breast fed baby rejected the bottle anyway. The baby was feverish, cried frequently and while the young mother pacified her infant with the breast, the baby slept little and continued to have diarrhoea.

After another uncomfortable night, Wurrpan took the baby to her sister's husband who lived close by and who was a marrngjitj (traditional healer). The powers and skills of the marrngjitj (traditional healer) are well documented (Reid 1983:56-78; Scarlett, White & Reid 1982:165-169; Thomson 1961; Warner 1969:200-208) and need not be detailed here other than to say that among the Yolŋu the marrngjitj is more a social, psychological and spiritual healer than a medical practitioner or herbalist (Scarlett, White & Reid 1982:166-7).

I went with Wurrpan and was therefore able to see what services the local marrngjitj offered. He took the baby, which was dressed only in a disposable nappy, and laid her across his thigh as he sat cross-legged on the floor. He proceeded to feel the

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2 In other parts of Aboriginal Australia the traditional healer and Aboriginal ‘doctor’ is known by other names, for example in Western Arnhem Land as marrngjibu (traditional healer) (Soon 1983) and in Central-Western Australia as the mabarn (traditional healer), and is described as continuing to provide a specialist and kin-based response to sickness and health needs in juxtaposition with introduced hospital and health services (Tonkinson 1982:225-241; Hunter 1993:54-57).
baby's head, abdomen and back and said that the infant had a sore spot high in the gut but that she was otherwise manymak (all right).

Then the marrggitj began to massage the baby with his fingers, which he alternately moistened with sweat under his armpit and with natural oil from his hair. First he massaged the head and appeared to feel the fontanelle, then he bent low over the baby's head, made a sucking noise and spat phlegm to one side. He massaged the baby's back and abdomen, using more sweat from under his arm and oil from his hair and all the while the baby relaxed and stopped crying. Suddenly, the marrggitj rose to his feet, handed the baby to the young mother and raced to the outside where he retched repeatedly. When he came inside, the marrggitj, who was also her brother-in-law, again reassured Wurrpan that the baby was only "little bit" sick and not to worry as the baby would get better soon.

The next day there was a repeat session with the marrggitj but by that night and after the baby had vomited a little, Wurrpan began to talk about seeing her kinswoman, the local health-worker, even though it was well after clinic hours. She also said that she might use her pension cheque to return with the infant to Darwin. However, she waited until the next morning and went to the clinic, where her kinswoman, the local YoliJU health-worker, organised that the young mother and her infant fly to Gove district hospital in Nhulunbuy. Had there been further complicating circumstances in the baby's health or an epidemic of gastro-intestinal disease in northeast Arnhem Land, no doubt mother and infant would have travelled under the inter-hospital transfer scheme to the public hospital in Darwin.

During the time of my field work when I moved in kinship networks that spanned the city and YoliJU communities in Arnhem Land, I never knew of a marrggitj who lived and was active in Darwin. The same marrggitj whom Wurrpan consulted in her community did come to Darwin and stayed in various kinship households in the suburbs during the period of my fieldwork, but I never heard of him practising his 'doctoring' skills while in town.

8.2.2 Known kin, local clinics and urban health services.

In their own remote communities, the YoliJU have recourse to well known kin who are specialists in matters of well-being and healing. In the 1990s, these include YoliJU who are trained health-workers as well as marrggitj. However, in many circumstances the YoliJU require further health care, beyond that which is provided by kin locally. They attend clinics held by the visiting non-Aboriginal doctor and are medically evacuated and
travel more voluntarily to urban centres for hospital and other health services, especially to Nhulunbuy and Darwin. Reid (1983:97) says that while Yolŋu have recourse to what appears to be 'a hierarchy of resort', it is perhaps more apt to describe their efforts in times of worry over illness as 'a shotgun approach' where a range of traditional and introduced health-care strategies are used, 'the rationale being that at least one might work'.

The culturally distinct and kin-oriented services offered by the marrggitj (traditional healer) and the 'culturally appropriate' health services (cf. CRESAP, 1991a:2) provided by Yolŋu health-workers in remote Yolŋu communities are not available to Yolŋu when they fall sick in Darwin or when as patients they are brought into the city from remote communities for hospital and other urban health services. Yolŋu health-workers have limited opportunities for employment in urban hospitals and other health services in Nhulunbuy and in Darwin. At the time of my research, there was one Yolŋu woman who worked as a health-worker at Danila Dilba, an Aboriginal medical service in Darwin, and one Yolŋu man also lived in town and worked for the Council for Aboriginal Alcohol Program Services (CAAPS), a rehabilitation service for Aboriginal substance abusers (see also 10.3.2). Otherwise, by moving to the city Yolŋu lose what little they have gained in their remote communities in the management of introduced health and medical services. In Darwin, Yolŋu are typically cared for by strangers and in alien contexts, in particular by hospital based in-patient and out-patient services.

Whether Yolŋu live in remote communities with very limited health services, or have lived long-term in Darwin and become familiar with urban health and hospital services or been trained as health-workers in Western medical ideas, skills and technologies, they have had to balance in some measure the Yolŋu and Balanda explanations and management of illness, misadventure and death (cf. Reid 1983:119-121). In hospital and in the care of other urban centred and Balanda style health services, dispensed by strangers, the Yolŋu experience the full weight of the Balanda system of health care and impediments to their own system of care for and services to the sick and their families. In the city and in the absence of kin who are specialists in health-care, the Yolŋu nevertheless have ordinary strategies to nurse their sick and to help the immediate family of support.

8.2.3 "Keeping company" and "helping out".

The ethnographic literature has given little attention to the ordinary, and non-specialist care which Aboriginal kin give to their sick (Scarlett, White & Reid 1982:165).
In their research into Aboriginal health in Central Australia, Nathan and Leichleitner Japanganka (1983:198) suggest that Aboriginal strategies to manage illness and care for their sick are difficult to discern within the encompassing and dominant system of Western style health care and medical services. Yolŋu efforts to help their sick by accompanying them to the city, hosting the support group, visiting the hospital, looking after kin as outpatients and by mediating between Yolŋu patient and non-Aboriginal medical staff are not recognised by government agents as a system of kin-based services.

The first and most compelling responsibility Yolŋu have for those who are considered to be seriously ill is for close kin to "keep company" with them. Yolŋu kin must not be seen to be indifferent, to neglect their sick or to do anything which will cause them worry or harm. Kin are likely to accuse each other of not taking proper care of the person before and during an illness and hence of being to "blame" for deterioration in health and possibly for a death (Reid 1983:113).

When Yolŋu patients are brought into Darwin for hospital and other health care, a supporting family member or group will accompany them. Typically the more serious the circumstances, the more anxious the family, the more imperative the obligation to "keep company" with the sick and therefore the greater the number of kin who come into and coalesce in town. Yolŋu 'have an obligation to stay as close as possible to a sick person' and 'to show their concern, to cry, to comfort or simply to sit' with the afflicted person and the immediate family (Reid 1983:96-7; see also Reid & Dhamarrandji 1978:29).

Yolŋu efforts to keep company and provide help are directed not only to the patient but also to the most anxious, most responsible of the support group. Considerable effort is made to balance social relationships so that father's and mother's side are represented in the care-giving group and where necessary classificatory kin reinforce and substitute for actual relations in care-giving.

These are not just passive commitments as Yolŋu take action to alleviate the symptoms and provide a social environment of care and solidarity. The practical "helping out" which urban-dwelling kin feel obliged to give includes housing and feeding the support group of kin, visiting the sick in hospital, reassuring patients and anxious kin about hospital procedures as far as they are able and acting in unofficial liaison and interpreting capacities between hospital staff, Yolŋu patients and accompanying kin.

Apart from these more general services to assist the sick and the immediate family of support, the kin most immediately close to the afflicted person, especially close actual and classificatory female kin tend to their sick. Yolŋu women nurse their sick by feeding, massaging, cooling or warming them and by sleeping alongside and hugging the sick and
those in pain. Of course they are not able to do so when the patient is isolated in an urban hospital ward. Western medical strategies seek to isolate the sick, prevent the spread of disease and leave the nursing and doctoring to experts and strangers.

Yolŋu patients abscond from hospitals from fear and because they miss and need the close contact, the reassurance and the nursing of close family and wider kin (cf. Reid and Dhamarrandji 1978). Sometimes kin in Darwin undertake to look after their sick in hostel accommodation and suburban housing and to take them to hospital for medical appointments and outpatient clinics rather than submit them to hospitalisation. In this way they seek a compromise between the Yolŋu and Balanda ways of caring for their sick.

8.2.4 Hunting and health care.

The Yolŋu in Darwin are largely dependent upon Balanda medicines and therapies for illness. Urban-dwelling Yolŋu do not practise anything like a thorough strategy to maintain or to regain their health by attention to nutrition, to lifestyle or by using traditional remedies and pharmacopoeia. They recognise, however, that traditional bush and marine foods are needed to promote a healthy life (cf. Scarlett, White & Reid 1982) and to reduce dependence on Western medicine and hospitalisation (Reid 1983:156). Yolŋu believe in and attempt to gain the benefits to be had in fresh air, exercise, traditional foods and the conviviality of hunting and gathering trips in the mangroves, freshwater lagoons and bush environs of Darwin and surrounding countryside.

The getting, giving and eating of traditional foods is an important feature of Yolŋu efforts to maintain or restore their sense of social, psychological and physical well-being in the city. Yolŋu who are concerned about the poor appetite and slow recovery of kin in hospital will sometimes smuggle them some pre-cooked traditional foods to supplement the hospital diet or will take patients out for a morning or afternoon to enjoy a meal of hunted foods and in the company of kin. Women who feel unwell or who are concerned about their children's health will go hunting in and around the city and in doing so will even miss out on hostel meal times in their quest for "fresh foods". The role of hunting and gathering as an Aboriginal initiative towards a healthy life in urban areas has been very largely overlooked.

When there is worry, sickness or a death within a group, urban-dwelling kin try to provide food and recreation which will alleviate illness and anxiety. To this end, they take those awaiting treatment and their support group of kin on hunting excursions in and around Darwin or else they pass on culturally prized bush and marine foods for those considered to be in need. The fresh air, fresh food and good company are intended to and
may in fact bring about social, psychological and physical benefits to the group of anxious kin, if not actually to the sick themselves. Hunting trips in and around Darwin are also economically beneficial when suburban households are overcrowded with visiting kin who have accompanied a patient into town.

8.3 The nexus of urban hospital and housing services.

As discussed in an earlier chapter (see 3.7.1), remote-dwelling patients and an escort kin per patient have their travel to and accommodation in Darwin organised and payed for under various departmental schemes, including medical evacuation (MEDEVAC), inter-hospital transfer (IHT) and the Patients Assistance Travel Scheme (PATS). The larger support group of kin who are obliged to "keep company", especially when serious illness or injury are concerned, are not provided for by these Northern Territory government initiatives. It is up to urban-dwelling Yolŋu to take this company of kin into their households and to host them for the duration of the health crises and of their stay in town. In consequence, the households of urban-dwelling Aborigines are overburdened as they accommodate kin who come to town to visit relatives in hospital or to await medical treatments.

A study of Aboriginal health issues in Central Australia in the early 1980s (Nathan & Leichleitner Japanangka 1983:153-4) observes that Aborigines from remote areas were deterred from seeking hospital and urban health services because of the lack of accommodation prior to admission and after discharge from the hospital in Alice Springs. This problem was addressed as early as the 1970s but only partly resolved by the opening of Aboriginal Hostels Limited hostels and other Church and State accommodation initiatives (see also 4.3). A more recent Territory-wide report (Clark 1991) not focused specifically on Aboriginal women but on remote-dwelling women in general notes that urban accommodation and other support services are still not adequately meeting the needs of women, children and family groups as they come into town to access hospital and other centralised health services.

Among Yolŋu in Darwin, it is the households of kin in the suburbs that take the bulk of the support group of kin who accompany patients to hospital, because these houses are family sized and less subject to daily scrutiny as to household composition than are hostel rooms and managed flats. It is up to Yolŋu households in the Bagot Aboriginal community and in Housing Commission houses in the suburbs to provide accommodation for the larger and unsponsored group of kin who come in to Darwin to "keep company" in ordinary times, but especially when there is worry and sickness
among "the families". The impact of housing and caring for the influx of visitors who "keep company" with the sick is a burden which brings many a Yolŋu household in Darwin to the point of collapse.

Yolŋu efforts to nurture their sick and to manage the socio-economic support group who form in Darwin around the sick cannot be understood in isolation from other purposes Yolŋu have in the city nor from the agency of urban accommodation and housing services. Yolŋu suburban households also host kin who have more cheerful purposes in Darwin such as holidays with urban-dwelling kin, shopping and a variety of recreational interests and calendar events which bring remote-dwelling people to the city.

One enticement to the city for Aboriginal people who live in 'Dry' communities where alcohol consumption is prohibited, is the opportunity to drink alcohol. Yolŋu who come to Darwin and take the opportunity to drink alcohol seek a safe place to drink, to sleep off the after effects of binge drinking and they also resort to the households of kin at Bagot and in the suburbs. Often it is a coincidence of events both serious and lighthearted, for example of Yolŋu kin who are "keeping company" in town because they have kin in hospital and others who have more recreational and sometimes irresponsible purposes in Darwin, that bring Yolŋu suburban households into disrepute with neighbours and with housing authorities.

8.3.1 A 'service economy' and the 'recomposing household'.

With his focus predominantly on men and the alcohol-drinking scene in Darwin in the 1970s, Sansom (1980:6) argues that Aboriginal fringe-dwellers were not 'assimilated' to urban institutions. Sansom (1980:7) says of Aborigines who lived at the time in Darwin fringe camps, that they minimised their contact with urban institutions, including urban housing, and operated an internal Aboriginal economy by redistributing welfare monies and rendering each other services as kin and 'countrymen'. In contrast, in the 1990s, Yolŋu are largely integrated into urban housing, health services and the money economy, although they also have their own techniques to redistribute money and other material resources. 3

Sansom went on to argue that Aborigines in and on the fringe of rural towns and urban centres in Northern Australia practiced 'a service economy' (1982:131), a 'grammar of service' (1988:161) and that 'performative kinship' was the 'north Australian mode'

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3 Aboriginal people in the Territory redistribute money within alcohol-drinking groups (Sansom 1980:44-75) and via gambling at cards (Goodale 1987:6-21) and Yolŋu participate in these two activities in Darwin. More typically, however, Yolŋu redistribute food, money and services when they "sit down together" in Darwin in daytime sociality and in extended households.
Keeping company (1988:170). More recently, Merlan (1992:1-37) says that it is the 'being for' and 'doing for' as much as the 'giving', that constitutes the 'service mode' among Aboriginal women and family groups in the town camps of Katherine, but again the focus is not on Aborigines in 'houses-in-town'. Aborigines living on the fringe of Alice Springs in the late 1970s operated a 'domestic economy' which both reflected and resisted dependence upon the welfare bureaucracy and urban services, although Collman (1988:105-125) argues that Aboriginal women and children were becoming more integrated into urban life, especially by means of urban housing and health services.

My interest here is not in an Aboriginal economy as such, as in an 'economy of power relations' (Foucault 1986:210) between Yolŋu and Balanda systems of care and control, particularly as both systems impinge on Yolŋu at times when they experience crises in health and in housing in Darwin. As Sansom (1982:131) has noted of an Aboriginal 'economy of service', whenever kin have 'a business or trouble or a problem or a ceremony' there are other kin who are obliged to help 'in times of trouble' and to come 'from far to offer service'.

That Aborigines move about the countryside and between rural and urban centres according to culturally specific patterns is well established and is linked in the literature to the allied phenomenon of the 'recomposing household or fluctuating local group' (Sansom 1982:122). Aboriginal households (and camp sites) in urban centres form the nodal points, the economic bases and social support centres that accommodate Aboriginal kin who are in transit or who are embarking on more permanent migration (cf. Beckett 1988:134). The metaphor of kinship networks as 'roads provided by kinship' and kinship households as service stops (Beckett 1988:134) conveys something of Aboriginal social organisation between the country and the town. I would go further and say that the Yolŋu have rights and obligations to culturally distinct services rendered in social and in ceremonial life that extend, albeit in attenuated form, to Yolŋu who move to Darwin for transient and more permanent purposes.

Yolŋu households in Darwin develop and re-adjust ordinarily as well as in times of crisis according to relations of kinship, marriage and sometimes in response to obligations in ceremonial life and are therefore not merely 'governed' externally by urban housing policies, rent inspectors and circumstances of urban life. The cycle of household expansion and contraction among Yolŋu in Darwin exemplifies the so-called 'concertina household' in which Aborigines attempt to 'cope with the vicissitudes of life ...by recomposing households' (Sansom 1982:122). There is, however, method in what often appears to the non-Aboriginal outsider as mayhem when Yolŋu households expand and
8.4 Case studies.

The following brief case studies and one extended case study illustrate how relations of kinship and of marriage pattern the ways in which Yolŋu suburban households extend and contract. The accompanying household genealogies provide evidence of social change in as much as suburban households in the case studies were based on monogamous Yolŋu marriage, inter-ethnic 'de facto' unions and on matrifocal and sibling-based family units, whereas their antecedents were often in polygynous marriages in remote communities. Yet it will be shown that each of the sample households expanded along 'traditional' lines as Yolŋu coalesced in suburban households according to patterns of relatedness traced through a common ancestor, via a current polygynous marriage, polygyny in a previous generation or former marriage, according to actual and classificatory relations as siblings, and, in some cases, three generations were present in the one household.

Each case study illustrates a medical emergency that causes a patient to be hospitalised in Darwin, kin to move to and come together in the city to "keep company" in this anxious time and shows how the purposes of other kin in town coincide to overextend and threaten the viability of kinship households in the suburbs. The genealogies provide insights as to the patterns by which these kinship households extended in these particular crises and key characters and groups are highlighted: the patient in hospital (small ellipse), the household according to the tenancy agreement (large ellipse), the male ancestor and polygynous husband (1) and female ancestors and polygynously married wives (A, B, C) and the extended family group co-resident at the time (see genealogies 1, 2, 3, & 4).

8.4.1 The extension of a nuclear family household.

As noted in an earlier chapter (see 5.3.2), Burala had lived in the same community but separate from her Yolŋu husband for many years, ever since he took a younger wife in polygynous marriage. When her husband suffered a coronary occlusion in his remote community and was medically evacuated to the Gove District Hospital, then transferred to the public hospital in Darwin, Burala and the younger co-wife, Gunda, decided to "keep company" by following their seriously ill husband to Darwin.

Close family in Darwin were advised by telephone that "we are all coming in to keep him company". The "all" were his two wives, his four young adult and adolescent
Genealogy 1: The extension of a nuclear family household.

Genealogy 2: Inter-ethnic marriage-based household

Key

ø Δ : deceased kin
Δ : adults co-resident
Δ : not co-resident
△ : children co-resident
= △ = = : wives in polygynous marriage
→ : woman's serial marriage
Genealogy 3. Yolngu monogamous marriage-based household

Genealogy 4: Sibling's private rental household

Key
- Ø: deceased kin
- △: adult co-resident
- =: co-resident
- : children co-resident
- : not co-resident
- : wives in polygamous marriage
children plus one grand-child and two of the four young children by his second wife and two sisters-in-law, that is a sister of each of his wives, together with their dependent children. These women and children came to Darwin by air and stayed in a Commission house in the northern suburbs with the Yolŋu householder, who was related to the two wives and their sisters as an actual and classificatory brother. This Yolŋu household in Darwin, though based on a monogamous Yolŋu marriage and nuclear family unit, was extended according to relations of polygynous marriage, actual and classificatory sibling relationships and included three generations.

The two co-wives had come together under the one roof in Darwin, as they responded in temporary co-operation as co-wives of their seriously ill dhuway (husband). While ordinarily the two wives kept their social distance and maintained separate households in their home community, in Darwin and in this crisis, they came together as "all one family" (See genealogy 1).

8.4.2 An inter-ethnic marriage-based household.

Guŋurru has already been introduced as the younger of two widows and former co-wives in an earlier polygynous marriage in a remote community, when sometime after the death of her Yolŋu husband she moved to Darwin and set up house and raised a second family with a 'de facto' husband of mixed-Aboriginal descent (see 6.3.5).

Guŋurru's household in a Housing Commission house in the northern suburbs was always more a Yolŋu extended family household rather than one based strictly on the inter-ethnic marriage. For Guŋurru had to rely on her supporting parent pension and Yolŋu relatives for additional income and for company and help with child-care because her 'de facto' was an unreliable provider and help-mate. Guŋurru frequently had kin, mainly female relatives, staying with her when they had various purposes in town. Her close classificatory sister and former co-wife, Burrmalala, had remained a widow and she and two of her children were living at the time in Guŋurru's extended family household in the northern suburbs.

At first it was happy events which brought about the extension and overcrowding of Guŋurru's household. A popular music concert at the amphitheatre in Darwin brought many Yolŋu families and young single people into town and another concert, which was scheduled for the following month, meant that many stayed on and still more kin came in for the second concert. While Guŋurru herself never drank alcohol, her 'de facto' husband had an alcohol-drinking problem. His own drinking habits possibly encouraged those Yolŋu kin, who wanted to drink alcohol while they were in town, to stay at Guŋurru's
house and go on a binge.

On one particular night, the party became too rough for the regular and sober co-residents. Gujurru's adolescent daughters by her Yolnu husband, now deceased, were in Darwin for the rock concert and the single girls were uncomfortable in the house when their visiting kinsmen were drinking alcohol. Gujurru had her young children to consider and so it was Burrmalala, her close classificatory sister and former co-wife, who went with the girls to sleep on the beach to escape the unruly behaviour. It is not uncommon for urban-dwelling kin, including women and children, to be displaced from their homes when households in the suburbs are over-run by visiting kin.

Early in the morning, agents of the Housing Commission came to Gujurru's household and started to move people out. The widow returned from the beach to see this process in action and she learnt that the household had to be reduced to the number and the composition indicated in the tenancy contract. Burrmalala and the girls were therefore supernumeraries but fortunately she was able to book herself and the girls into Galawu hostel for a night or two. It was in her company at the hostel that I heard her and other Yolnu women making distinctions between Yolnu and Balanda ways of managing housing needs. The women discussed how the Housing Commission were "toughening up" and moving Yolnu out of crowded households.

The women said that many family groups and young people from communities in northeast Arnhem Land had come in for the concerts and did not have the money for return airfares or else they cashed in their return airfares to finance their 'good time' in the city. This meant that remote-dwelling kin who were in town, ostensibly for a limited time and set purpose, tended to prolong their stay and to rely on urban dwelling kin to house and feed them until they had the will and the means to return to their home communities. Gujurru's household survived this particular build-up of kin even though the Housing Commission took action to evict most of the visitors. Some months later in the same year, the household was again extended by kin and again threatened by overcrowding. Gujurru's two adolescent daughters and her younger sister, an unmarried mother with a young boy, came to stay with her and to go to the Darwin Show. Gujurru's younger sister and child planned to stay for seven weeks or more, as that was the waiting period which remained before she obtained a Housing Commission flat in her own right.

Late in the year, Gujurru was well advanced in pregnancy and was expecting twins fathered by her Aboriginal 'de facto'. Her two single daughters by her previous Yolnu marriage were coming back to stay with her in Darwin. They would help her in the last weeks of pregnancy and stay on after she brought the babies out of hospital.
Guuurru's younger sister and her child were also still staying in the house and still waiting for a Commission flat. When Guuurru brought the twins home from hospital in early February of the next year, she had plenty of female Yolŋu kin to help with child-care.

In March, the household played host to more kin who were in Darwin for a medical emergency. The Yolŋu wife's married sister, her sister's husband and their children came into Darwin from Ramingining and stayed in Guuurru's house because one of their children, a ten year old girl, had been medically evacuated to Darwin and hospitalised. Medical tests conducted in Darwin resulted in the child being transferred to a hospital in Brisbane for specialist medical attention. The child's parents and siblings stayed on in Guuurru's already extended family household in the northern suburbs (see genealogy 2).

A Balanda nurse accompanied the seriously ill child to Brisbane. The reports from the hospital in Brisbane were "bad news": the child had been admitted to intensive care but once her condition had been stabilised she would be returned to Darwin and then back to her community in Arnhem Land. The child had kidney failure and the message was that there was nothing further the doctors could do for the child and that she was going home to die. More kin gathered at this suburban household to "keep company" during a daytime visit and to stay overnight in this time of grief. A gāndi (mother) of mine explained that "keeping company" with kin in distress is a way of fulfilling kinship obligations. There were some who were not "helping out", they were acting selfishly and "humbugging", that is thinking only of their own interests.

At this time a non-Aboriginal neighbour complained again about the noise and overcrowding but the household was soon to disband to attend to Yolŋu "funeral business" in their home community. Soon the household was all but deserted, only the Aboriginal husband of mixed-descent remained. His wife and children and most of the extended Yolŋu family returned to their community of origin for the funeral ceremonies as the child had died. The obligation on close kin and principal mourners to go home to the Arnhem Land community for the funeral rituals did not mean the end of this urban household. The end of a life and the ceremonies which followed, however, timed the break in the cycle of overcrowding and dispersal in this and other Yolŋu households in Darwin. After the rituals and a period of mourning in the remote community, the Yolŋu wife and her children returned to the city and to suburban life with their Aboriginal husband and father.
8.4.3 A Yolŋu monogamous marriage-based household.

Warraga and Mulunda were introduced earlier as the Yolŋu parents in Darwin, who sent their eldest son to live with kin in their home community to prepare for and be initiated in *dhapi'* (circumcision rituals) (see 7.4.1). They are a monogamous couple who came to live in Darwin with their young family when their fifth child was born with a congenital disorder. The baby required immediate surgery and he and his mother were transferred from Gove hospital to the public hospital in Darwin, then transferred to a hospital in Adelaide. This quick medical intervention was successful and in 1995, many years later, the young boy is healthy and going to a suburban school for children with special needs.

On medical advice, the family decided to move to live in Darwin to ensure that the infant could receive immediate and specialist medical attention should he suffer any complication or deterioration of his condition. The father was able to transfer in employment within a secular agency of the church into the central office in Darwin and the family moved into a Housing Commission house in Palmerston. Soon after this, Warraga's mother and sister followed their son and brother to the city and set up a female-headed household, also in a Commission house in Palmerston, in order to be near and to help the married couple and their family of young children.

The grandmother led an active life in Darwin but she died suddenly in February 1988. Her suburban house and that of her son, Warraga, were ritually "smoked" to clear them of the pollution of recent death and both households broke up as bereaved kin travelled to her community of origin for the funeral ceremonies and burial (see 9.7.2). When they returned to Darwin after the funeral ceremonies in the remote community, Warraga and his wife Mulunda and their children were re-allocated another Housing Commission house, as the public housing authority had developed a 'culturally sensitive' approach in these circumstances (see 9.9.1).

Approximately twelve months after the death of his mother and the dislocation which followed, the Yolŋu husband and wife again found their suburban household on the point of dissolution. A young kinsmen, the nineteen year old son of Warraga's half-brother was medically evacuated from his remote community and hospitalised in Darwin. This precipitated an influx of visitors from several remote Yolŋu communities as kin flew to Darwin to "keep company" with the sick and with the family most concerned. This group of visitors who came to Darwin for a serious purpose happened to coincide with others who were in town for more lighthearted reasons and who were also looking to Warraga and Mulunda and their house for help and a place to stay while in the city. The
Chapter 8. Keeping company

married couple's household verged on malfunction under the strain of overcrowding and the obligation to help such a concentration of visiting kin who were in town for such diverse purposes.

This Yolŋu household in the northern suburbs was already an extended family unit as the husband’s unmarried, youngest sister was living with Warraga, his wife and his children since the household she shared with her mother in Palmerston had broken-up when her mother died. Also, another sister's adolescent son was in town and staying with his napi (mother's brother). On the other hand, two young sons of Warraga and Mulunda were living away from their parents in Darwin and staying with kin in their parent's community of origin in northeast Arnhem Land.

In the main, the adult kin who gathered in Warraga's household at this time related to him via full, half and classificatory sibling relations and some of these siblings were accompanied by their spouses and children. The father of the youth brought into hospital was a half-brother of Warraga, the householder, as they had the same father but different mothers because their "one father", now deceased, had been polygynously married. The half-brother was estranged from his wife and it was as a sole parent that he brought all of his unmarried children to Darwin with him, so that they could "keep company" with their brother in hospital. Two of his daughters were single mothers with three infants between them. In sum, the elderly half-brother and his children and grand-children increased Warraga's already extended household by twelve co-residents, five adults and seven children, not including the patient in hospital.

Warraga's father had in life been polygynously married to some eleven wives, and another visitor staying at Warraga's house was a half-sister who had the same father as he and his half-brother but a different mother, the third involved in this assembly of "close up" siblings. This half-sister and her husband and child were in Darwin for some recreational purpose and they responded to the obligation to "keep company" with family in times of sickness.

Another brother of Warraga's, a classificatory brother from Galiwin'ku was also in Darwin at the time with his wife and infant, and they "sat down" for a while in Warraga's house to demonstrate their concern for close kin in times of worry. The man from Galiwin'ku was related as brother to Warraga because their mothers were sisters.

The adults traced their relationship as siblings via "one father" and different mothers in a polygynous marriage in a previous generation, and in one instance via mothers who were sisters but married to different men. This "all one family" was shaped by a polygynous marriage in a previous generation and in a remote community, yet
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Warraga’s suburban household was based on his own monogamous marriage and kin staying in his household at the time were monogamously married, maritally estranged and two young women were single mothers. In the one suburban household and “keeping company” at this time of concern for one patient in hospital there were some 12 adults and 14 children (see genealogy 3).

As the householder, Warraga was responsible to the Housing Commission for the proper management of the Commission house he rented in the northern suburbs. He was supposed to ensure that the co-resident composition of the house did not flagrantly breach the rental agreement, damage the house, provoke complaints from neighbours and it was he who ultimately would have to pay the rent. At this time, Warraga had real difficulties in regard to these commitments as a householder but because he was employed with a salaried income, was a long-term and respected tenant of the Housing Commission, his tenancy was not revoked and the overcrowding did not lead to the eviction of visiting kin. Nevertheless, the pressure was on Warraga to relocate the obvious supernumeraries.

Meanwhile, the situation in the household in the northern suburbs continued to deteriorate. The old man came to Darwin without his wheel-chair so he was largely confined to the living room floor where he sat all day every day amid foam mattresses, blankets and food scraps which became fly-blown. The living room had to serve multiple purposes as a place to sleep, eat and as a playing space for infants, and the old man was left with young children much of the daylight hours as the adults went about their affairs. Warraga managed to go to work every day, others visited the hospital and kin in the city and went shopping.

The old man complained that only the children kept him company and that no-one would collect bark and ochres for him so that at least he could continue with his bark painting. Warraga was more concerned with the food quest than with the collection of raw materials for his elderly half brother and the task of feeding all these visitors preoccupied him. After work and on weekends, Warraga and his wife and female kin went in his vehicle to hunt for crabs, shellfish, mangrove worms and fish. These hunting trips helped to entertain the visitors, both to feed them and to alleviate the congested living conditions.

The invalid pensioner also complained that young kinsmen who were in Darwin for a football carnival and who visited the house, were “humbugging” him for money when they were drunk. He was increasingly exasperated by his circumstances and he was of no practical use in terms of the medical emergency. Warraga spoke by telephone with his brothers in Arnhem Land about the prospect of chartering a plane to fly the invalid
and his younger children home. The brothers decided that it would have to wait for another two weeks, timed in terms of pension weeks, before sufficient funds could be raised to fly their elderly brother and his young children home, either by charter or scheduled flights.

Meanwhile, the patient's condition had stabilised enough for him to remove himself from an intravenous drip and walk out of the hospital. His father's brother and his own sisters returned him to hospital but soon he discharged himself again. His sisters, Giyapara and Miku, the two young and single mothers who had accompanied their sick brother to Darwin understood their younger brother's fear of hospital and they spoke with the doctor concerned. The sisters decided that they would rent a house and look after their brother themselves and he could continue with medication and tests but as an out-patient. The sisters realised that they could not look after their brother properly in Warraga's overcrowded household so they urgently set out to obtain a house in their own right.

8.5 An extended case study.
8.5.1 The single siblings and their privately rented house.

Giyapara and Miku had lived in Darwin before in various kin-based households and they knew that the Housing Commission usually required prospective tenants to enter their names and details on a waiting list. They felt theirs was an exceptional case and they applied to the Housing Commission but apparently there was a mis-communication because the sisters were not advised about the Commission's provisions for Out-of-Turn (OOT) or emergency housing (see 4.4.3). While their need was genuine and urgent, the sisters failed to obtain emergency housing so they began to search the listings for private rental housing. At the same time, their father and his youngest children were flown home and while this eased the situation in Warraga's household it was still overcrowded.

Giyapara and Miku and two of their adolescent brothers rented a ground level, air-conditioned three bedroom house in a seaside suburb of Darwin. With the combined incomes of the two sisters' single parent pensions and two of their adolescent brothers' Aboriginal education allowances (Abstudy), the siblings were barely able to pay the rent, which was more expensive than that they would have paid if they had rented from the Housing Commission. Additional kin were needed to increase the combined income of the household. Two female kin soon joined them from remote communities, a widow from Howard Island and from Milingimbi (a single mother of two young children). These women contributed their pension incomes as well as their company and care. The widow was a close classificatory sister of the siblings' mother and though she and their mother
had different fathers when their respective fathers died in their childhood they were "brought up" by the one grandfather, mārī'nu (father's father).

The widow from Howard Island was therefore a close classificatory gāndi (mother) to the siblings and she came to help them as a mother during this time of crisis in Darwin. The siblings' own mother, Djirrididi, was more a liability than a help even though she had lived in Darwin many years. She was one of the small number of Yolŋu women who take up with a succession of men of various ethnic backgrounds and follow a lifestyle which revolves around alcohol consumption in Darwin.

The younger woman who came from Milingimbi to join the household is a daughter of the widow and an unmarried mother of two infants. She is a close classificatory yapara (sister) of Giyapara and Miku, the two sister's who were themselves unmarried mothers. Another single young woman, Wurrpan, who was living with her brother and his wife and children in his Commission house in the northern suburbs, also joined them as she is a close classificatory bāpa mukul (father's sister) to the siblings. Wurrpan's older married sister, Burala, also stayed off arid on in this privately rented house during this time when the young man was so ill. A young married man from Galiwin'ku, who together with his wife and child had been staying in Warraga's Housing, Commission house in the northern suburbs, also joined the siblings household. He was a classificatory bāpa (father) of the siblings, Giyapara and Miku and their adolescent brothers including the seriously ill lad.

The actual parents of the siblings were not present as the invalid father had returned to the remote community and the mother was living with a Balanda and preoccupied with the alcohol-drinking quest in Darwin. The parental relationship was nonetheless represented by classificatory relations, a gāndi (mother) from Howard Island and a bāpa (father) from Galiwin'ku and two bāpa mukul (father's sisters) from Milingimbi who represented the "father's side" of kinship obligations to "help out" and "keep company". Yet the rental agreement was based on a young singles household consisting of the four siblings, Giyapara and Miku as single mothers and pensioners and two of their adolescent brothers with Abstudy allowances, plus their sick brother who was moving in and out of hospital (see genealogy 4).

The household continued to expand as others, "sat down together" who were not so helpful either in terms of contributing monies or in terms of services given. The build up of kin in the sibling household was also exacerbated because Warraga and Mulunda, the married Yolŋu couple decided to close up their house in the northern suburbs and take a holiday in their home community, both to escape the pressures of kin on their suburban
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household and because Mulunda was expecting a baby. The six weeks in which the suburban house was vacated effectively broke up the extended family group who had been staying there and took this house out of use as one kinship base in the city. This rebounded on the already over-extended household of the siblings and kin visiting Darwin for various purposes gravitated to this new household. There were those who visited and genuinely checked up on the family and the sick lad and those who used the house as a place to drink alcohol and party, to have a feed and a sleep on the floor. The general youthfulness of the occupants and the proclivities of some of the householders tended to attract the boisterous visitors. This party-style did not fit well with the household's initial purpose to look after a seriously ill young man.

It was not all party-time for the youthful household though, and one night the household was up all night, not revelling, but comforting the lad who was in pain but too frightened to let himself be admitted to hospital again. In the early hours of the morning some of the household took a taxi to Nungalinya College to ask the help of a kinsman and health worker who was resident on campus at the time. He returned with them and conducted a Christian prayer meeting with the household and was able to persuade his young kinsman to go to hospital.

In times of trouble such as serious illness, Yolŋu kin who live in Darwin or who are staying in town for the duration of a medical emergency will look to kin studying and working at Nungalinya to "help out". Kin at Nungalinya offer material support, the use of a vehicle, some hunted foods and they add to the numbers of those "keeping company" with the sick and worried. As lay and ordained preachers, as students of theology and of health care, Yolŋu at Nungalinya College provide their words of advice, their reassurances and they organise special prayer meetings for the sick and their supporting kin.4

8.5.2 The hospital experience, part 1.

The siblings hired a television set and set it up next to the hospital bed in an effort to keep their brother more content in hospital and in the hope that he would not discharge himself again. From his forehead to his feet he was swollen up, a condition which the Yolŋu described as "bruised all over" and he was given medication and placed on

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4 Yolŋu are represented on campus at Nungalinya College both as urban-dwelling teaching staff and as students from remote communities who are enrolled in courses in theology and in bicultural life skills, the former with an emphasis on spiritual well being, the latter having a focus on self-management and personal and community health and well-being.
restricted fluid intake. His bed was next to an old man who was obviously dying and the sisters, Giyapara and Miku, asked if their brother’s bed could be more suitably placed in the ward. The staff were not very sympathetic and one said that the Yolŋu patient was irresponsible for twice discharging himself without permission. Another of the nursing staff was more helpful and suggested that when the family were visiting, the patient could have a wheel chair and be taken down the lifts and outside for a little while. The offer of the wheel chair was well meant and well received and the siblings took their brother outside for a while each day.5

In the entrance area of the hospital the siblings met an urban-dwelling kinswoman who said that she was "sitting down" every day at the hospital in order to visit a kinswoman who was hospitalised. Her relative was an elderly woman from a remote community who had just had a foot amputated as a result of a complication of diabetes. The Darwin woman was keeping vigil in the first few days after the operation because her kinswoman was not responding well and needed encouragement to eat.

After their brother had seen a heart specialist, Giyapara and Miku were advised that the specialist recommended heart surgery in Adelaide. Darwin hospital medical staff agreed that it was wise for Giyapara, the elder sister, to take her brother home to the remote community for a few days, there to discuss the proposed operation with their father. They would also speak to a kinsman who had previously and successfully had heart surgery in Adelaide. The Northern Territory Department of Health would arrange and pay for the fares to and from the remote community and later would arrange and pay for the patient and one accompanying kin to travel to Adelaide for the proposed operation. Giyapara would discuss all this with "the families" when she went home.

8.5.3 The household experience.

The patient was properly discharged this time but before he and his sister could get away to their home community the siblings' household experienced yet another night of invasion by visiting kin who were in the mood to party while in town. Some kinsmen who were on a drinking spree arrived and continued their revelry and helped themselves to food. The invalid lad was alarmed by their boisterous presence and there was talk of buying a padlock to lock up the refrigerator in future. Nothing came of this but non-perishable foodstuffs were stored in the bedrooms henceforth, where visiting kin could

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5 Aboriginal patients regularly congregate with their visitors in the covered-way outside the reception area and in this way escape for a time the air-conditioning and institutional regime of the hospital. Patients who are outside in the covered-way are checked regularly by hospital staff who remind them when it is time to return to their beds, to be present for the doctor's ward rounds and to take medication.
not help themselves. Giyapara left with her brother for their remote community and while they were away the management of the household deteriorated.

Another group of kinsmen, who held responsible positions in their own remote communities, were in Darwin to protest the passage of the Northern Territory Sacred Sites Bill at an Aboriginal rally. After these activities were over, however, there was time for drinking gáníti (alcohol), something Yolŋu cannot readily do in their own remote communities.

At about 11.00 pm some of the women and children resident in the siblings' household decided that they would get no sleep this night because a number of these kinsmen had arrived with alcohol and were already drunk. Led by the siblings' young bāpa mukul (father's sister), the women and children took a taxi to her brother's vacated Commission house in the northern suburbs and broke in and bedded themselves there for the night. The majority of the household did not drink alcohol and one young woman protested that as she was a regular and contributing member of the household it was not right that she should have to move out because kin who were visiting town and drinking alcohol had moved in.

After this bout of disturbance by visiting kin, the siblings' household was visited early in the morning by a man from the real estate agent's office. He asked one of the sisters to sign a form to allow for a rental inspection which he conducted briefly and immediately. He made his inspection and left but was shortly back with a more senior man from the agency. The two knocked on all bedroom doors, entered and checked the entire house and grounds. The estate agent observed that there was evidence of damage to the house and the number of people staying in the house far exceeded the rental agreement, which stipulated the two sisters and their adolescent brothers. When the two Balanda men had gone, the young bāpa mukul (father's sister) of the siblings angrily asked, "don't they know we are all family together".

After the rent inspectors had left, everyone returned inside the house in a very subdued mood. Someone played a video tape, not a commercial one but a family copy of Djałambu, the hollow log ceremony.⁶ The video is a Yolŋu family copy which circulates in several Yolŋu households in Darwin and among families which trace their direct descent from the ceremonial leader in the film. He is māri'mu, the father's father, of the four sibling householders and their sick brother and bāpa (father) to Wurrpaŋ and Burala, the siblings' bāpa mukul (father's sisters). It was my impression that their sense of self-

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⁶ The original film of Djałambu, the hollow log ceremony and a Yirritja moiety ceremony of secondary burial rites was made by Cecil and Sandra Holmes in Arnhem Land in 1964 and was a re-enactment of the actual secondary burial of the ceremonial leader's own father.
esteemed esteem and identity was bruised by the early morning raid by the rent inspectors and restored as they watched their common ancestor and their cultural heritage on video. Before the video finished the kin began to get up and take steps to answer the challenge to the household posed by the rental inspection.

The co-resident kin discussed what they would do in response. One suggestion was that the extras to the household obtain permission to use the vacated house in the northern suburbs, while their kinsman and his wife and family were still away. One young woman suggested that she would sleep on the beach or in a park with other kinswomen and children for company. While the young single woman's statement was more one of protest rather than of real intent, this strategy is all too frequently resorted to by Yolŋu women and their children when urban households become grossly overcrowded and disorderly with drunks.

The married couple from Galiwin'ku and their infant had three months more to wait for a Housing Commission house of their own in Palmerston and they said that they would camp out with kin if necessary. Sometimes drinking camps were resorted to in times of a crisis in housing by Yolŋu kin who more usually restricted their involvement with them to daytime drinking. In the three months until they received keys to a Commission house in Palmerston, this couple and their baby spent much of their time oscillating between living with kin in suburban households and camping out within the circles of Yolŋu drinkers.

Meanwhile, in the siblings' household it was decided that, for the next few days at least, the household would rise early and those in excess of the rental agreement would go out for the day and only come back after dark. The next morning, they left early and caught and cooked fish and made damper (bread) on the beach for breakfast. Later that day, the young women set about cleaning the house while the young men organised a vehicle to take the accumulation of garbage to the tip.

A kinsman who was studying at Nungalinya College and the one who helped persuade the sick young man to re-admit himself to hospital, visited the siblings' household the next day. He had spoken of their troubles among Yolŋu at the College and kin who had just arrived on campus gave him turtle eggs, brought in fresh from the Ramingining area in Arnhem Land, which he passed on to them. In much the same way the household was offered a portion of wallaby, which had been shot somewhere in the region of Batchelor and by a small party of kinsmen drawn from the suburbs of Darwin.
and the campus at Batchelor. 7

When the patient and his sister, Giyapara, returned from their remote community, the household of young people decided on a hunting trip to Buffalo Creek. The youngest brother among the siblings, a lad of about seventeen, went spear fishing. He walked through the shallows along the side of the estuarine creek and in short time had speared two maranydjalk (stingray) and a large nyoka' (mud crab). The women made a fire to cook damper, boil the billy for tea and they prepared and cooked the stingray. Everyone, the children and myself included, enjoyed the food except for the sick young man who began to retch. He said it was only the maranydjalk, he was not used to it but he had looked very ill all morning. The group did not linger over their meal and soon returned to the house.

8.5.4 The hospital experience, part 2.

The siblings took their brother to the hospital to see the medical specialist. The doctor asked his patient how he felt, whether he needed to be hospitalised and if he was taking his medicine regularly. The young man was very positive in all his answers and the doctor agreed to let him remain in the care of his sisters until it was time for him to go to Adelaide for the heart operation. The brothers and sisters finalised the inter-hospital transfer and travel arrangements to Adelaide. Meanwhile, the doctor checked the patient's medication record while the Aboriginal Liaison officer and Balanda staff sorted out the travel details. The elder sister, Giyapara, would accompany her brother to Adelaide and they were booked on Ansett Flight AN42, Sunday 4 June.

At about 8.00 am, 2 June, I received a phone call from Darwin hospital. The nursing sister who had met me with this Yolŋu family wondered if I could take a message to them. She said that she was unable to contact them earlier in the morning, and the Australian Inland Mission Service (AIMS) bus, which had gone to the house to pick them up was not able to raise anyone. She said that the young man was dying. The nursing sister said that his condition deteriorated badly on Thursday night and he was re-admitted to hospital and his family went back to the house to get some sleep. She told me that he was not expected to live the morning and would I please convey this message to his family.

The sequence of events which followed, the arrival at the hospital only to find

7 In southern and more densely settled Australia and among urban Kooris (Aborigines) there are other social events more typically associated with urban life than is hunting, which 'allow a person to reunite with family and friends to bolster their identity' (Mitchell 1994:14). 'In terms of well-being, people spoke about the rejuvenating effect of being together' (Mitchell 1994:14).
their brother and kinsmen had died already, the doctor's version of events, the Yolŋu reaction and announcement of death are developed in the following chapter (see 9.5). Before moving on, however, it is important to further discuss how a Yolŋu system of familial governance provides services to kin in good times and in bad, in sickness and in revelry and in uncomfortable juxtaposition with government delivery of urban health and housing services.

8.6 Further discussion and conclusions.

8.6.1 The urban hospital: first and last resort.

In earlier chapters, I discussed the ways in which Yolŋu and other remote-dwelling Aboriginal people are targeted by medical authorities and government health services as particularly in need of urban hospital services starting with birth and intervening throughout life in times of accident, illness and death. This chapter has focused more on the needs of remote-dwelling people for specialist medical services and hospitalisation in times of serious illness and as a last resort, that is late in the disease cycle (cf. Hudson 1991:190).

In a recent report on health outcomes in the Northern Territory, Aborigines are found to account for much higher proportions of deaths and hospitalisations than is commensurate with their demographics (Plant, Condon & Durling 1995:x). The disease categories which are causing the high rates of hospitalisations for young Aboriginal children in the Top End of the Northern Territory are nutritional disorders and gastrointestinal and respiratory disease. Rubin and Walker (1995:402) find that high rates of hospital admissions 'for diarrhoeal disease are associated with poverty, and reflect the poor living conditions of Aboriginal children' and high rates of malnutrition found among Aboriginal children admitted to hospital has varied little in the past twenty years. Rubin and Walker (1995:402) conclude that in 'many remote communities potentially preventable conditions are not detected, and intervention, often through hospitalisation, occurs only when the problem becomes severe'. The major causes of hospitalisations and high rates of morbidity and mortality in Aboriginal adults and especially in Aboriginal women in the Northern Territory include diseases of the circulatory and respiratory systems, various forms of cancer, endocrine disease including diabetes mellitus and genitourinary disease, including renal failure and pelvic inflammatory disease (Plant, Condon & Durling 1995).

Some of the above diseases figured in the case studies and because they were diagnosed and treated late in the disease cycle they necessitated radical interventions such
as the amputation of a foot, following the complications of diabetes, and to premature death in the case of the child with renal failure and the nineteen old youth who had advanced heart disease, attributed to childhood infection with rheumatic fever.¹

All too often Yolŋu from remote communities are sent to Darwin and to hospitals in other states in advanced stages of disease, by which time medical intervention may be too late or only the most drastic procedures have any chance of success. Even where the medical intervention is timely, less radical and successful, the centralisation of comprehensive health and hospital services in Darwin and via Darwin in southern cities severely disrupts the lives of Yolŋu who must travel from remote communities to urban centres, whether as the patient or to "keep company" with the patient.

Aboriginal people, especially those who originate from remote communities, find the urban hospital environment to be strange and threatening. Illness and the hospital regime promote anxiety, confusion and what often appears to be lack of co-operation with staff, hospital routines and medical treatments. Many Aboriginal patients find the air-conditioning uncomfortable and hospital wards no place for meeting visiting kin with children and they and their visitors spend as much time as possible out of doors. The hospital entrance and surrounds in which Aboriginal patients and visitors congregate are not well designed or serviced for this purpose, despite many years of Aboriginal usage in this way.

Yolŋu who associate the hospital with death or are afraid that they might die away from kin and country, together with those who are frightened of particular treatments or discomforted by the hospital regime, are apt to discharge themselves unofficially and to the detriment of medical treatment and to their health. Again, kin who live in suburban households and those who come in from remote communities to support the patient must cope with caring for the sick, either by persuading them to be re-admitted or by looking after them at home and guaranteeing they present to hospital as outpatients.

Aboriginal patients who originate from remote communities do not always communicate effectively with hospital staff because they are seriously ill or frightened. Among the Yolŋu, old people and small children have little or no understanding of English and even for educated Yolŋu, English is a second or third language. Balanda staff and Aboriginal Liaison officers are typically monolingual English speakers who have difficulty in communicating with Yolŋu patients from remote communities, especially with those who are experiencing their first period of hospitalisation and who have little or

¹ According to Menzies School of Health Research Doctor, Jonathan Carapetis, Aborigines in the Northern Territory 'may be 60 times more likely than non-Aborigines to contract rheumatic fever which could lead to heart disease and early death' (N.T. News 21 November 1994:12; see also Wolff, Carapetis & Currie 1995).
Chapter 8. *Keeping company*

no facility in English.

In consequence, Yolŋu kin who are visiting relatives in hospital are often asked to help medical staff with Yolŋu patients, even those they do not know and have not come to the hospital to visit. Although they are not trained in interpreting or in Western medical contexts, they are asked to question the patients in Yolŋu languages about how they feel, about their symptoms and to reassure and to explain medical procedures to Yolŋu patients whom they may never have met previously but to whom they are related as kin via subsection and classificatory kinship. In this way, Yolŋu provide the hospital with impromptu and unpaid interpreting services even as they provide the kinship service of "helping out".

The fear, discomfort and inability to communicate effectively continue to result in Aboriginal patients delaying admission to and absconding from hospital and being discharged earlier than medically advisable. In these circumstances, the onus is on Yolŋu kin in Darwin to care for and to house their sick kin, the immediate family of support plus wider kin who are obliged to "keep company". The movement of Yolŋu to Darwin for hospital and health care is a major factor in Yolŋu seeking urban accommodation and housing in the first instance and subsequently of overcrowding Yolŋu households in the suburbs.

8.6.2 Urban housing: strategies and constraints.

A Yolŋu response to manage and alleviate overcrowded and dysfunctional urban households is hampered by externally controlled time and economic constraints. For example, a minimum interval of two weeks, timed in terms of pension payments, must elapse before enough money is available to pay for airfares to return visitors to their remote communities. Often the expenses and attractions of life in the city result in short visits turning into prolonged stays and it is many Social Security fortnights later before return fares are bought. The initial purpose of the visit to the city may be well over and still the host household is overcrowded.

Yolŋu women and children and even married couples tend to try life in the city by moving between hostel accommodation and staying in various kinship households before they are satisfied that they want to settle. The Housing Commission places prospective tenants on a waiting list for two to three years for ordinary family size houses and a longer waiting period applies to flats and larger than average houses. Out-of-Turn and emergency housing are available from the Housing Commission but are subject to medical and welfare referral, to bureaucratic procedures and often to a time lag between
notification of need and access to emergency housing (see 4.4.3). The Yolŋu experience difficulties with communicating the urgency and merit of their needs, and Yolŋu kin in suburban households help by housing their kin in the interim and in default of readily accessible emergency housing.

Moreover, in Darwin there is no appropriate accommodation for remote-dwelling Aboriginal people who come to the city for recreational purposes, whether for calendar events or more unscheduled recreation, including the opportunity to drink alcohol (see also Young & Doohan 1989:192-197). Yolŋu households in the suburbs are obliged to host kin who visit the city but who do not have the means, the confidence or the style to be accommodated in hostels, motels, hotels and holiday apartments. The resultant extension and often over-crowding of Yolŋu households in the suburbs is exacerbated when visitors have different and incompatible purposes in the city, such as a health crisis, recreational purposes or the intention to go on an alcohol binge, and yet rely on the same kinship households to accommodate them.

The Commission's response to overcrowded and unruly Yolŋu households in Darwin includes outright eviction, suggested voluntary relocation into the hostel system or back to a remote community and partial eviction, that is of kin who are identified by agents of the Commission as additional to those permitted in the tenancy agreement.

All of these strategies address the Commission's relation of contract with the original householder and core tenants but does nothing to address the larger problem of housing the super-numeraries. In the end, this is short-sighted because the most favoured strategy of kin who are moved out of one Yolŋu household is to move into another one or two kin-based households. This simply transfers rather than resolves the problem. Another option open to kin is to move into the Aboriginal hostels system. In consequence, people who have long-term and indefinite purposes in the city fill rooms which should be reserved for transient usage, thereby forcing transients to stay with kin in the suburbs and so the pattern of overcrowding, eviction, relocation repeats itself.

A small number of Yolŋu use private rental accommodation and housing in Darwin for a number of purposes such as sponsored business trips to the city and for more personal reasons. Most Yolŋu typically use government subsidised accommodation and housing in the city as the private rental market is expensive, but sometimes Yolŋu women who are married to Balanda men live in private rented flats. Yolŋu will turn to the private rental market in an emergency when staying in an already established kinship household proves untenable and neither the Aboriginal hostels nor the Housing Commission meet their urgent need.
In many circumstances, Yolţu in Darwin resort to camping in parks, on beaches or join the alcoholics in the "long grass" when they are unable to find housing in time and to fit their purposes. It is not always the alcohol-drinkers and the visitors to town who resort to "sleeping out". Sometimes the more long-term urban residents, including women and children, are displaced from suburban housing into parks and onto beaches when households are overcrowded, threatened with eviction and over-run with unruly kin on an alcohol drinking spree while in town.

The break up and reformation of Yolţu households in Darwin is by no means only shaped by the culling and evictions organised by agents of urban housing authorities, nor by the collapse of will of Yolţu who find it too difficult to maintain suburban households. Crises in health and in housing among Yolţu in Darwin are sometimes happily resolved. Kin who have long-term purposes in Darwin become urban householders in their own right. The build up of kin in suburban homes dissipates when visitors return to their home communities after they satisfy their diverse needs and reasons for coming to the city. Urban and rural-dwelling Yolţu co-operate to finance and to organise the return of kin who are superfluous to Yolţu suburban households and those who have overstayed their original purposes in the city and out worn their welcome in established Yolţu households.

There are two cycles at work in the build up and dispersal of kin who come to Darwin for health related purposes and stay in Yolţu households in the suburbs. The centralisation of comprehensive health and hospital services in Darwin and via Darwin in southern cities and Yolţu obligations "to keep company with" and "help out" in times of anxiety, in combination, govern the build up of kin in suburban households. On the other hand, the medical or life cycle resolution of the crises in health, for example when the individual gets better or dies, typically leads to a reverse movement of the patient and support group of kin when they return to the remote community. In the case of a death, the obligations on kin to attend the funeral rituals and burial on clan land also shape the dispersal of kin from an overcrowded Yolţu household in Darwin.

Obligations in ceremonial life and especially in funeral rituals hold true for urban-dwelling Yolţu. The death of kin and subsequent funeral ceremonies in remote communities disturb the lives of Yolţu in Darwin and punctuate the developmental cycle of urban Yolţu households. Those who are close kin of the deceased and who are principals in the funeral rituals are obliged to return to remote communities for the ceremonies, burial and period of mourning. This outcome and Yolţu management of death in Darwin are the subject of the next chapter and so will not be developed in detail.
It is important to note, however, that the recurring obligation to attend funeral ceremonies in clan lands tends to break up crowded households in Darwin. In some particular circumstances, urban households are permanently abandoned but more typically, Yolŋu who are committed to life in Darwin as well as to their social and cultural roots in remote communities and clan lands simply visit remote communities for the funeral ceremonies and a period of mourning before they return to Darwin, reconstitute their households and go on with their lives in the city.

Ultimately it is not just outside interventions such as being admitted to hospital in Darwin but the life-cycle of individuals, the developmental cycle of family and household units and a Yolŋu system of governance exercised in kinship and in ceremony, which in combination shape the expansion, contraction, break up and re-formation of Yolŋu households in Darwin.
Chapter 9

*Smoking houses, farewelling coffin planes*
Chapter 9. Smoking houses, farewelling the coffin plane.

9.1 Introduction.

Today, the timing, place and aspects of the management of death are frequently outside Yolŋu control and are governed by urban hospital and coronial services. To re-assert a measure of control over death and their dead, Yolŋu have had to take their kinship and ceremonial responsibilities at the time of death to urban centres, in particular to Nhulunbuy and Darwin. They have had to do so because as with other Aboriginal groups from remote communities they suffer a high morbidity and mortality rate (see Plant, Condon & Durling 1995) and are largely subject to the conduct of specialist, emergency and intensive medical care, autopsies and the certification of death in urban hospitals.

In this chapter, I examine how the deaths of Yolŋu in and from remote communities are 'governed' (in the sense of Foucault 1986:221). Foucault (1972) argues that power is exercised via the keeping of registers and archives of knowledge. In this sense, government governs by 'methods of observation, techniques of registration, procedures for investigation, apparatuses of control' (McHoul & Grace 1993:22). Balanda "business" at the time of death includes such medical, forensic and bureaucratic procedures as medical and autopsy reports, certification and notification of death, arrangement for collection and burial of the corpse and readjustment of financial concerns including social security entitlements.1

In Australia as in other Western liberal democracies, a division of responsibilities in pastoral care (cf. Foucault (1986:213-215) has seen the State predominate in the more secular, material dimensions of 'government', so that the Church and the Family have retained some autonomy in and methods of governance over the spiritual and ceremonial dimensions of "funeral business". In this chapter, I focus on the role of government departments of Health and Community Services and of Law, via the agencies of the Royal Darwin Hospital and the Office of the Coroner, in the urban management of death among the Yolŋu and in the repatriation of the dead for burial in Yolŋu communities and clan lands. Moreover, I examine the role of the Church, particularly via Nungalinya College in providing limited means for Yolŋu to come together for mortuary rituals held in Darwin.

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1 It is too early to be able to predict what effect the Euthanasia Bill which passed through the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly in 1995 would have on the management of dying and of death among Aboriginal people and on their trust in urban hospital services and in non-Aboriginal doctors. Aboriginal groups have expressed their misgivings about the Bill and an Aboriginal attempt to prevent the ratification of the new legislation by the Administrator of the Northern Territory, Sir Austin Asche, was not successful. This Bill is an example of the extent to which government governs 'life' (cf. Foucault 1979:14) and 'life processes' (cf. Nathan & Leichleiter Japangka 1983:90; McHoul & Grace 1993:61).
Yolŋu have had to accept many dimensions of "Balanda business" at the time of death, yet they uphold their own responsibilities to their dead. They announce the death to wider kin, reclaim their dead from strangers and urban hospitals, start the spiritual, ritual and physical journey homeward of their dead, conduct their own post mortems about responsibilities and culpability, and assemble the bąpurru (clan group) for funeral ceremonies and burial. During the ceremonies and period of mourning, Yolŋu seek to repair the rent in the social fabric made by death and recriminations after a death and they seek to realign individuals and restore social harmony.

As a result of the centralisation of hospital and coronial services in urban centres and the consequent urbanisation of death, Yolŋu have had to adjust to Balanda interventions and death occurring or being processed in urban centres (see Reid 1979; Morphy 1984:450). A Yolŋu system of governance exercised in kinship and in ceremony has had to adjust to these circumstances and to articulate with "Balanda business" in administrative responses to death. In the city, Yolŋu come together in a limited gathering of the bąpurru (clan group) to perform mortuary rituals, to "smoke houses" in the suburbs, thereby expelling the dangers and lifting the prohibitions of recent death among Yolŋu in Darwin. Yolŋu also hold rituals to "farewell the coffin plane" from the city and thereby start the ritual and spiritual dimensions of the repatriation of deceased kin for funeral ceremonies and burial among kin and in clan lands.

When Yolŋu in Darwin have primary responsibilities in mourning and in funeral rituals they return to remote communities for the funeral ceremonies and some stay on for a period of mourning. In this way, "funeral business" punctuates the lives of Yolŋu in the city and reinforces their ties to remote-dwelling kin and to clan lands. On the other hand, mortuary rituals held in town allow Yolŋu to fulfil some of their responsibilities in kinship and ceremony in Darwin, and thereby to go on trying to balance "two ways, both ways" as they renew their lives in the city.

At the same time, the death of a husband, parents or other close kin shapes the altered circumstances in which Yolŋu women can manoeuvre to go their "own way" in Darwin (see chapter 5), and subject to the benefits and constraints of two systems of 'control as care' (Keen 1989:27), of government 'of families' and government 'through the family' (Donzelot 1979:92).

9.2 "Balanda business" at the time of death.

In the 1990s, many dimensions of life among the Yolŋu would seem to verify the popular truism that the Welfare State looks after the dependent citizen 'from the cradle to the grave'. On
the other hand, a Yolŋu system of governance by kinship and ceremony also seeks to look after kin and compatriot throughout life and in death.

In response to the death of a dependent citizen, the Commonwealth Department of Social Security terminates any welfare entitlements of the deceased and, where appropriate, activates new entitlements to the widow and dependents. In this way, the relationship between the individual, the family and the State is re-adjusted. Relations within the family have also to adjust, not only to the loss of a family member, but also to new circumstances of welfare intervention including widow's pensions and the like.

I am not specifically concerned here with the Commonwealth government and welfare-money response to death among dependent citizens, but rather with the agency of the Northern Territory government in terms of medical and repatriation services, autopsies and certification of death. My analysis focuses on the role of the Northern Territory Department of Health and Community Services and the Department of Law, and, in particular, on the agency of the Darwin public hospital and the Office of the Coroner in 'governing' Yolŋu at the time of death.

The Northern Territory Department of Health and Community Services (HACS) operates three schemes by which remote-dwelling citizens who are ill or injured are brought into Darwin for medical care and under which schemes they are repatriated home. As with other remote-dwelling people, Yolŋu patients are brought to Darwin hospital by medical evacuation (MEDEVAC) from a remote community, by inter-hospital transfer (IHT) from the regional hospital in Nhulunbuy to the public hospital in Darwin or via Darwin to hospitals in southern cities, or less urgently by the Patients Assistance Travel Scheme (PATS) (see also 3.7.1). Whatever their ethnic origins, remote-dwelling patients in the Top End of the Northern Territory and the north-west of Western Australia, who are brought to Darwin hospital by means of these schemes are entitled to repatriation home at departmental expense.

Where patients die while admitted to hospital or in other circumstances while still subject to these schemes, the appropriate government department assumes the responsibility for the repatriation of the corpse and for the attendant organisation and costs of mortuary services in the hospital morgue as well as coffin purchase and transport. Moreover, when a Yolŋu death at a remote community in Arnhem Land requires a coronial inquiry and autopsy, the Office of the Coroner within the Northern Territory Department of Law brings the corpse into Darwin for the autopsy and certification of death. The Office of the Coroner then is responsible for storage in the hospital mortuary, for purchase of a coffin and for repatriation of the deceased to the remote community of origin, where kin are responsible for funeral ceremonies and burial.
Chapter 9. Smoking houses, farewelling the coffin plane.

From 1971, modern mortuary facilities were available at the Gove District Hospital in Nhulunbuy in addition to the facilities at the public hospital in Darwin. Initially, the relevant Northern Territory government departments did not take responsibility for the repatriation of deceased Yolŋu in their charge in the hospital morgue in Nhulunbuy. As a result, the Gove hospital experienced problems of mortuary storage because there were long delays while Yolŋu kin arranged to organise and finance the return of their dead for rituals and burial (Reid 1979:332).

Since then, bureaucratic procedures have been put in place to ensure that Aborigines who happen to be in town in some form of government 'care' at the time of death are repatriated to communities of origin for burial. These bureaucratic procedures for the mortuary storage and repatriation of the dead for burial have been developed for administrative convenience, in light of a government policy of self-determination for Aboriginal people and in response to Aboriginal insistence that they reclaim their dead for funeral ceremonies and burial among kin and in 'country'. The mortuary services provided by the morgues at Gove and Darwin hospitals allow Yolŋu time, as long as two weeks or so, to assemble "all the bąpurru" (clan group for ceremonies) from dispersed places so that urban-dwelling and remote-dwelling kin can come together in a Yolŋu community to perform the funeral ceremonies and bury their dead in clan country (cf. Morphy 1984:45).

The interval after death and before the process of repatriation takes effect is typically negotiated between hospital personnel in Darwin and the local Town Council and ultimately kin in the remote community. Where bureaucratic procedures for repatriation apply, the particular government department, whether Health or Law and the particular agents, whether the public hospital or the Coroner, accept responsibility for the physical and financial dimensions of repatriation including mortuary storage in an urban hospital, the services of urban funeral parlours and the charter of a light aircraft to fly the coffin to a remote community for burial.

An anomalous situation exists in Darwin, however, in that Yolŋu who move to the city under their own or kin-defined initiative and happen to die in town are not subject to departmental schemes of repatriation, because their urban transience and migration was not sponsored by particular agents of the Northern Territory government. These Yolŋu are not being buried in Darwin despite the considerable cost of charter flights for the return of the coffin to

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2 The Yolŋu speak of 'all the families' in social contexts and of 'all the bąpurru' (clan group) in ceremonial contexts, especially funeral ceremonies (Keen 1994:184).
home communities in Arnhem Land. In these circumstances, a Yolŋu system of governance is solely responsible for the repatriation of deceased kin and compatriots for funeral ceremonies and burial.

While remote-dwelling Aborigines are nowadays typically assisted by departmental schemes of repatriation to bury their dead at home, this was not always the case. In the past, Aborigines had sometimes to practice their funeral rites separate from burial as Goodale (1980:240-1) notes of the Tiwi of Bathurst and Melville Islands,

the subsequent rituals are carried out even when there has been no burial, as when the body was lost at sea or when death has occurred at the mission or in Darwin, and burial was under the direction of the Church or the government.

Darritj, a senior man and leader of his clan and community in northeast Arnhem Land told me that he remembers when Yolŋu who died in Darwin were buried there. His own father had "worried" so much about a kinsman being buried in Darwin before repatriation of Aborigines for burial became common that he had talked with leading Balanda from Darwin, 'Tiger' Brennan, the mayor at the time and Harry Giese, then the Director of Welfare, and persuaded them to give permission for the body to be exhumed and taken home for ceremonies and burial. White administrators, agents of law and of government were not comfortable with Aboriginal individual and group requests for the disinterment of human remains, although some Aboriginal groups including the Yolŋu had cultural precedents in disinterment and in secondary burial (see discussion below 9.3).

While the State through the agency of various Northern Territory government departments is concerned with the bureaucratic detail of the management of death, government is not directly interested in Yolŋu "funeral business". For this reason, the Yolŋu exercise relative autonomy in their mourning and mortuary rituals which address the physical and spiritual repatriation of the deceased and the social reintegration of the kinship group following a death. Sutton (in HRSCAA, 1990a:59) suggests that Aboriginal people maintain relative autonomy in important dimensions of life, including ceremonial life, because government and external agents consider such matters to be 'private affairs'. Yet such contexts as Aboriginal funerals and ceremonial life 'may be quite critical areas of relatively autonomous decision-making' (Sutton in HRSCAA 1990a:59).

The Yolŋu have adjusted their ceremonial response to death to accommodate modern patterns of settlement, transport technologies and government intervention at the place of death, and management of the body. In the current context, while Yolŋu may exercise little control over
the when, where and with whom they die, they have tenaciously exercised their control over the
when, where and with whom of funeral ritual and burial.

In face of the interventions of welfare measures of government in their lives and at the
time of death, the Yolŋu have adjusted their social and ceremonial responses to death in new
circumstances, including new patterns of disease and death and where death occurs among
strangers and in urban centres. While the Yolŋu have had to innovate in response to social
change and bureaucratic intervention, Yolŋu "funeral business" remains unmistakably based in
traditional beliefs and practices.

9.3 Yolŋu "funeral business": beliefs and practices.

The Yolŋu have largely given up secondary and subsequent burial rites in response to a
settled lifestyle and the laws and sensibilities of Balanda, and there has been a shift in emphasis
towards the rituals of primary burial (Morphy 1984:42-6: 1991:110). Đarrjit explained to me
how the rites of exhumation of bones and of secondary burial in Djalumbu, the hollow log
ceremony, had come to an end in his community and clan lands. His own father performed the
last Djalumbu ceremony in that area and is said to have taken "all that with him" when he died.
Yet the shift towards rituals of primary burial has not led to a decline in Yolŋu funeral practise
but on the contrary to elaboration and innovation. Yolŋu "funeral business" has transformed in
response to social change (see Morphy 1984:42-46).

There is considerable controversy in the anthropological literature about Yolŋu concepts
of the dead, in particular whether mokuy and birrimbirr are two souls, two aspects of the soul
or perhaps two potential ways the soul or spirit might take after death.³ In my experience, the
Yolŋu believe that the recent dead are mokuy (wandering spirits) who hover around the living
and sites of a lifetime. It is the responsibility of living kin to perform the necessary rituals to
ensure that their dead kin are not left in this unresolved state but become birrimbirr (true spirit,
souls reunited with ancestral kin and country). Warner (1969:404) says that when the dying
person prepares her or himself for death and the mortuary rituals are properly performed, then
the birrimbirr goes quietly and surely to ancestors and the ancestral well. Otherwise, Yolŋu
believe that there is the potential for the recent dead to hover about sites familiar in life and to
be a menace to the living (cf. Warner 1967:437).

³ For further discussion of Yolŋu concepts of the dead see (Warner 1969:435-437; Williams 1986:32-36; H. Morphy
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In this disoriented and discontented state the mokuy might exhibit malevolence towards the living and especially towards close kin, those to whom some ill-will adheres and towards the new-born, whose spirit it may lure away to join other mokuy. It is a cultural imperative that the deceased's kin and clan take all the ritual precautions necessary to ensure that the spirit of the recent dead does not go the way of wandering spirits, is not a danger to the living and that the birrimburr finds its proper way to unification with the spirits of deceased ancestors and unborn descendants in ancestral country. Components of Yolŋu funeral rituals signify the separation of the dead from the living and from the familiar sites of a life-time, while other sequences invoke the spiritual journey of the deceased to the company of ancestors and to ancestral sites.

9.3.1 Destination of the dead and rituals of journey.

The Yolŋu have to ensure that not only the body but also the soul or spirit of deceased kin travels homewards for funeral ceremonies and burial in 'country' and that the birrimburr (true soul of the dead) finds reunification with ancestral land. To this end, Yolŋu perform mortuary rituals to "farewell the coffin plane" and repatriate their dead, typically in conjunction with bureaucratic schemes to repatriate the coffin by charter flight.

As with the ambiguity inherent in Yolŋu concepts about the spirit or soul of the dead, the Yolŋu also have complex understandings about the destination of the dead. Yolŋu beliefs about where the dead go and life after death have come to incorporate Macassan and Balanda influences, the latter including Christian elements. Warner (1964:404) says that among the Murgin (Yolŋu), the buggul (dancing, ceremony) and the manikay (singing) prepares the dying or the recently dead for the proper spiritual disposition so that 'he will find his ancestors and go straight to his totem well' (Warner 1964:404). However, Williams (1986:33) says that the destination of the dead is not now as simply or surely summed up as 'the totem well' or 'the island of the dead' as earlier ethnographic evidence suggested, but that Yolŋu mortuary rituals still function to ensure that the spirit of the recently deceased takes a 'mythologically appropriate path to some area in its own land'.

The journey of the dead may be purely symbolic when rituals and burials are held within clan lands (Morphy 1984, 1991:106-8). In today's circumstances of dispersed settlement, 

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4 For further discussion of the beliefs of northeast Arnhem Landers about the destination of the dead see (Warner 1969:270; Berndt and Berndt 1988:378-388; Morphy 1984:41; Rudder 1993:106-116).

5 The journey symbolism of Yolŋu funeral ritual is well documented in Journey to the Crocodile's Nest, a monograph written by Howard Morphy (1984) to accompany Ian Dunlop's film, Madarrpa funeral at Gurka'wuy.
modern transport systems and the incidence of urban transience and migration, Yolŋu rituals place an added emphasis on the homeward journey of the body and spirit of the deceased. For example, the ritual journey of the spirit of the dead may be held at the start of road, air or sea transport of the coffin from the hospital in Nhulunbuy or Darwin to remote communities in northeast Arnhem Land (cf. Reid 1979; Morphy 1984:45). Yolŋu mortuary rituals held beside the "coffin plane" in Darwin symbolise the spiritual journey homeward of the deceased in parallel with the physical repatriation of the corpse, and the transport of the coffin by air-charter has been re-worked into the sequence of funeral rituals.

Whether it be urban-dwelling Yolŋu who die in Darwin, remote-dwelling Yolŋu who are brought into Darwin as patients and subsequently die in hospital or a corpse which is flown in for coronial purposes, Yolŋu in Darwin are obliged to perform rituals to repatriate deceased kin. If the necessary rituals to orient the homeward journey of the deceased were not performed, the Yolŋu say that the soul or spirit of their dead kin would be indefinitely exiled from ancestral land. Yolŋu in Darwin perform mortuary rituals to start the ceremonial and spiritual dimensions of the homeward journey of their dead, then they hand over the care of the deceased to kin waiting in remote communities to receive the body and to perform the funeral ceremonies and burial on clan lands.

Yolŋu mortuary rituals are redolent with symbolism of journey: across country, the passage of the seasons, the movement of waters and identification with totemic features. These symbolic elements of Yolŋu funeral ceremonies which signify the journey through life and in death and across clan lands to ancestral sites, assume added significance when Yolŋu die far away and sometimes after long absence from kin and country. For Yolŋu who have migrated away from their clan lands, the spiritual journey component in Yolŋu funeral ritual is peculiarly poignant because funeral ritual takes the dead on a symbolic journey through clan estates (cf. Morphy 1984:107) where the living person may not recently or never have travelled.

9.3.2 Rituals of separation and purification.

To ensure that the recent dead are truly "farewelled" and will not trouble the living and linger around sites of a lifetime, the Yolŋu also perform mortuary rites which symbolise separation and purification (cf. Warner 1969:433-34). Smoke was traditionally used to take the smell of death and so the spirit of the deceased away from the living and fire was used to destroy the camp and possessions of the deceased (Warner 1969:406).

From fieldwork among the Yolŋu dating from the mid 1970s, Keen (1977:168, 1994:140)
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describes the *dada* or *man'tjarr* (smoking with burning leaves ceremony) and the *yindi man'tjarr* or "rag" ceremony, sometimes held as long as six months after burial, where some of the possessions of the dead, often items of clothing were burned (see also Morphy 1984:43). These rituals emphasise a break in contact between the recent dead and their living kin, their former possessions and with places of significance to them in life. In turn, people, belongings and sites are freed of close association with the recent dead and the pollution of death is lifted so that ordinary life can be resumed.

While in pre-contact times the Yolŋu abandoned and/or burned the camp where a death occurred, the Yolŋu now smoke, *dada'yun* (lit. to smoke, to cleanse), valued places and possessions to release them from the dangers associated with a recent death. Today, houses and their surroundings, household furniture, motor vehicles and motor boats are among the valued goods which are "smoked" and thereby freed for re-use by the living (see Morphy 1984:44; Rudder 1993:117). When Yolŋu who have been living in Darwin happen to die there, their urban-dwelling kin perform the "smoking" rituals on houses and cars with which the deceased was associated during her/his life in the city.6

Yolŋu regard close contact with the body of the deceased to be highly polluting and dangerous to kin who have to handle or "mind" the body and carry the coffin. Such contact entails stringent taboos and ritual counter-measures to overcome the spiritual dangers which Yolŋu believe are associated with close contact with a dead body (cf. Warner 1969:425; Morphy 1984:108, 1986:440-448). Morphy (1984:448) documents examples whereby Yolŋu have had to find, 'a solution that was both innovative and yet at the same time grounded in traditional cultural practices'. For example, where the body has to be housed in dwellings and transported in aircraft and vehicles, Yolŋu have adjusted their ceremonies and found new expressions whereby rituals contain the dangers of death, release people from the pollution and prohibitions entailed by close contact with the dead and allow valued goods and services to continue in use.

9.3.3 Post-mortems: blame, anger and *galka'*(sorcery).

Yolŋu believe that death is least unnatural for the very old, for whom death is anticipated (Warner 1969:183), otherwise death has a moral and supernatural cause and someone is to

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6 Gray (1976:151) notes that among Aborigines in Carnarvon, Western Australia, the "Jula" or "smoke ceremony" takes place after the burial of the deceased. Among Aborigines in this rural town, the burial is generally a Christian affair with slight Aboriginal overtones.
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"blame". Warner (1969:405) says of the Murngin (Yolŋu) that death is a time when, 'the more intense latent antagonisms rise to the surface, and some of the relatives may be blamed for the death'. The divisions and conflicts inherent within tight knit kinship societies tend to be hidden but they become apparent in the expressions of remorse, anger and accusations of blame and suspicions of sorcery which immediately follow an untimely death. Moreover, these divisions and disharmonies within the family, between kin and in the wider moral universe are thought to actually bring misfortune and death.⁷

Among the Yolŋu, death is the context in which social tensions become apparent and unresolved grievances surface in the post-mortems after a recent death. Reid (1983) gives a detailed explanation of a Yolŋu socio-medical theory of illness and death and the post-mortems of anger, blame and accusations of *galka'*(sorcery) which are made after death.⁸

Among Yolŋu in the 1990s, male and female, older and younger generations, close family and wider kin take sides in family and wider community disputes, especially in matters of the 'correctness' of sexual-marital relations. If these discordant issues and relationships persist they are commonly considered by Yolŋu to be to "blame" for recent serious illnesses and deaths (Reid 1986:112-15).⁹

It is to redress these disturbances in the social-moral order that Yolŋu direct their attentions after a death (Reid 1986). Yolŋu in Darwin are not exempt from accusations of neglect, of moral misconduct and of blame after the death of kin. Indeed, long absence from kin and country and certain aspects of urban living may make urban-dwelling kin more liable to expressions of guilt, anger, blame and possibly to accusations of *galka'*. Reid (1986:25, 48-9, 135) says Yolŋu believe that urban centres such as Nhulunbuy and Darwin and especially urban drinking contexts are suspect because close contact with strangers, with Yolŋu from other communities, with other Aboriginal people and with peoples of other ethnic origins provide new opportunities for sorcery.

In my experience, Yolŋu in Darwin are not living in fear of *galka'* or of strangers and the

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*Glückman (1971:243) notes of African tribal societies that divided loyalties exist between close kin and wider kin and, 'each disturbance of social relations has a spreading (moral) effect which results in misfortune befalling either the wrongdoer or the wronged'.

⁸ Of the Gunwinggu of west-central Arnhem Land, Berndt and Berndt (1970:174) say that, 'anger is ... along with grief, a conventional feature of mourning, and accusations and threats are a normal part of a camp upset after a death'.

⁹ Myrna Tonkinson (1982:239) says of Aboriginal beliefs at Jigalong, an Aboriginal community in Central Australia that, 'the community accepts that "bad" behaviour, such as abandoning a spouse, marrying wrongly, breaking ritual taboos or heavy drinking, can lead to the illness of parents or other relatives'.

urban environment. Rather than blame total strangers for a death, urban-based kin examine their own lives and relationships and focus on particular kin or kinship factions and particular social-moral issues within a Yolŋu domain, which spans kin in the city and kin in the remote community. Yolŋu consider how social and moral obligations have been met or neglected in life in order to assess responsibility in death and to reconfirm Yolŋu norms and values among the living.

Urban-dwelling Yolŋu are not dismissive of galka’ but they do not see themselves especially endangered because they live in the city and move among strangers. Even so, in the gossip and more serious post-mortem discussions which follow the recent death of kin, urban-dwelling Yolŋu will consider a range of explanations of death including Balanda medical diagnoses, what is stated on the death certificate, autopsy reports and the findings of the coroner. They will also assess the recent lifestyle of the deceased, the role of family and wider kin and ultimately the possibility of the malevolent intent of an unidentified person(s) who effects a fatality through galka’ (sorcery) (cf. Reid 1986:146-56).

These post-mortems have the potential to emphasise divisiveness and distrust, but anger, blame and galka’ also direct Yolŋu to repair relationships; and to re-affirm norms and values. Serious illness and death stir up tensions which existed before these crises within the wider kinship community. The hostilities which are aroused and voiced in turn stimulate mechanisms to smooth over and where possible to resolve differences. The pointing of moral blame is often enough of a social sanction to make Yolŋu, as individuals and social groups, reconstitute their loyalties and reconfirm Yolŋu norms and values.

While Yolŋu funeral ceremonies tend to put to rest old grievances as the rituals lay to rest the dead, sometimes funeral ceremonies only submerge and fail to "settle" unresolved issues as was the case with Burala, the restless wife and later senior widow (see 5.3.3, 5.5.2). The reconciliations achieved at times of funeral ceremonies may not be lasting if underling issues are subdued rather than resolved. The full resolution of different interests, conflict and grievance takes time and may never be fully achieved. Yet the coming together of "all the bąpurrų” in funeral ceremonies goes a long way towards the restoration of harmony in the persons of the bereaved and in the social groups involved in the funeral ceremonies (cf. Warner 1969:434).10

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10 Ghuckman (1971:247) emphasises the sociological relevance of ritual in the restoration of solidarities and social order but he notes that complete resolution may be evaded rather than addressed: 'Ritual action is employed as the redressive, reconciling mechanism, for ritual reaffirms basic loyalties without careful examination of the underlying causes of disharmony'.
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The funeral rituals themselves emphasise kinship and clan solidarity and perpetuity within a moral universe beyond the confines of factional interests, individual affairs and of death itself. Yolŋu in Darwin are able to participate in this renewal of social and spiritual identity and "belonging" when they perform mortuary rituals in Darwin, even when they are not obliged or cannot return for funeral ceremonies in their remote communities and clan lands in Arnhem Land.

9.3.4 Announcing a death and 'bringing the bapurru'.

For the Yolŋu, it is important for death to be anticipated and individuals who feel they are about to die are known to forewarn their close kin (see Warner 403-4, 433; Morphy 1984:38-9; Eastwell 1984:13). However, in current circumstances it is often a stranger, a medical or legal authority, who breaks the "sad news" to Yolŋu that the death of a kinsperson is imminent or has already happened. From this moment the Yolŋu set in train their own mechanisms to announce a death and "bring the bapurrur" (clan group for ceremonies).¹¹

The Yolŋu describe the gathering of kin and clan for mourning and funeral ceremonies as "all the bapurrur". Today, the group of mourners and ritual participants may have to travel from Darwin and other places far from clan estates, as well as from the larger Yolŋu communities and from small, isolated homeland centres, in order to take part in the funeral ceremonies in a particular Yolŋu community. In Darwin, a partial gathering of the bapurrur comes together whenever mortuary rituals are held to "smoke" suburban houses and to "farewell the coffin plane". It is only by travelling from the city to remote communities that urban-dwelling Yolŋu can more fully participate with "all the bapurrur", which comes together for funeral ceremonies and burial on clan lands.

Contemporary patterns of settlement, the introduction of mortuary storage in urban hospitals, modern transport and money incomes provide the means for large numbers of dispersed kin to gather for funeral ceremonies and burial in remote communities (see also Morphy 1984:45 & 128; Williams 1987:160). In the 1990s, Yolŋu funeral ceremonies have the potential to gather kin and strangers, the latter including kin by 'adoption' and marriage to participate in funeral ceremonies in numbers and ways which have no precedent in the past. To this extent Yolŋu funeral ceremonies today, especially of individuals who have widened their

¹¹ In its primary sense bapurrur refers to a set of people and ritual objects and performances in the context of a death and the associated funeral ceremonies but there are many and complex meanings of the word bapurrur (see Williams 1986:65-70 & 224-30).
9.4 Case studies.

The case studies which follow concern the deaths of two female children in mid-childhood, an adolescent male, a mature aged man ordinarily considered to be in the prime of his life and three senior but by no means elderly women. These deaths included the accidental drowning of a girl child in a remote community, the return of a terminally ill girl to die in her home community, the death of a nineteen year old youth, of a middle-aged man and a senior woman in hospital in Darwin, the return of a mature aged woman to die in her home community and the death of a mature aged woman in a public toilet on the beachfront in Darwin.

This latter death and that of the accidental drowning of a child in a remote community required the intervention of the Office of the Coroner in Darwin for the certification of death, while the deaths in hospital and those who were discharged from hospital to die among kin in a remote community were processed by the relevant medical authorities. The Department of Law and the Department of Health and Community Services, through their respective agencies of the Office of the Coroner and the public hospital, were responsible for the repatriation of those remote-dwelling Yolŋu who were brought to Darwin in their care or charge, whether alive or dead. These departments and their agencies were not ordinarily responsible for the repatriation of deceased individuals who had come to Darwin independently so that two women who lived and died in Darwin had to be repatriated at kinship expense. In all circumstances where death occurred in the city, Yolŋu performed mortuary rituals, though they did not "smoke" suburban houses in every case as this was not always relevant, but in each case they performed the rituals to "farewell the coffin plane".

9.5 First extended case study: the death of my galay.

9.5.1 Telling the "sad news".

The tragic ending of this story takes up from where the narrative left off in the previous chapter (see 8.5.4). A nursing sister from Darwin public hospital rang to ask me if I could notify the immediate family that the nineteen year old youth was not expected to live the morning. When I arrived at the suburban address, the Yolŋu household was stirring for the day and I asked to speak with Giyapara, the youth's sister. I explained what I had been told and Giyapara alerted the rest of the household and then quietly everyone readied themselves to visit the hospital.
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Some of the visiting kin had left a few days earlier and so it was the core extended family household of nine young adults and adolescents together with four small children which now hurried to the hospital.

At the hospital we were asked to wait outside the Intensive Care Unit until the doctor and an Aboriginal liaison officer came for us and took us into an office, which could be closed off from the ward. The doctor then explained: the patient had been admitted by ambulance on Thursday night; he had a history of rheumatic heart disease and consequent malfunction of the heart valves. During the night, his heart had stopped but the medical staff had started it again and put him on a respirator. Staff had not been able to bring his blood pressure back up and medication could not help him so that, as the doctor said, 'his condition slid slowly downhill'. His heart stopped again about twenty minutes before they, the family, had arrived and medical staff could not start it again.

The Balanda doctor gave this explanation as he squatted down so as to be at eye-level with Giyapara, who had been the sister most responsible for her brother in his recent failing health. A moment of silence followed the doctor's account of the death before Giyapara said in a clear, firm voice as if she were taking command of the situation, "now tell me straight about this". The doctor looked surprised as he had just finished a detailed but plain English account of the circumstances of the youth's death. He went through the story again but in an abbreviated form and added, repeatedly, that there was nothing more medicine could do and that the patient was in no pain.

At this point, Wurrpan who was *bāpa mukul* (father's sister) to the deceased threw herself sideways onto the floor of the office. The Aboriginal liaison officer, an Aboriginal woman of mixed-descent, quickly held another female relative tight to prevent her from throwing herself down. The Balanda doctor hugged Giyapara, the elder sister of the two so that she could not move, only cry and call out *yukuyuku* (little brother) and *bāpala* (daddy). I hugged Miku, the other sister but the young men, including the seventeen year old brother of the deceased stood alone in their grief.

Shortly we were taken into a reception room where a hospital chaplain, a Balanda woman, made cups of tea and coffee and where members of the family were able to use a phone. Giyapara tried to ring a friend, an urban Aboriginal man of mixed-descent with whom she had work experience in the Department of Social Security. He was not in his office in the city so she left no message. Giyapara's classificatory *bāpa* (father), Dhangi, who was staying in the young siblings household at the time, decided to ring the Town Council office in the home community
but the appropriate kin were not in. Again no details were given because the right person was not available but the message was left that the matter was urgent and a contact phone number was given.

The appropriate kinsman in Arnhem Land soon returned the phone call and apparently they had heard the "sad news" there already. Dhangi wanted to know how it was that the remote community knew about their kinsmen, apparently ahead of the family in Darwin. He asked me what time I really thought the youth had "passed away". I explained how the hospital staff had phoned me, that they had earlier tried to contact the sleeping household and that I was told that the patient was not expected to live much longer. The classificatory father listened to me then said, "they say that because they think it is better to tell us to our face".

I am not sure that this was the case, but the hospital usually contacts the Town Council office in order to give immediate notice of the death of a patient from that community. I have known the hospital staff to follow this line of communication to the exclusion of making contact with concerned kin in Darwin, although every effort had been made in this case to contact the family in town.

By now, more kin had arrived outside the Intensive Care Unit as the news had spread to Yolŋu who were patients and visitors at the hospital. The immediate family were invited by hospital staff to have "one last look". After this we all left with the young bēpa mukul (father's sister) being the one who took charge of a small parcel of clothes of her gāthu (brother's child). The extended family wanted to go to Nungalinya College to "sit down" and "keep company" with kin for a while and so I left them there.

Later that day, the family returned to their privately rented house in the suburbs. The two sisters, Giyapara and Miku, had been into the city to the real estate office but were unable to explain their altered circumstances because the right man, the Balanda with whom they had had most contact was out of the office. For the third time this day, I noticed how the Yolŋu were reluctant to speak with just anyone or to leave messages but preferred direct contact with specific individuals who had particular responsibilities in the "business" at hand.12

Later that same day, the sisters and brothers sought out their own mother at one of her drinking haunts in the city and brought her back with them to the house. When I arrived she was sitting in the middle of the living-room on the carpeted floor and eating guya (fish) which the

12 Sansom (1980:24-27) describes the importance which Aboriginal people living in Darwin fringe camps placed on the appropriateness of person(s) giving and receiving 'the word' about a particular 'business'.
family had cooked for her. In an aside I was told that "she doesn't know". The mother had laryngitis or the like because she had all but lost her voice but she ate heartily and at the same time told a story, mostly in sign language with some strained attempts at speech. She was encouraged by those listening to go on with her story and she laughed from time to time.

Only when the mother had finished her meal and story did the young man, Dhaugi, the classificatory bapa (father) of the deceased youth, make his move. Lacking the traditional clapsticks, he improvised by taking up two pencils to tap out a rhythm on the wooden arm-rest of the chair in which he was sitting and he began the manikay (singing). Then the classificatory gandi (mother) of the deceased joined the lament and wailed for her waku (mother's child). The actual mother of the deceased realised what was amiss and threw herself sideways from her sitting position to the floor. She did this repeatedly, alternating with hitting herself in the abdomen (womb) with her clenched fist as Yolŋu women do who are gandi (mother) to a waku (mother's child) who has just died. She continued her lament, repeatedly blaming herself as a yajkurru gama (bad mother). All the while the semi-circle of her children and kin watched her expressions of grief.

That evening the Nungalinya College bus arrived to collect the bereaved. Apparently Yolŋu at the College had arranged to pick them up, and any kin from the Aboriginal hostels in the city and from suburban houses and flats conveniently en route, to take them to the College for a prayer-meeting. I was told that Yolŋu and Balanda in this specially convened 'fellowship' made a circle around the immediate family of mourners and said prayers and sung hymns. A Balanda pastor conducted the service but the congregation was predominantly made up of Yolŋu staff and students at the College and kin drawn from the city and suburbs. The Yolŋu were all invited to come again and some of them did go to a service the next Sunday.

9.5.2 "Smoking" the house and airing grievances.

Friday night the family stayed in their privately rented house in the seaside suburb even though it had not been "smoked" as yet and therefore was not released from contamination with death. The young siblings speculated about getting permission to move into their classificatory father's Housing Commission house in the northern suburbs, as he and his wife and family were still on holiday in their remote community of origin.

Early Saturday morning the householders busied themselves with cleaning the house and packing up in preparation for moving out. They cleaned the floors and boxed up their clothes and kitchen utensils but their belongings were few as they rented the house fully furnished. In
the late afternoon Yolŋu kin began to arrive for the "smoking" of the house. I was asked to park my car in the driveway so that it too could be "smoked" and cleared of association with the deceased. The Nungalinya College bus arrived with a party of kin, both staff and students from the College campus. Yolŋu had also come from Housing Commission houses and flats in the suburbs and from the Aboriginal hostels in the city. There were nine men, thirteen women and several children assembled.

A small fire was made towards the back of the backyard, beyond the carport. Coconut husks found in the garden were placed on the fire but not much smoke was produced and the men began the *bungul ga manikay* (lit. dancing and singing, ceremony). They advanced, retreated, advanced towards the back door with the leading two men carrying spears. Suddenly the group of men exhaled a cry in unison and charged the door with the spears. They did not hurl the spears and embed them in the door as I have seen done at house "smokings" in the home community in northeast Arnhem Land.

The men then entered the house by the back door, walked throughout and exited via the front door and some of the women also filed through. There were no possessions to be retrieved as the house had been thoroughly cleaned and vacated by the householders earlier in the day. I was asked to drive the car further into the driveway under the carport and a senior Yolŋu man in the ritual party took my car keys. I could not see if he passed the keys over the fire and through the smoke, only that he moved to the car, opened all the doors including the back hatch and several times leaned inside. He returned the keys to me saying that he had "smoked" the car. He specified the driver's seat, the front passenger seat, the back seat, the luggage area and "right through". The group from Nungalinya College left almost immediately after the "smoking ritual" which was a very orderly Yolŋu "business".

Towards sundown when the gathering of kin had dispersed, four of the household, two young women and two young men, walked to the local shops across vacant ground. They told me later that they heard footsteps following them but when they turned no one was there and the hairs stood up on their arms. Later that night, Saturday, they all moved into the Housing Commission house in the northern suburbs which was vacated by their kinsman and family who were on holiday.

Apparently the household had a restless night and the elder sister woke them saying that *yukuyuku* (little brother) was calling her. The women and children were sleeping together on mattresses pulled into the living room, while the young married couple and the adolescent boys used the bedrooms. Giyapara, the elder sister of the two said that perhaps they should have
stayed at the former house because it had at least been "smoked". She felt that the mokuy (ghost, wandering spirit) of her recently dead brother might continue to visit the house where they were now staying as he knew the place, lived there when first he came to Darwin and because the house had not been "smoked".

Despite their nervousness their kinsman's vacant house was a timely resource. Here they enjoyed a meal of weti (wallaby) which some kinsmen had given them. They also made good use of the telephone and discussed with their relatives in their community of origin such matters as when they were coming home for the funeral ceremonies, who would stay for the mortuary rituals to "farewell the coffin plane" and who would help pay their air-fares home.

By telephone, the two sisters in Darwin discussed the organisation for the funeral ceremonies with kin in their remote community. What started out as a rational discussion between kin about the merits of various sites suggested for the funeral ceremonies in the home community quickly became a heated argument. The immediate family of bereaved favoured holding the funeral ceremonies in bush camp, near the home and for the convenience of the invalid father of the deceased and not down near the beach, Town Council Office and local store where funeral ceremonies were regularly held in this particular Yolŋu community. Giyapara and Miku who were still in Darwin felt that their father was not being properly considered and became angry. One of the sisters rang the Town Council office in her home community to tell her kinsmen that if her father's wishes and interests were not met, the family in town would not bring the body home and everyone would have to fly to Darwin. There seemed to be no logic in this idea and no one took the threat seriously.

The bereaved and aggrieved young woman said that no-one helped to "look after" her brother over the years and in his last illness but she did not single out her alcoholic and deserting mother for blame and she praised her invalid father for all the care he had given over the years. Rather she hinted that there were those on her "father's side" who should have "kept company" and done more to "help out". A classificatory bapa mukul (father's sister), the young single woman, Wurrpan, who had kept company with her gathi (brother's child(ren)) throughout this crisis was mindful of the need to uphold the "father's side" of the extended family. She asked another classificatory bapa mukul of the deceased to go with herself and the party of kin who

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13 Among other Aboriginal people, however, kin do sometimes opt to bury their dead in Darwin and not to repatriate their deceased for rituals and burial in the community of origin. While this latter course of action may be an indication of social change and urbanisation, sometimes it is an act of reprisal by kin in town for the perceived neglect of kin in the home community (Gary Robinson, pers. com.).
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were to have another "last look" at the deceased in the hospital morgue.

9.5.3 Tidying up urban ends and "farewelling the coffin plane".

Some of the mourners decided to stay in Darwin long enough to finalise their urban affairs and to participate in the mortuary rituals to "farewell the coffin plane". Giyapara and Miku had to see the real estate agent to come to an agreement about the sudden termination of their rent. There was time to shop, to buy floral wreaths for the grave-side, sheet-sets to give as part payment to kin who lead the funeral ceremonies and new clothes for themselves and their children. Most importantly, the actual mother of the deceased was found again and made sober enough to board a scheduled flight to her home community so as to participate in the funeral ceremonies and burial of her son.

The siblings themselves also made a trip to a coastal site in Darwin to collect *gamunuggu* (white clay) to take home to their father for his bark paintings and to "paint up" for their brother's funeral ceremonies. However, they did not manage to use the clay to "paint up" for the mortuary rituals held in Darwin, as this time the rituals to "farewell the coffin plane" were hurriedly conducted and nearly pre-empted by Balanda organisation.

Saturday morning, eight days after the youth died, the coffin was scheduled to be flown to the remote community. There was consternation when the immediate family arrived at the air-charter terminal to find the hearse, a simple combivan, was pulled up on the tarmac next to the waiting light aircraft and it appeared as if the coffin was about to be loaded aboard without ceremony. There was an awkward wait for more kin to arrive, including the men who would lead the rituals.

The Yolŋu kinsmen who were to lead the mortuary rituals were employed at Nungalinya College, within the Uniting Church in Darwin and one kinsmen worked for the Council for Aboriginal Alcohol Program Services (CAAPS). When they arrived they found that the position of the hearse did not give them any room to process with the coffin from the hearse to the plane. The men simply opened the back doors of the van, beat on the clapsticks and began their *manikay* (singing). A *yidaki* (drone-pipe, didgeridoo) was wound with cloth and thrust several times into the open back of the van towards the coffin and the men hissed like the totemic snake as they repeatedly thrust the *yidaki* into the open back of the hearse and towards the coffin. Their movements were constrained by the lack of space and the whole ritual appeared truncated.

The classificatory mother of the deceased clung to the coffin as Yolŋu men handled it into the plane. Some of the mourning group were only just arriving as the rituals concluded and
some women only had time to briefly lament as the plane taxied away. None of the ritual or
mourning party had " painted up" with gamnuungu' (white clay). One Yolgu couple came
forward with their apologies for arriving too late. It was Dhaggi and his wife, the young couple
who with their infant lived in the siblings' household throughout the youth's illness and up until
his death. They had brought two bouquets of fresh flowers which were supposed to decorate the
coffin but the plane had already departed.

The classificatory mother of the siblings, who had been "helping" them and living with
them since they set up their own household to look after their seriously ill brother, was chosen
to accompany the coffin in the plane. It was also reasoned that this widow would not need a
return air-fare as she would travel on the plane chartered by the Department of Health and
Community Services to repatriate the deceased. However, the plane chartered by government
tender had only room for the pilot and the coffin and so the classificatory gundi (mother) could
not accompany her deceased waku (son). There was dismay that the coffin was not being
"minded" on the journey home and money for another air-fare had to be raised to ensure that the
close classificatory mother returned to the remote community for the funeral rituals and burial.

9.6 The life and death of my mukul rumaru'.

Djirrigidi had lived in her remote community in a monogamous marriage and she and
her Yolgu husband had eleven children. By the time she decided to leave her husband, he was
aged and in the years which followed he was to become an invalid largely confined to a wheel-
chair. He was nevertheless a man of considerable authority and he continued to keep most of his
children with him and maintain his own household after his wife deserted him and moved to
Darwin.

In the city, Djirrigidi joined the small group of Yolgu and other Aboriginal women who
socialised in alcohol-drinking camps and lived in a succession of 'de facto' relations with other
Aborigines, Maoris, Thursday Islanders and Balanda of various ethnic backgrounds. These
women are regarded by the wider kinship network of Yolgu in remote communities and those
in Darwin as "humbugs", that is kin who are often drunk and prone to make unreasonable
demands for money, rides in vehicles, a place to sleep for a night or two but who seldom
contribute reciprocally to relations of kinship.

Djirrigidi was introduced earlier as the mother of the nineteen year old youth who died
in hospital (see 9.5.1). Her daughters, Giyapara and Miku, made certain that their mother
attended her son's funeral rituals and burial in the home community. As soon as Djirrididi returned to Darwin after the funeral ceremonies, she went back to her drinking habits and associates in the city.

Not long afterwards, Djirrididi was again sought out by one of her daughters to attend mortuary rituals on the tarmac beside the "coffin plane" in Darwin. When found she was scarcely sober but her presence, at least at the mortuary rituals held in Darwin, was imperative. One of her young grandchildren, an eight year old girl, had died in a drowning accident at Galiwin'ku and the body had been flown to Darwin hospital for an autopsy and death certificate. The Coroner's Office was responsible for the physical repatriation of the dead child but kin in Darwin were responsible for the rituals to start the spiritual dimensions of the homeward journey.

Yoŋu staff and students at Nungalinya College took the ritual roles but it was up to kin who lived in the city and suburbs to make up the mourning party. Although the mortuary rituals beside the "coffin plane" in Darwin were for a young child who lived and died in a remote community, urban-based kin rallied in good numbers to conduct a brief and simple ceremony. Kin did not "paint up" but the ritual party of men was led in the bugul ga manikay (dancing and singing) by clapsticks and women wailed and sang their lament.

It was most important that Djirrididi, the child's märi (mother's mother), participated in the mortuary rituals for her gutharra (mother's daughter's child) because as a clan and community leader explained to me, "in death, in that area märi looks after gutharra". Morphy (1984:12) notes that members of the märi clan play a major ceremonial part on behalf of their gutharra (daughter's child, sister's daughter's child) in the context of Yoŋu funeral ceremonies.14

Djirrididi used to rent a room in what she aptly described as a "drunks" lodging in the inner city. Sometimes she lived in private flats with a current Balanda "boyfriend" and various men took her to live out of town in various bush camps or squats. At the time of her own death, Djirrididi was sleeping out in a predominantly Aboriginal alcohol drinkers' camp at a near city beach. It was the Wet season and apparently one night Djirrididi woke up in the rain and took shelter in a public toilet block on the foreshore. The next morning she was found dead on the floor. Her daughters had by now returned to live in northeast Arnhem Land and they learnt of her death from the police in Darwin. Because of the circumstances of her death an autopsy was

14 For the importance of the märi-gutharra relationship after death and in funeral rituals see also Warner (1969:102) and Morphy (1984:105, 1991:112-13).
performed at the Darwin public hospital.

Yolŋu women in Darwin who had little to do with Djirrididi and the Yolŋu drinking set began to speculate whether she was murdered and whether her death was by *galka’* (sorcery). Another Yolŋu woman of the drinking scene knew the circumstances which led up to Djirrididi’s death, that she was wet, coughing and shivering when she took shelter in the toilets. The elder daughter in Arnhem Land rang me to say that the autopsy report suggested that her mother died of natural causes, herself mentioned an asthma attack brought on by being cold and wet. Yolŋu accept the medical explanation of death but still believe that the underlying cause is a moral transgression, ill-will and *galka’* (sorcery) (see Reid 1986:146-156).

Among a group of Yolŋu women who were visiting the city on a Christian rally, there was discussion about whether Djirrididi’s body would be flown home for funeral ceremonies or be buried in Darwin. These women speculated that because in life this kinswoman did not keep up her responsibilities in kin and in ceremony that she might not be taken home for funeral ceremonies but simply buried in Darwin. A daughter of the deceased rang me to say that her mother’s coffin was to be flown home. Kin in Darwin would see to the mortuary rituals to start the homeward journey as the “coffin plane” had been organised. The deceased’s husband and children, together with the wider kinship community, prepared for her funeral ceremonies and last home-coming.

### 9.7 The death of my mali’.

Bu’manydji was a middle-aged man who suffered a coronary occlusion in his home community. At first he was evacuated to the hospital in Nhulunbuy and shortly afterwards transferred to the public hospital in Darwin, where he was admitted to the Intensive Care Unit. His condition improved for a while but he had another heart seizure and died in hospital.

As Bu’mayndji had not lived in Darwin there was no need for rituals to "smoke" houses and cars in town, but urban-dwelling kin were still responsible for the mortuary rituals beside the "coffin plane", which was chartered to repatriate the deceased. As Bu’manydji had been a patient brought into Darwin to be hospitalised and was therefore in the 'care' of the Northern Territory Department of Health and Community Services, the purchase of a coffin and the cost of air-charter would ordinarily have been arranged by and at the expense of the Department. In fact, the deceased’s kin decided to obtain a coffin which was considerably more elaborate and expensive than the more modest coffin supplied under government tender. On the other hand, they accepted the government tendered charter-flight for the repatriation of the coffin.
A large influx of visitors were expected to travel to the deceased's home community for the ceremonies and burial. The headman of the community advised kin in Darwin that everything would be delayed so that all who planned to travel to the remote community would find the time and means to do so. This meant that the coffin would not be repatriated much inside of two weeks after death, subject to the co-operation of the administrators of the morgue attached to the public hospital in Darwin.

The deceased was a Liyagawumirr clansman whose parents were long dead and he himself was an only child. There was some early talk that his ceremonies and burial should have been in his clan country but as Bul'manydji had lived most of his life in the community and clan lands of his in-laws, the ceremonies were planned accordingly. Bul'manydji had been polygynously married and when he was hospitalised in Darwin his two wives and their respective children by him had hurried to town and to his bedside (see 8.4.1). After Bul'manydji's death, a clan brother was most anxious that the widows and children return speedily to take up their roles and responsibilities in mourning and in funeral rituals in the home community (see 5.5.2). This clan brother, Maranydjalk, was related "close up" because his own wife was an actual sister of the deceased's senior widow. As a close kinsman and clansman of the deceased he had a major ceremonial role in the funeral rituals and was helped by the arrival of two other Liyagawumirr clan brothers from Galiwin'ku and Gapuwiyak.

The deceased man had wide experience in his life and many mourners were expected to travel to the funeral ceremonies. In former years, Bul'manydji had worked for the Forestry Department in the country of other Aboriginal people, including that of the Tiwi of Bathurst and Melville Islands. A Tiwi man said to be "one of his best friends", made his way to the Yolŋu community for the funeral ceremonies. Bul'manydji had also worked in the Department of Lands and Housing in the earlier years and in this capacity had travelled and worked in Yolŋu and other Aboriginal communities, including Maningrida. Some of his social contacts from those days also came to the funeral rites and burial.

Bul'manydji had been an elder of the local Yolŋu congregation of the Uniting Church, although in more recent years he had lapsed from active Church membership. Even so, Yolŋu kin who were Church officials gathered from other communities and the local congregation put in a special effort to mark the Christian dimensions of his life in the ceremonies held after his death. At the time of his death, Bul'manydji was involved in Aboriginal local government as a councillor on the local town council. A kinsman, the Member for Arnhem in the Legislative Assembly of the Northern Territory also attended and danced in the funeral ceremonies.
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In his lifetime, Bul'manydji had limited personal experience of Darwin but via his two wives he could claim the support of urban-dwelling kin, when in a medical emergency he was hospitalised in the city. For example, a brother of his senior wife lived and worked in the city and a sister of his junior wife had married a Balanda and settled there. After he died in hospital in Darwin, urban-dwelling kin were responsible for the rituals to start the homeward journey of the deceased and to "farewell the coffin plane".

However, the greater gathering of "all the bāpurru (group, clan)" took place in the remote community as Yolŋu and other Aboriginal mourners flew in for the funeral ceremonies. This gathering reflected the 'social personality' (Warner 1969:435) the deceased man held in life, both in introduced contexts such as employment, Church and local government as well as in relations of kinship and of clan. The bāpurru had assembled on the ceremonial ground at the remote community, when the public address system at the local school broadcast the message that the "coffin plane" had taken off from Darwin. It was now up to kin and clan in the home community to meet the plane, take charge of the coffin and continue the ceremonies.

About three hours later the "coffin plane" circled overhead to alert the community before the plane headed for the airstrip to land. A number of vehicles set off from the Town Council office with kin who were to meet the plane and ceremonially receive their kinsman who had died in Darwin. The Council utility acted as the hearse and when the returning cavalcade neared the community, car horns were repeatedly sounded. Many kin hurried to meet the cars and to walk beside the hearse as it drove slowly through the community towards the ceremonial grounds. From the local school, the public address system broadcast a Christian evangelist, a white American, singing a hymn said to be a favourite of the deceased. Later, the Kids' Club within the local Church, together with adult Yolŋu members of the local congregation provided a guard of honour and a floral archway through which the coffin was borne after the funeral ceremonies and just prior to burial. Before this, however, the Yolŋu funeral ceremonies took precedence over these introduced elaborations. Even so, a Church banner was carried ahead of the procession when kinsmen carried the coffin the last distance to the ceremony grounds and placed it inside the *bala'*(bough shelter, shade). The *bala'* was made of saplings which had been roughly cut to form the uprights and horizontals of the framework which was then covered all over, walls and roof with green, leafy boughs.

I was invited to "pay the last respects" to my deceased *mālu'*(father) and so to enter the *bala'*. The central poles of the *bala'* were hung with *bathi*(sacred dilly bags) and with *gulikulimirr*(feathered) strings. I added the floral wreath from my family in Darwin to the
collection of floral wreaths and crosses which decorated the coffin. The two widows, Burala and Gunda were resting on mattresses either side of the coffin, but they could not speak to me as they were under the speech prohibitions of widows in mourning. They were obliged to keep vigil together beside their deceased husband's coffin even though as co-wives in a polygynous marriage they had made a point of keeping separate households. While they could move outside for limited and specific purposes, the widows were said to be "locked up in the shade" during the ceremonies and for a period of mourning (see also 5.5.2).

9.8 Second extended case study: the death of my märi.

In the following account of the death of Därpa, my märi (mother's mother), I have come full circle. It was in the introductory chapter that I described how in life she introduced me to Yolŋu kinship organisation and in her death to Yolŋu ceremonial life, as experienced in Yolŋu kinship networks which span kin in remote communities and in Darwin. Why Därpa came to live in the city and how she became a suburban householder has been discussed earlier (see 5.3.1).

Därpa had had tuberculosis, which although treated and contained had left her prone to lung congestion, and more recently she had suffered from asthma. Generally she enjoyed better health in the city, and several kin noted that when she returned to her home community for any length of time she would return to Darwin in poor health and agitated about the "arguing" there and the demands made upon her in terms of wider family needs and disputes.

Even so, Därpa was an energetic woman, active in craft work, and she wove mats and dilly-bags for sale and to give as gifts. She enjoyed regular hunting and gathering trips in Darwin's foreshore and bush environs, which she made in company with other Yolŋu women. The Aboriginal Women's Resource Centre sometimes provided a small bus to take Aboriginal women on these excursions and Därpa was a regular user of the service and well known and liked at the Centre. In fact, she had "adopted" the co-ordinator, an Aboriginal woman of mixed-descent, into the Yolŋu subsection and kinship systems and she and the co-ordinator thereafter were related as yapa (sister(s).

Därpa said that she was happy to live in Darwin but that her sons were going to build her a new house back at her home community and she would then return there to "finish out" her life. This statement did not necessarily indicate that she had a premonition of her death but rather was an example of a commonly expressed Yolŋu preference to die among kin and on clan lands. She was not to realise her desire to return home to die. She became ill one night, was driven to
hospital the next morning by her single daughter accompanied by her sister's son. Darrpa was admitted to hospital but died shortly afterwards.

Wurrpan, the single daughter, told me that in the car on the way to hospital her mother had said, "I am going to die now", or words to that effect in the Djambarrpuwuyu language. Wurrpan tried to reassure her mother that she would be all right once at the hospital. When recounting the story to others, the daughter emphasised that her mother had said that she was going to die.

Particular circumstances may be left out of the account of a death. I have reason to believe that was the case when Wurrpan first told me about her mother's death. Later, I was given another version of the events immediately prior to the death by an Aboriginal woman of mixed-descent, who had been "adopted" into the Yolgu kinship system. She herself was not present and her account is therefore second-hand.

Apparently there had been a disturbance in the household the night before Darrpa died. Some male relatives, visitors to town, had come to the house drunk and continued to drink there until a fight broke out among them. Darrpa was unable to stop the fighting so she had gone to fetch the help of a Balanda, an off-duty policeman who happened to be a neighbour. With or without the policeman's intervention, I am not certain, the household quieted down and most of the co-residents went to sleep.

Darrpa had been agitated by the fighting and spent an uncomfortable night. Apparently she tried to arouse various members of the household during the night to tell them she was feeling ill, but no-one had responded because they were either exhausted by the disturbances earlier in the night or in a drunken sleep. Sometime the next morning the daughter decided to take her mother to the Darwin public hospital where she died shortly after being admitted. These details were initially suppressed in the first accounts I heard of the death. As with Balanda, Yolgu do not like to disclose family problems to strangers, nor to have to call for police intervention as this would be to admit that the family cannot manage the mari (trouble, fighting).15

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15 Sansom (1980:118-20) tells of a similar experience of being excluded from the full story of a death among Aborigines in a Darwin fringe camp and of the reluctance of Aboriginal kin to call police in to manage disputes among themselves.
9.8.1 Feelings of anger, talk of blame and galka' (sorcery).

Most of the decisions that had to be made and carried out immediately after Đarrpa's death related to the movement of people but there was also the management of information and of accusation to be considered. The post-mortem discussions in the remote community and among kin in Darwin had still to resolve matters of "blame" for this death (cf. Reid 1983:32). Concurrent with practical decisions and actions was the process of coming to terms with the emotive reaction to the death, the grief, anger, blame and the quest for cause and explanation of this sudden death.

There were two foci for these feelings and expressions of anger and of blame. On the one hand, the wider kinship group accused one of Đarrpa's sons of moral misconduct and hence of culpability for her death. In his own community in Arnhem Land, this man was allegedly having "wrong-side" sexual relations with a young woman whose relations by kinship to him culturally prohibited sexual-marital relations. His misconduct in this matter made him liable for "blame" concerning his mother's unexpected death (cf. Reid 1986:112-15).

The young men whose alcohol-drinking and fighting caused the household disturbance the night before Đarrpa died appeared not to have attracted any blame. In fact, a senior son of the deceased dismissed any suggestion that the young men were culpable in regard to his mother's death. Reid (1983:32) says that among the Yolŋu there is an indirect link between, "the "proximate" cause (such as a sorcerer or spirit) and the "ultimate" cause (such as the conflict, breach of a religious or social law, jealousy or spite which motivated the sorcerer or spirit)' 16

In the context of Yolŋu beliefs, it was more the son's inappropriate relationship with a Yolŋu woman which focused on him the disapproval of wider kin and their accusations of "blame" for his mother's death. In contrast, the deceased's eldest daughter, Burala, expressed initial feelings of anger towards the wider kinship community. She said that when her mother died, she felt hatred for the remote community where she lived and that she wished to leave it. She blamed the wider kinship group for her mother's death because she felt that they did not accord her mother proper recognition "as boss for the families" and had recently given her mother so much trouble over a disputed marriage of a grand-daughter. It was this disharmony within the wider family and local kinship community which the married daughter believed had led her mother to migrate to the city and ultimately, the daughter alleged, was "to blame" for her

16 Similarly, among the Gunwinggu a person who is instrumental in another's death may be merely that, an instrument, and the underlying cause of death lies elsewhere in disharmony in relationships and in the wider social and moral universe (Berndt & Berndt 1970:173).
mother's sudden death in Darwin.

In the days of mourning and ceremony which followed, the deceased's sons talked among themselves and with the numerous kin who questioned them or gave their opinions about their mother's untimely death. These brothers discussed the rumours and the accusations and the "blame" directed at one of them by the wider kinship group. The eldest brother as clan and local community leader brought his authority to support his younger brother against the anger and blame of wider kin and clan and the three brothers agreed to present a united front in order to disavow the accusations of blame and rumours of *galka'*(sorcery) as "just talk".

The wider kinship system chose this moment of crisis to exert moral pressure upon one of the deceased's sons to set his sexual-marital affairs in order. Although I have no evidence of the end of the illicit sexual liaison, it seems likely that norms of sexual-marital relations were reinforced. Later, nearly a year after his mother's death, Warraga, the son in Darwin confidently stated that "everything is *manynak* (all right) now". Matters were settled within the family and wider kinship circles and there was no more talk of anger, blame or *galka'*(sorcery).

In the meantime, co-resident kin in Darrpa's suburban household were initially pre-occupied with moving out of the house, which they shared so recently with their kinswoman who was now dead. They quickly relocated to other kinship households for the coming night and until they returned to Arnhem Land for the funeral rituals and burial.

9.8.2 "Smoking" suburban houses.

I was invited by Wurrpan, the single daughter of the deceased to come to the "smoking of the house" ceremony and later to provide the use of my car for the transport of people, bedding, clothing and other readily removable household items. When I arrived, Yolnu kin were already there and sitting on the ground in four separate small groups. Two groups of women and children sat either side of the drive-way and outside of the front fence on the footpath. All the women in these two groups were classificatory kin of the deceased and none of them was co-resident in her household at the time of her death. Another group of women and children was seated on the ground inside the front yard and included two *waku*(daughters), two *gathu*(daughters-in-law) and one grand-daughter *gaminyarr*(son's child) of the deceased.

The fourth group of Yolnu consisted of kinsmen who sat or stood in a semi-circle about the preparations for a fire on the edge of the car-port and directly opposite the front door of the house. Two *waku*(sons) of the deceased, a *gurrug*(son-in-law) and another *waku*, in this case the son of a sister of the deceased, organised the preparations for the "smoking" rituals. Three
young men who were *gurrug* (sons-in-law), in each case a classificatory relationship to the deceased, completed the group of men who staged the "smoking" rituals.

Other essentially foreign parties to this gathering of Yolŋu arrived before the "smoking" rituals began. A taxi arrived with some Yolŋu and as the taxi driver was one engaged regularly by this kinship network, he parked on the opposite side of the road and stayed there throughout the "smoking". A Balanda man from the Arnhem Land Progress Association (ALPA) arrived in his own car and walked up the drive-way to shake hands with and to offer his condolences but he did not stay. An Aboriginal woman of mixed-descent, an Aboriginal Liaison officer with the Housing Commission came on a routine visit to this Yolŋu household. Unaware of the death of the householder and what was happening she asked "What's up with you mob today?" No one answered directly but Wurrpan took the Aboriginal woman aside and explained the situation and the Housing Commission officer left.

The actual son-in-law, a senior man, took the lead in this *man tjarr* (smoking ceremony) in which the house, car, household durables associated with the deceased were "smoked". The son-in-law handed a garden rake to a classificatory daughter of the deceased who was sitting on the footpath and he directed her to rake up leaves to fuel the fire. A son of the deceased broke green branches off a tree in the front yard. A small fire of leaves and twigs was built just under the carport, which was unpaved and doubled as the front porch. The smoke was then fanned with green branches towards the front door of the house and the men continued the *manikay* (singing) accompanied by the clapsticks, while the women wailed their lament. As the fire increased, more green twigs were added until smoke started to billow and again, leafy branches were used to fan the smoke towards the door. The singing and billowing of smoke reached a point of climax and in unison the men exhaled a loud cry.

The *manikay* was of *Djambarrpuyŋu* clan and *Dhuwa* moiety and the men sang of *Darrpa* (King Brown snake), the totem of the deceased. At this point, the women inside the front yard jumped up, snatched branches from the fire and ran through the house, sweeping it with the smoking branches. Men and women then used the branches to smoke and sweep over the daughter's car, which was parked in the drive-way and which took the sick woman to the hospital. The ritual was over, house, contents and the car had been smoked and the *mokuy* (ghost, wandering spirit) of the deceased had been urged not to linger.

As soon as the "smoking" rituals were over, Yolŋu kin re-entered the house in a less hurried fashion and the business of removing bedding and clothing took place. Mattresses were strapped on top of the daughter's car and more were loaded into the back of mine. Bundles of
clothing were removed, but larger household furniture such as a refrigerator, a table and chairs were temporarily abandoned. Apparently nothing more was removed from the house until three weeks or a month elapsed after the funeral. As it happened, the Housing Commission waived all normal conditions for the vacation of the premises and allowed a three week period in which the Yolŋu might choose to retrieve any belongings and furniture from the abandoned house before these were removed.

Two other Housing Commission houses in the suburbs of Darwin were "smoked" as a result of this one death. These were two suburban houses occupied by kin with whom Darrpa had formerly lived before she had gained a Commission house in her own right. She had lived for a time in the household of a son, his wife and children and the third house was that of a Yolŋu woman with whom she had stayed when first she moved to Darwin. This Yolŋu woman was in hospital and had just given birth to an infant daughter at the time of her kinswoman's death. Yolŋu kin in Darwin considered it necessary to "smoke" her Commission house before she came out of hospital and brought the baby home, otherwise the mokuy (ghost, wandering spirit) of the dead woman might return to the house and endanger the life of the new-born child.

Later, one Yolŋu woman complained that the dirramu (men) who "smoked" the houses should also have arranged to "smoke" the hunting and gathering sites around Darwin where Darrpa and other Yolŋu women, herself included, used to hunt and gather. The Yolŋu men who led the rituals to "smoke" houses and vehicles and so free them of the dangers associated with death and allow them to be re-used, included men who were at the time resident at Nungalinya College and others who worked in town and lived in the suburbs. They were well aware that they had no jurisdiction to set fire to bushland in and around Darwin. The constraints on Yolŋu "smoking" rituals in Darwin are discussed later in this chapter (see 9.9.1) and need not be discussed here other than to say that because these places were not burnt off and therefore cleansed, Yolŋu women were not able to resume hunting and gathering in the deceased's favourite hunting sites, at least not for the next twelve months or more because the mokuy might linger there.17

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17 Warner (1969:407) notes the Murngin (Yolŋu) belief that the mokuy (ghost, wandering spirit) of the deceased may effect the hunting potential of the living and that the spirit of the recent dead, 'might go looking for fish, and turtle and other animal food and frighten these animals away so that the living could not kill them'.
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9.8.3 Personal plans and collective action.

During the eleven or so days between Därpa’s death in Darwin and her ritual burial in her community of origin, kin had much to plan. Numerous telephone conversations were held between kin in Darwin and kin in the remote community. The YölJu directed their immediate attention towards the practicalities of getting people to the rituals: paying for air-fares, meeting planes, housing visiting mourners and planning and performing the sequences of funeral ceremonies. The eldest son of the deceased was a clan and community leader in the home community and he took charge of organisation at that end and at times his influence predominated among Darwin-based kin.18

Warraga, the son who lived and worked in the city said that he and Dhaugi, his late mother’s sister’s son, had a plan of their own for the rituals to repatriate their deceased māndi (mother). These two close classificatory brothers had planned to lead the ceremony at the air charter terminal in Darwin. To this end, Warraga sent word to the home community for the eldest man he called brother, not his own eldest brother, to send him a *bathi* (a ceremonial dilly-bag). Warraga called this sacred dilly-bag his māri (mother’s mother, mother’s mother’s brother) and he planned to dance with this sacred dilly-bag in the mortuary rituals beside the "coffin-plane" before the plane left Darwin.

However, Warraga had to give up this plan after he had telephone conversations with his eldest brother, the clan and community leader in the home community. Apparently, the eldest brother advised him to return home immediately and to leave other kin to perform the rituals at the Darwin end. By now the ceremonial dilly bag had been brought into Darwin but as it could not be given to just anyone, Warraga took it with him when he returned to his home community for the funeral ceremonies and burial. In this way, there were no immediate family left in Darwin to perform the ritual "farewell" at the airport and the ceremonial dilly-bag was also not available for the Darwin ritual.19

The staging of the funeral ritual at the airport was therefore entrusted to those Darwin based YölJu who were related to the deceased via more distant and classificatory kinship, and who were not obliged to or in any event did not return for the funeral rituals in the home community.

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19 A ceremonial dilly-bag has never been used at any of the YölJu mortuary ceremonies I have been party to in Darwin.
community. Even so, some of these Yolŋu presented themselves at flight times to participate in the departures of others and some also came in the hope of receiving money or tickets for their return. For these Yolŋu who did not return to the home community for the funeral rituals there was still a major ceremonial role to play in the rituals held beside the "coffin plane" and to start the journey of repatriation of the deceased.

Some eleven days after Dārrpa's death, the day and the time were fixed for the charter flight to take the coffin of the deceased back to her home community in Arnhem Land. Because Dārrpa had lived in Darwin under her own initiative, the entire circumstances of funeral parlour services and of repatriation by air-charter were managed without government agency and between kin in Darwin and kin in the remote community of origin.

A small crowd of Yolŋu assembled in the car-park outside the air-charter office. There were several parked cars here but also some vacant spaces in which a group of Yolŋu men and another of women and children assembled. When I arrived the men were already "painted up" with gamunungu' (white clay) and had begun the manikay (singing) accompanied by the clapsticks. The women and children were painting their faces, hair and limbs with white clay when I joined them. After a lull in the men's singing a Yolŋu woman, a waku, in this instance a classificatory daughter of the deceased, sung out her lament and the men renewed their singing.

People continued to arrive, including two Balanda taxi-drivers who regularly transported Yolŋu clients and Dārrpa's kinship group about the city and suburbs. A Balanda woman arrived who knew the deceased and associated with Yolŋu women in general during the course of her work at the Aboriginal Women's Resource Centre. Meanwhile, the air-charter company continued with business as usual. Aborigines and Balanda who were meeting or joining flights but were not involved with the mortuary rituals and mourning group continued to drive in and out of the parking area, walk in and out of the office and seemingly ignored Yolŋu "funeral business".

The staff of this air-charter company were familiar with the mortuary rituals beside the "coffin plane" because the rituals were a fairly common occurrence. Charter flights are typically the way in which deceased Yolŋu are repatriated to their remote communities from Darwin. This particular air-charter company used to caretake the bilma (clapsticks) in the office so that they were readily available for use by the Yolŋu men who led the mortuary rites in Darwin.
Chapter 9. Smoking houses, farewelling the coffin plane.

9.8.4 The ritual participants and their relationship to the deceased.

Of the Yolŋu men who assembled to lead these particular mortuary rituals, the kinsman who took the lead was living at the time in a camp back from the beach front at Lee Point. From this base he conducted an informal trade as a maker of spears for the tourist market in Darwin. He had been to represent the Northern Territory in an Aboriginal cultural display at the Expo in Brisbane but when he returned from this trip he had not gone home to his community of origin but stayed on and camped out in Darwin. A Galpu man of the Dhuwa moiety, he stood in the classificatory relationship of wāwa (brother) to the deceased. Because of this close relationship it was not appropriate for him to handle the coffin and consequently he was not one of the pall-bearers.

When the hearse arrived and started to reverse into the car-park, this Galpu man led the procession of men who flanked the hearse. He carried two spear shafts which lacked blades or tips. Yolŋu said that the shafts represented two snakes which carry the spirit of the deceased on its journey towards the ancestral site in clan lands. The Galpu man made them quiver and move like snakes, like the deceased's totem.

The man with the clapsticks called the deceased his yapa (sister). His was a special relationship to the deceased because after her own father had died, this man's father had 'adopted' her and helped to "grow her up" in northeast Arnhem Land. Therefore the man with the clapsticks stood in a close but classificatory wāwa-yapa (brother-sister) relationship with the deceased. Both were of the Djambarrpuyku clan and they shared the same snake totem. Yolŋu kin were often at pains to make the intricacies of kinship connections known to me but most notably in contexts of mortuary rituals they emphasised clan identity. Keen (1977:168) makes a similar observation when he says, 'people are identified in terms of the name of their clan: "Who is this dead person" someone asks at a funeral. "He is Gupapuyku' is the reply".'

One woman who traced her connections to the deceased through her mār'imu (father's father) said that she was singing out Djambarrpuyku songs even though they are not her own Gupapuyku clan songs. She said that she was "picking them up", these songs for the clan of the deceased, for the Djambarppuyku clan. This woman, a waku in this case a classificatory daughter

20 Warner (1969:142) describes an 'Eastern Dua Sea Cycle of Songs' in which two lines of men dance as the snakes 'Uvarko and the other Darpa' in a sequence of Murngin garma songs and rituals, which follows closely after a smoke sequence of funeral ritual. Warner says, 'each man carries a basket in his mouth to symbolize a fighting man, and each carries a spear shaft or stick and moves it to represent the head of a snake'. As noted already, the ceremonial dilly-bag was not used in Darwin because the waku (son) of the deceased went ahead of the "coffin plane" to the home community and the dilly-bag could not be given to just anyone.
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of the deceased, said that the songs were of water, of rain and of *Därrpa* (King Brown snake), the totem of the deceased.

Another woman, who called the deceased *gändi* (mother) according to a classificatory relationship, said that she too sang out *Djambarrpuygu* songs. This woman had lived in Darwin for many years, currently in a suburban Commission house and was married to and had three children by an Aboriginal man of mixed-descent and from an urban background. She explained that because her deceased kinswoman was *Dhuwa* moiety and *Djambarrpuygu* clan, those assembled sang *Dhuwa* moiety and *Djambarrpuygu* clan songs about the snake totem and about clouds, rain and running water. 21

In her grief, one classificatory *gändi* (mother) of the deceased repeatedly threw herself down on the bitumen surface of the car-park. At this time, this woman had lived in Darwin approximately ten years. She and her Yolŋu husband and their younger children were currently living in a Housing Commission house in the northern suburbs and her husband had held urban employment for many years. This *gändi* snatched a broom from the tray of a parked utility and broke the handle until she had a short stick with a jagged edge. She gestured as if to stab herself in the abdomen or womb and she also picked up a broken brick and made to strike herself with it on the head. She made as if to stab herself in the womb, because, as Yolŋu say, that is where mother and child are joined. These demonstrations of grief did not cause the extent of injury for which there was potential as the grieving woman was restrained by other kinswomen. 22

The pall-bearers who carried the coffin from the hearse to the waiting charter plane were Yolŋu men who called the deceased *mumalkur* (wife’s mother’s mother), an avoidance relation. When she was alive, these same men had to avoid close contact with their *mumalkur* but after her death they were responsible for carrying the coffin because of their relationship to the deceased. One of these Yolŋu men, a *Warramiri* clansman who was living in Darwin at the time, was married to an Aboriginal woman from Central Australia. His wife and some of her kin also attended the rituals at the air-charter terminal. Yolŋu kin said that they did not know what culture these Aboriginal people had or what songs they sang. Even so, the *Warramiri* clansman’s

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21 Warner (1969:409) describes similar symbolic elements in ritual song cycles which were sung in funeral ceremonies when he did his field work in northeast Arnhem Land in the late 1920s: ‘The land-way cycle .... the clouds gathering in the high country, the rain coming from the clouds, the rivulets running into the creeks, the creeks into the larger rivers, and the great rainy-season flood going to the sea’.

22 In Yolŋu expressions of mourning, self-inflicted blows or injuries are prescribed by certain relationships to the deceased, but if expressions of mourning are excessive other kin will restrain the individual (Reid 1979; Morphy 1984:62-3).
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Aboriginal in-laws, originally from Central Australia, passively participated in this Yolŋu mortuary ceremony in Darwin.

As the deceased's *gutharra* (daughter's child) by 'adoption' into Yolŋu relations of kinship, I was invited to the mortuary rituals to farewell the "coffin plane" from Darwin and to attend the funeral ceremonies and burial in the remote community. An Aboriginal woman of mixed-descent who traced her Aboriginal ancestry to the Larrakia people of the Darwin area, was also invited to the mortuary rituals beside the "coffin plane" and to the funeral ceremonies in the remote community.

In her work-role as the co-ordinator of the Aboriginal Women's Resource Centre in Darwin this woman had known the deceased and related to her as *yapa* (sister), in this case an 'adoptive' relationship. She came to the rituals at the air-charter terminal with her own family of mixed Aboriginal descent and both she and her teenage daughter "painted up" with white clay. The rest of her family were dressed more typically for a Balanda style funeral and did not smear themselves with clay because they were to go straight from the rituals to their places of employment in the city.

During her life in Darwin, Dārrpa had "adopted" both mixed-descent Aborigines and Balanda as kin and thereby sought to oblige them to help as if they were kin, an obligation which was extended to them at the time of her death. For example, the Aboriginal woman of Larrakia descent was chosen by Yolŋu kin to "look after" the coffin on the homeward journey. In choosing a non-Yolŋu to accompany the corpse Yolŋu kin recognised the validity of 'adoptive' relations of kinship and the utility of such relations. By taking on the obligation to accompany the body, the mixed-descent Aboriginal woman released Yolŋu kin from this necessary but onerous ritual responsibility and the pollution of close contact with death was contained by one who was not burdened by its significance.

The Aboriginal woman who accompanied the coffin on the charter flight was given a restricted role to play when she arrived at the remote Yolŋu community. She was asked to sit to one side of the ceremony ground and was not invited to go with the mourners, myself and my young daughter included, who were led to view the coffin. She was told that she had "done enough already". The fact that she had been close to the dead body on the plane trip meant that she was contaminated with death pollution and that, I understand, is why she was not to participate further and had to keep a distance from the ceremonial ground.

In the hiatus between Dārrpa's death in Darwin and the return of her coffin to the home community, Yolŋu travelled by regular and charter flights from Darwin and by road, sea and air
Chapter 9. *Smoking houses, farewelling the coffin plane.*

from mainland and island communities in northeast Arnhem Land so as to participate in the funeral rituals. Much of the social organisation involved in financing travel expenses, meeting visitors as they arrived in the home community, housing and hosting them etcetera was borne not just by the eldest son of the deceased but shared by "all the families", by his brothers and sisters, their spouses and families and within wider kinship networks. Similarly, Yolŋu kin who live in Darwin make a substantial social and economic effort when they fly and more rarely drive to communities in Arnhem Land to participate in funeral ceremonies.23

The peak in arrivals occurred during the four days in which the coffin lay in 'state' within a two-roomed house set aside for the purpose. The Wet season precluded the use of a temporary bough shelter to house the deceased and the assemblage of ritual paraphernalia. As my young daughter and I were invited to pay our "last respects" before the coffin I was privileged to see how the two rooms were decorated with artefacts and ritual objects in honour of this deceased woman. Because the deceased had formerly been an active craftswoman, many woven and dyed baskets, mats and string bags she had made and given to kin in her lifetime were brought together here. In addition there were *bathi* (ceremonial dilly bags) and ceremonial feathered strings hung from various places in the rooms and the coffin was draped in several brightly coloured bedspreads and blankets.

I was later told that the coffin was "very expensive" and of polished rosewood with silver-plated handles. Because the circumstances of Dārrpa's death did not fall within the parameters of departmental schemes of repatriation and of funeral parlour services by government tender, Yolŋu kin expressed their sentiments and the status of the deceased among themselves by purchasing an expensive coffin. An array of floral wreaths, were kept aside until after the ceremonies when they would brighten the grave. Months later the grave was to be more permanently marked in one of the many styles employed by Yolŋu today, the more traditional, introduced or a synthesis of the old and the new and decorated with indigenous and Christian symbols.

For my purposes it is not necessary to give a detailed account of the funeral ceremonies, as Yolŋu mortuary practices have already been extensively documented (see especially Warner 1969; Keen 1977, 1979 & 1994; Morphy 1984a, 1984b & 1991). It is important, however, to further discuss the social changes and cultural transformations which are taking place as Yolŋu

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23 Comparative data from urban Fiji illustrates the function of tribal funerals in kinship cohesiveness between town and country and the spread of the 'cost' of participation in funerals, including the cost of the air-fares of kin who have to fly home for funeral ceremonies (Rika 1986:191).
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respond in kinship and in ceremony to new circumstances of life and of death in the city.

9.9 Further discussion: Social change and cultural transformations.

9.9.1 "Opening up" and "making simple".

The "smoking" rituals held to "open up" suburban houses in Darwin (see 9.5.2, 9.8.2), varied in particular details from those which took place at the deceased's house in the remote community after the death of my *mālu*, Bulmanydj. In the remote community, one of the men who led the "smoking" rituals hurled a spear which embedded in the front door. This custom was not observed in Darwin where Yolŋu lived in rental housing and were obliged not to damage property. In the remote community, Yolŋu employed other symbolic elements and actions to contain and remove the dangers associated with a recent death.

For example, after "smoking" and when the ritual party had left, Ḧarritj the local clan and community leader and his wife and I returned to the house. She and I were given the task of painting red ochre in a continuous line around the external walls of the house, while he systematically burnt off the grasses and bushland nearby. Ḧarritj explained that he burnt off "not really" to chase the *mokuy* (ghost) away but because he wanted to "open up" this place again. He said the Yolŋu are "making everything simple now". The area had to be burnt off because in his lifetime the recently deceased, "always walk around here. First he sits down in this place, under that tree, all those trees. He walks down this road". Ḧarritj said that "all the families" will want to walk here and sit under these shady trees to watch the football on the oval. Soon the *djamarrkuli* (children) will be going back to school after the holidays and they will want to take a short-cut through this way as usual.

He went on to say that in his childhood when a kinsman died in the country, around Cape Stuart it was, the family put the body on a platform of boughs and "just walked away". They did not burn off but came back the next year and burnt the remains and the area around, that is if a bushfire had not done so already. They would then camp there and use that country again. Nowadays, the Yolŋu live in houses and in settled communities and Ḧarritj said that already there was discussion as to what family would move into the house just "smoked". He said some Yolŋu liked to wait until the red ochre painted on the outside walls started to crack and to flake off.

The painting with red ochre and burning off are details of "opening up" places after death which are not practised in Darwin, where Yolŋu have no jurisdiction over property or country. In Darwin, Yolŋu men who lead the rituals to "smoke" suburban houses recognise that
embedding spears in front doors, painting the exterior walls with red ochre and setting fire to the backyard or to areas of bushland in Darwin's environs are not appropriate actions in the city. The "smoking" rituals themselves without these minor embellishments are sufficient to release suburban houses from the dangers associated with a recent death.

Aboriginal liaison officers and Balanda who are agents of urban services attempt to be "sensitive" to Aboriginal culture and to make allowances for Aboriginal beliefs. Within the Housing Commission, the Aboriginal Housing Advisory Service and Aboriginal liaison officers have developed a 'culturally appropriate' response to death among Aboriginal tenants. For example, time is normally allowed for ritual and mourning purposes before material concerns such as the settling of rent and removal of furniture are pursued. Aboriginal and Balanda personnel in Aboriginal liaison positions in the Housing Commission and Aboriginal Hostels in Darwin tend towards the conservative position, to observe Aboriginal etiquette in regard to a recent death rather than to offend. On the other hand, the Yolŋu adjust their understandings and customs in terms of death taboo to the new and changing circumstances in which they find themselves.

For example, Yolŋu believe that the "smoking" rituals remove the dangers associated with a recent death and therefore "open up" suburban housing for re-use after a death. At the same time, a bureaucratic procedure is in place whereby the Northern Territory Housing Commission re-house Aboriginal tenants who wish to be re-allocated housing after the death of a member of the household.24

This bureaucratic response to re-house the Aboriginal household after a death of a household member does not extend to other kinship households elsewhere in the suburbs which were associated with the deceased in life and therefore also felt by Yolŋu to be endangered by death. On the other hand, the Yolŋu in Darwin may perform "smoking" rituals to "open up" two or three houses if these have been closely associated with the recently deceased, as was the case after the death of my māri (mother's mother).

In remote Yolŋu communities where housing is chronically and sometimes acutely in short supply, a house is typically re-occupied fairly quickly after a death and the "smoking rituals". In Darwin, Yolŋu "smoke" houses and cars which do not belong to them personally or

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24 Toussaint (1992:24-5) says that Nyungars, an Aboriginal people originally from south-west Western Australia and living in Perth, typically moved out of suburban houses after a death in the household; and that Homeswest (formerly the State Housing Commission) did not accept Nyungar customs and beliefs as grounds for being allocated another house.
as a group and in some instances where they are not likely to re-use these same resources. To this extent the Yolŋu rituals to "smoke" houses and vehicles is a service to the wider and non-Yolŋu community of the city by freeing these valued resources from spiritual contamination after a death.

While the "smoking" and repatriation rituals are held at the place of death, which in today's circumstances include urban centres especially Nhulunbuy and Darwin, the funeral ceremonies, burial and the lifting of the prohibitions of mourning are performed in Yolŋu remote communities on clan lands. Where their personal and family circumstances permit, urban-dwelling Yolŋu may decide to stay weeks even months in a remote community to carry out their obligation to mourn, to keep company with the bereaved and to await the *buku-lup* (washing ceremony) and other rituals which "finish up" the period of mourning after a death. However, Yolŋu accept that some kin will have to limit their participation to a weekend at the climax of funeral rituals and burial in remote communities or even to participation in mortuary rituals held in Darwin. Urban-dwelling Yolŋu are variously obliged to participate in funeral ceremonies, depending on their closeness to the deceased, their responsibilities in terms of kin, clan and ceremony and the complications of employment, inter-ethnic marriages and other dimensions of their lives in the city.

9.9.2 Obligations to and difficulties in going home.

It is not a cultural imperative for urban-based Yolŋu to participate in every mortuary ritual in Darwin or to return to remote communities for the funeral ceremonies of every relative. Given the extension of Yolŋu relatedness, the dispersal of Yolŋu today and Yolŋu commitments to other dimensions of life including paid-employment timetables and urban residence, this would be impossible. The extent to which relations of kinship are "close up" in terms of actual and classificatory relations, affection, history of co-residence and in terms of ceremonial solidarities are all deciding factors but maturity in terms of age, social and ritual status also shape the extent to which individuals are obliged to participate in funeral ceremonies. Most importantly there are specific roles within funeral ceremonies for the living who stand within particular kin and clan relations to the deceased and these roles must be filled, preferably by

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25 Gray (1976:149) says that, after a death among rural and town-based Aborigines in Carnarvon Western Australia, the time involved for the arrival of separate groups of mourners is increased by contemporary circumstances. For kin live widely dispersed and variously committed to lifestyles and activities from which they have to extricate themselves so as to travel to and participate in funerals.
those most appropriate and obliged to do so.

There are times, however, when Yolŋu in Darwin are reluctant to return to their remote communities of origin for funeral ceremonies. For example, Yolŋu women who have recently deserted Yolŋu husbands, pursued sexual-marital relations of their own choosing and otherwise stirred up mari (trouble) in their home community are often reluctant to return too soon to remote communities, even for funeral ceremonies. They say that they fear kinship censure and the anger and potential for violence which are stirred up after a death (see 5.5.2, 6.3.2). In such circumstances, Yolŋu women in Darwin are unable or reluctant to return to their communities of origin for funerals because of sanctions against them, although this is usually a temporary state of affairs and typically involves a limited period of exile.26 On the other hand, if Yolŋu are obliged in kinship to return and participate in funeral ceremonies but they fail to do so, they incur further social sanctions from wider kin, including accusations of neglect, of ill-will and possibly talk of retribution and of galka’ (sorcery).27

Yolŋu who live in "long grass" camps and are alcohol-dependent consistently fail in their obligation to participate in mortuary rituals held in Darwin and to return to their home communities for the funeral ceremonies and burial of kin. For some Yolŋu men and women it is simply that kin will not help them with air-fares. Yolŋu explain that they are reluctant to send money to kin in Darwin or arrange air-fares for them if the latter can be expected to cash the air-fares and spend the money on grog. To be refused help to return for funeral ceremonies of close relatives is considered to be a severe sanction.

Tjarritj said that there "might be" circumstances in the future where Yolŋu are not taken home for ceremonies and burial. He said that perhaps the body might be "too much damaged" and he gave accident and disease as examples. To date, the facts suggest that close kin are obliged to bring their dead home and that the wider kinship community is obliged to help and to conduct the ceremonies. Even if Yolŋu have lived urban lifestyles which marginalise them from the governance of kinship and of ceremony, in their own deaths these Yolŋu are typically reclaimed in the mortuary rituals of repatriation and in funeral ceremonies and burial among kin and in country.

26 Max Gluckman (1970:130) suggests that, 'prescribed absence from a ritual is thus a form of participation in it: though it is not a protest, it states that there is a conflict present in the social process'.

27 Gluckman (1970:121) suggests that, 'the performance of specific ritual acts by persons in a particular kind of relationship with one another, is an essential element of that relationship....Failure to conform is believed to lead to severe mystical penalties'.
I Jarritj was unsure whether in the future certain circumstances of inter-ethnic marriage and of urban life would bring to an end the repatriation of the Yolŋu dead for funeral ceremonies and burial in Yolŋu communities and clan lands. For example, whether a non-Yolŋu husband and urban reared, mixed descent children might refuse to have his Yolŋu wife, their mother, repatriated to her remote community of origin for funeral ceremonies and burial. If the marital relationship is of long standing and the non-Yolŋu spouse is on good terms with his Yolŋu in-laws, he is usually content for his late wife to be claimed by kin for funeral ceremonies and burial. In these circumstances the non-Yolŋu husband is invited to attend the ceremonies and burial and later to visit the home community and the grave whenever he wishes. The burial of a Yolŋu woman in her community of origin and clan lands is one tie which her non-Yolŋu widower and mixed-descent children may act upon so as to maintain links with Yolŋu kin and country.28

9.9.3 Women and widening the bāpurru.

Yolŋu women contribute to a widening of the bāpurru (clan group for ceremonies) when they bring non-Yolŋu spouses and mixed-descent children to attend and in some cases more actively participate in Yolŋu funeral ceremonies. Among the participants in Yolŋu funeral ceremonies, there are likely to be people of other ethnic origins, including Balanda, and other Aboriginal people who participate because they are married to Yolŋu, work or interact regularly with Yolŋu and because they respond to ‘adoptive’ relations of kinship to the deceased and/or to other Yolŋu in the mourning and ritual parties.

‘Adoptive’ and classificatory kinship enables Yolŋu to extend widely those social and ritual ties and obligations which apply most rigorously to immediate kin. The ability to be able to make kin of strangers and to obligate them to act in social and ceremonial contexts as kin has profound implications for Yolŋu in the multi-ethnic, cross-cultural contexts in which they find themselves in Darwin. In the case of Darrpa, my māri (mother’s mother), her ability in life to co-opt mixed-descent urban Aborigines and Balanda into relations of kinship was evident in the response of these ‘adoptive’ kin to her death (see 9.8.4).

While these urban dimensions of her life were reflected in the gathering of non-Yolŋu mourners and participants in the funeral ceremonies, Darrpa’s status in life as the matriarch of

28 To date, I do not know of any instances where non-Yolŋu spouses and mixed-descent children have insisted on the Yolŋu deceased, whether wife or mother, being buried in Darwin.
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a large and leading family in her community of origin predominantly shaped the organisation and elaborateness of ceremonies after her death. The rituals of "farewell" from Darwin and the scale of the gathering of the bāpurru and elaboration of the funeral ceremonies in her remote community reflected the high regard with which Dārpa was held in kin networks which interconnected kin in several remote communities and Darwin.

Warner (1969:435) suggests that the scale of Murngin (Yolŋu) funeral rituals reflected the social status of the deceased and that in the case of women and children, the 'social personality' was limited and the funeral ceremonies were commensurately simple. Today, there are new circumstances which overlay and in some cases radically alter Warner's earlier assessment of women's social status in life and the elaboration of ceremonies at their death.

The case studies illustrate the importance of Yolŋu women in kin circles and thus in mortuary rituals in Darwin. Three of the four suburban houses "smoked" were houses rented in the name of and headed by Yolŋu women. Moreover, Yolŋu women and their regular fortnightly pensions, and more rarely employment incomes, are important in the timing and organisation of funeral ceremonies, especially in the contributions women make to paying air-fares and thus enabling kin to gather for the funeral ceremonies in remote communities. The timing of the climax of ceremonies and burials reflects the income cycle of pay and pension weeks as much as the time limits set by hospital administrators on mortuary storage.

9.9.4 Yolŋu and Balanda "funeral business".

There are times when Yolŋu rituals of repatriation and Northern Territory departmental policy and procedures to repatriate the dead coincide smoothly. At other times, there is miscommunication and in some circumstances in which repatriation schemes do not apply, a Yolŋu system of governance takes full responsibility for the repatriation of deceased kin. When government does not take charge of the repatriation of the Yolŋu dead, a Yolŋu system of governance must take up all the responsibilities, the financial and practical as well as the ritual aspects of the repatriation of deceased kin for funeral ceremonies and burial among kin and in clan country. More typically, however, it is the agency of the Darwin public hospital and the Office of the Coroner which create the bureaucratic circumstances in which death among the Yolŋu is processed in the city and the body is repatriated for burial in Aboriginal communities and lands. In response to this intervention, Yolŋu governance extends to the city in order to manage the cultural dimensions of death and repatriation of the deceased.

This extension of Yolŋu governance in the provision of mourning and mortuary 'services'
in the city is facilitated by two different agencies of kinship: firstly, by the communication and action which is possible within kin networks that link Darwin and remote Yolŋu communities, and, secondly, by Yolŋu acting both as kin and as agents of government in local town councils in northeast Arnhem Land and similarly, as kin and agents of the church at Nungalinya College in Darwin.

In the telephoned communications between the hospital authorities or the Coroner's office in relation to a death, kin in Yolŋu town councils in remote communities form a mediatory role between the immediately bereaved family members, the wider community of kin and the bureaucratic management of death and repatriation of the deceased. It is the local town councils of Yolŋu communities or more precisely Yolŋu kin employed in local government who make arrangements with the hospital, the Coroner's office or with urban funeral parlours and air-charter companies, to arrange the details of the physical repatriation of deceased kin for burial in remote communities and clan lands.

Yolŋu who staff local council offices in their own communities act as kin as much as bureaucrats in these matters as they mediate between the immediate family of the bereaved, government bureaucracies and sometimes private enterprise in the repatriation of deceased kin from Darwin. In the city, a similar function is performed by kin who are variously involved in Christian studies on campus at Nungalinya College.29

Kin who are living on campus at Nungalinya College are an essential component of the conduct of mortuary rituals in Darwin. They provide a core of urban-dwelling kin who are staff and also a replenishing supply of men and women who are the students from remote communities. It is these men who lead the rituals and these women who swell the mourning party and who offer comfort and support to bereaved kin. As staff and students of the College they provide an urban base for communication and organisation for Yolŋu "funeral business" in Darwin. They use the College bus to pick up kin from the city and suburbs to come together for the "smoking" of a suburban house and the rituals beside the "coffin plane". As an agency of the pastoral powers of the Church, Nungalinya College provides resources to augment the spiritual dimensions of Yolŋu repatriation of their dead, while the State provides the more secular means (cf. Foucault 1986:213-15).

29 Mayer (1961:81) describes burial unions and Church associations in East London, Cape Town in South Africa whereby African countrymen who died in town would be buried among kin in their own country. In the Copperbelt, Mitchell (1987:261) says that mining companies and local municipalities paid for and organised funerals for tribal workers while informal networks of kin and Church members made contributions to the bereaved.
Following Donzelot’s suggestion that better organised families are able to form contractual relations with external government (Donzelot 1979:90), I argue that the Yolŋu have developed the agency of kinship within remote town councils and at Nungalinya College in Darwin as an interface, as an emergent contractual relation between the family, the state and the church in the matter of death and the repatriation of deceased kin from Darwin.

Although bureaucratic schemes and Aboriginal rituals to repatriate the dead may coincide, they represent the culturally dissimilar interests of departments of government, specifically health and law, and the social and ceremonial mechanisms of a Yolŋu system of familial governance. The articulation of these systems which have different loci of power, culturally different interests in a death and person of a deceased, and different motivations for the movement of the deceased, nevertheless achieve a moment of synchrony when departmental procedures coincide with mortuary rituals in the repatriation of Yolŋu dead.

9.10 Conclusions.

Death is a time for the living to re-assess their own lives and responsibilities as well as a time when the family and wider social group re-adjust solidarities and re-assert claims on the individual. As discussed in Chapter 5, the death of parents, spouse and other close kin may unsettle the bereaved and the status and circumstances of women and children are especially liable to be re-adjusted after the death of spouses and parents, both in relation to the family and to the state. The death of husbands and close relatives may also release women from responsibilities in marriage, the family, and wider kin and provide the altered circumstances which enable Yolŋu women to set out "to go my own way now" by moving to the city.

On the other hand and among Yolŋu already living in Darwin, the death of "close up" family and indeed of wider kin has the effect of interrupting their urban lives to the extent that they are obliged to return to remote communities for funeral ceremonies. In some instances, the death of close kin causes the extended family to re-assess their interests and responsibilities in Yolŋu women, adolescent girls and their children in Darwin. Efforts are made to encourage and in some cases to enforce their return to remote communities, not just for funeral ceremonies but permanently (see 5.3.3, 5.4.1). Funeral ceremonies are a major element in the Yolŋu retaining their links to kin and country.

Yet for those Yolŋu women who are integrated into urban life, who have lived for years in suburban housing, contracted enduring inter-ethnic marriages, raised children in the suburbs and, more rarely, been long-term employed in the city, a permanent return to their remote
communities of origin may be out of the question, at least in their foreseeable future. Some do not want to give up the advantages of urban life, including more personal autonomy and access to urban health, housing, education and employment.

Many of the participants in the rituals to "smoke" houses and vehicles in the suburbs and those to "farewell the coffin plane" are Yolŋu who have lived five, ten, twenty years in Darwin. While Yolŋu who have transient purposes in town also join in these mortuary rituals, the permanent core of ritual leaders and the mourning group are variously integrated into urban life in terms of residential campuses, suburban housing, urban employment and inter-ethnic marriages. These urban-dwelling Yolŋu are able to discharge, at least in part, their obligations to kin and in ceremony by participating in the mortuary rituals held in Darwin and by returning, where need be, to remote communities in order to honour their obligations in kin, country and ceremony.

There are Yolŋu who would like to return to remote communities, not just for ceremonies and holidays but permanently. It is not, however, easy for Yolŋu to reverse migrate after many years of life in town, especially Yolŋu women who have non-Yolŋu husbands and urban reared children to consider. In the next chapter, I look at the constraints Yolŋu women experience as they try to "speak for themselves and work for the families", whether they choose to live in Darwin or return to remote communities.
Chapter 10

Speaking for ourselves, working for families
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10.1 Introduction.

In this chapter I examine the ways whereby both a Yolŋu system of familial governance and state mechanisms of government 'structure the possible field of action of others' (Foucault 1986:221) (see 2.2). I investigate how Yolŋu women experience constraints on where they can live and maintain paid employment, and how and where they can best pursue their own employment careers and support that of their husbands, as well as represent wider Yolŋu and indeed wider Aboriginal needs and interests. The case studies in this chapter suggest that Yolŋu women find their prospects for and status in paid employment, in remote communities and in Darwin, are not simply curtailed by Balanda style employment structures but also by the 'arbitrariness of familial power' and differences between 'individual interests and family interest' (Donzelot 1979:53 & 94). In keeping with my focus throughout this thesis, I explore the extent to which it is external forces, familial factors and women's individual decisions and actions that shape Yolŋu women's employment, marital and migratory careers.

The question of how a familial system of governance acts to 'govern' the distribution of resources in Aboriginal communities, especially opportunities in paid-employment, must take into account the general and specific influences of Western masculinism and Church paternalism in the definition of local and extra-local job opportunities and career paths. The actual policies of state government, such as to Aboriginalise the local workforce, to provide 'culturally appropriate' community services and 'work for the dole' monies and the like, most obviously shape the labour market and employment related life chances in Aboriginal communities. Equally important, however, is the consideration of local power structures within Aboriginal communities, including gendered relations of power, the politics of land ownership and of local community government and of the existence of inequalities within local communities.¹

As has already been argued (see Chapter 5), Yolŋu women who seek more personal autonomy, especially in their sexual-marital lives, are typically censured and sometimes sanctioned by their own menfolk, families and wider kin. In Yolŋu remote communities, recalcitrant women can be coerced and punished by the offering and withdrawing of valued resources, including local employment and even housing. As already argued, some Yolŋu women escape from or avoid Yolŋu marriage (cf. Burbank 1988:111-12) and put distance

¹ For further discussion of local politics, the distribution of valued resources and evidence of inequalities within Aboriginal communities see Sutton and Rigsby (1982), Gerritsen (1982), Myers (1986a, 1988), Bern (1987) and Anderson (1988).
between themselves and the concentration of 'Yolŋu power structures' (Keen 1994:299) by seeking more personal autonomy including by means of housing, and more rarely employment, in Darwin.

In this chapter, I will argue that mainstream, church and Aboriginal employment structures also constrain Aboriginal women's opportunities, if not in moving to and finding housing in the city, at least by limiting Aboriginal women's ability to be able to move in employment between remote communities and the city. To this extent, state and familial systems of governance coincide to constrain Yolŋu women's autonomy.

In my experience, most Yolŋu women who have lived some part of their lives and those who continue to live in Darwin want and work to achieve the 'best of both worlds'. They want to have better access to urban services and opportunities, especially housing, health and education services and urban employment, and, on the other hand, they want to retain for themselves and develop for their urban-reared children, and sometimes for their non-Yolŋu spouses, rights and opportunities among remote-dwelling kin and in clan lands. When Yolŋu women decide to leave the city and return to live in their communities of origin, they want bi-lingual schooling for their children, housing for their families, and in some cases, paid employment for themselves and their non-Yolŋu husbands. In this chapter, I focus on the extent to which Yolŋu opportunities in employment are limited and variable, not only in terms of rural-urban dimensions but also in terms of gender and familial and external relations of power.

Yolŋu have had little involvement with private sector employment because they live in remote northeast Arnhem Land where historically Aboriginal Reserve status, and, since the Aboriginal Land Rights (N.T.) Act of 1976, the inalienable Aboriginal Land status of what remained of the Arnhem Land Reserve serves to limit private sector enterprise. Even the mining operation and associated service town of Nhulunbuy excised from and surrounded by Yolŋu clan lands have not significantly enhanced Yolŋu prospects for employment in the private sector of the economy. Because the Yolŋu have been so little integrated into private-sector employment, I confine my discussion to those policies and initiatives of the Uniting Church, the government-sector, and Aboriginal organisations which shape Yolŋu women's employment prospects in remote communities and in Darwin. First, however, I turn to the wider picture of Aboriginal employment, particularly in the Northern Territory and in Darwin, to provide the necessary context.
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10.2 Aboriginal employment.

10.2.1 Statistical data and social and cultural analysis.

Any discussion about familial constraints and gender differences between Yolŋu women and men in obtaining and maintaining employment in Darwin must be located in the wider and by no means homogeneous context of Aboriginal employment. In the Northern Territory, policies are in place in Aboriginal and government sector employment, which are meant to facilitate the recruitment and advancement of Aboriginal people in employment in remote and urban contexts, and there is evidence of some success in these initiatives (Manuel 1985; Taylor 1990).

For example, the policy of self-determination for Aboriginal people and the initiative to Aboriginalise the local workforce have seen the Yolŋu largely take over from Balanda in employment in local government and local community services. These employment contexts are local agencies of various Northern Territory government departments, including Education, Health and Community Services and Lands, Housing and Local Government and to a lesser extent, local agencies of federal government departments, including the Department of Social Security and the Department of Employment, Education and Training (DEET). In this way, although there is still very limited employment, especially full time employment, there is a high level of government sector involvement in Aboriginal employment in remote Aboriginal communities (see Taylor 1990: 79-86).

Differences in income and employment status and potential are not only measured, however, in terms of comparisons between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Australians, but also in terms of a 'bifurcation of opportunity' between Aboriginal people, for example between Aborigines living in and outside Darwin (Tyler 1990, 1993:336). Tyler (1990, 1994:16) notes that for Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory, there is a 'regionalisation of life chances between city and bush' and that health, housing, education and employment are regionally variable and are most concentrated and developed in urban centres. Government policies tend to subsume these polarities of opportunity under the heading of 'locational disadvantage' (Hawke & Howe 1990).

Tyler (1990, 1993) suggests that Aborigines in urban centres and in Darwin have more opportunities to gain a higher standard of living, including by means of paid employment, than do Aboriginal people in remote communities. However, such a conclusion is based on analysis of statistical data on Aboriginal employment where broad distinctions between Aboriginal males and females in employment and between remote and urban employment opportunities for Aboriginal people are made. So far how the different Aboriginal groups variously fare in regard to urban employment has not been brought into
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I suggest a further disaggregation is necessary. For example, statistical data suggest that Aboriginal women were found to be significantly integrated into community service employment in urban as well as remote contexts (Taylor 1990:85-86). The last point misleads, however, in that it does not disaggregate urban-dwelling Aboriginal women who are from remote communities and who are indigenous language speakers and Aboriginal women who have a longer history, often several generations, of urban residence and who are monolingual English speakers.

Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) census data and statistical analysis have not to date focused on distinct Aboriginal groups in Darwin and this constitutes a real gap in information on Aboriginal people in the city. Even if census taking and statistical analysis were fined tuned so as to discern socially and culturally distinct Aboriginal groups living for example in Darwin, there is still a need for ethnographic analysis to reveal the social and cultural forces, as well as the structural and idiosyncratic factors, that shape Yolŋu women's life chances and employment opportunities in the city. In this chapter, especially in the case studies, I provide the ethnographic evidence that is not captured by census or survey techniques (see 10.5).

10.2.2 Gender, representation and employment.

Representation, or who speaks for whom, is a continuing problem in terms of gender relations and cross-cultural relations of power (Muecke 1992:32), and those who 'speak for' also tend to shape, to 'govern' the lives of those for whom they speak. Bell (1983:229-250) argues that whites and the majority culture continue to value Aboriginal male and female roles differently, such that Aboriginal men were historically promoted by whites as the spokespersons and breadwinners. On the other hand, Aboriginal women and children were defined as clients and dependents, whether of their own menfolk or of welfare government. Accordingly, Aboriginal men came to be active in a wider socio-economic and political sphere and Aboriginal women were largely confined to domestic life and local employment contexts.

On the other hand, Aboriginal women have come to prominence as 'cultural custodians' (Jacobs 1989:76-98) in interaction with non-Aboriginal agencies in a wide range of contexts and in matters concerning Aboriginal heritage and land as well as family and community related issues (see various contributions in Brock ed. 1989). Aboriginal women have asserted their claim to represent kin, country and culture in partnership with kinsmen and countrymen and also in circumstances where their menfolk have not provided
appropriate leadership, whether in remote communities, rural towns or capital cities. Grimshaw (1984:94) argues that social change and urban life 'intensified both the challenges and opportunities for self-help and cohesive effort' by Aboriginal women (see 2.4.1; see also Gale 1989:134).

Whether they act as representatives of family, wider kin and Aboriginal community in remote Aboriginal employment contexts or in Aboriginal representation and liaison in mainstream and urban employment contexts, Yolŋu and other Aboriginal women have come to "speak for ourselves, work for the families". In positions of Aboriginal representation in paid employment, Aboriginal women take an important part in the development of a more 'contractual' relationship between an Aboriginal familial system of governance and bureaucracies of government (cf. Donzelot 1979:82-95).

In northeast Arnhem Land, Yolŋu women hold employed positions in local schools, health centres, resource centres, council offices, local stores and the like in their remote communities and in these employed positions they are agents of family, kin community and government. Yolŋu women have also come to represent Yolŋu as well as wider Aboriginal interests in health, education and other community services in conferences, workshops, courses and the like held in Darwin or elsewhere in the Territory and other states. They have done so largely by circulation through the city, while remaining resident and in employment in remote communities. Among those who have migrated to Darwin, a small number of Yolŋu women have managed to represent Yolŋu and wider Aboriginal interests in paid employment in the city.

Yet it has been Yolŋu men who have predominated in government, church and Aboriginal arenas of cross-cultural representation and paid employment. For example, Yolŋu men have taken up positions as ordained clergy and executive officers within the Aboriginal Christian Congress and the Uniting Church (see 4.5.1). Yolŋu men have also taken the lead as town councillors in local government and as elected and selected political and cultural representatives in wider Aboriginal and cross-cultural forums. Yolŋu men travel to Darwin and beyond from their remote communities and constituencies in order to represent their people in church, government and Aboriginal forums. They mainly do so by means of business trips to Darwin and elsewhere but a small number of Yolŋu men have also developed urban careers and settled with their Yolŋu wives and families in Darwin.
10.3 Yolŋu in self-representation and in paid employment.

10.3.1 Business trips to Darwin and beyond.

Numerous Yolŋu represent their remote communities and Yolŋu and wider Aboriginal political, cultural and land related interests by travelling to Darwin and beyond for cross-cultural business purposes. For example, local Yolŋu representatives of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Council (ATSIC), the Northern Land Council (NLC) and Top End Aboriginal Bush Broadcasting Association (TEABBA), to name a few, are mainly men who live in and represent their remote communities by periodically travelling to the city.

Some of these positions are short-term but a small number of Yolŋu men have long-standing careers in representing their local communities, remote constituencies and wider Aboriginal interests in Darwin and beyond. For example, Galarrwuy Yunupingu was by 1995 in his fifth term as Chairman of the Northern Land Council (NLC), a statutory authority established by the Aboriginal Land Rights Act (NT) 1976, which has the responsibility of pursuing Aboriginal land rights and administering Aboriginal trust funds in much of the north of the Territory. In this capacity and in his work for the Federal government’s Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation, Mr Yunupingu travelled to Darwin and elsewhere in the Territory and to Canberra and elsewhere in Australia, but his residential base and home office were in his clan lands near Yirrkala on the Gove peninsula.

Wesley Lanhupuy also held a long-term political position. He was first elected (as the Member for Arnhem) to the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly in December 1983, and he was re-elected in subsequent elections until 1995 when he resigned because of poor health. As his party was in opposition, he held the shadow portfolios of Aboriginal Affairs and Local Government and Sacred Sites Protection. Mr Lanhupuy was on various sessional and select committees which required him to travel to Darwin and throughout the Territory. He also attended the Sittings of the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly and Labor Party Caucus meetings and sub-committee meetings of Caucus in Darwin. In these capacities he spent considerable time in Darwin, yet he maintained a residential base and family life in Yolŋu communities in northeast Arnhem Land.

Such Yolŋu men are not urban residents and they are not well placed to represent the interests of Yolŋu women, children and family groups in Darwin for transient purposes or settled more permanently. The political careers of Yolŋu men have more typically pursued a 'business trip' style in Darwin, while they retain their residential base and political constituency in Yolŋu communities in northeast Arnhem Land. By contrast, the Uniting Church, the Arnhem Land Progress Association (ALPA) and Nungalinya College have
tended to create career paths for Yolŋu men that entail long-term urban employment and permanent residence in Darwin.

**10.3.2 Permanent residence and urban employment.**

In 1993 I found sixteen Yolŋu, seven men and nine women, living permanently in Darwin and working on either a full, part-time or casual basis in paid employment which in various ways involved them in the business of speaking for and working towards Yolŋu interests in the city. In the late 1980s, early 1990s, the Arnhem Land Progress Association (ALPA), which runs a chain of retail stores in Arnhem Land, employed two Yolŋu in the head office in Darwin. A mature aged, monogamously married Yolŋu man originally from Milingimbi had been employed in Aboriginal liaison and administration in ALPA headquarters since the late 1980s, and he continues to be so employed there up until 1995. He and his Yolŋu wife and younger children have lived all this while in Housing Commission housing in the suburbs.

Another Yolŋu man, whose name is suppressed because of his recent death, lived and worked in Darwin as the Director of Aboriginal Resource and Development Services and as an associate executive officer of the Northern Regional Council Congress (NRCC) of the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress. While he held this position he, his wife and young adult daughter and other family members lived in Darwin. His wife was employed part-time in translation work in Yolŋu languages for the Uniting Church and she was a proof reader for linguists at Galiwin'ku, who sent work to Darwin for her to check. Their daughter found full-time employment in the ALPA head office as a receptionist and her urban employment was directly contingent upon her father's employment and on her living with her parents in town.

The urban residence and employment of this young woman and her mother largely depended on their father's and husband's career in the Uniting Church, which had brought the family to live in the city. These circumstances were suddenly altered when he died and they and other kin went back to Galiwin'ku for the funeral ceremonies and burial. Neither woman returned to live in Darwin and resume their employment in the city.

Also originally from Galiwin'ku, the Reverend Djiniyini Gondarra, an executive officer of the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress lived in Darwin at this time with his Yolŋu wife and family. Reverend Gondarra also assisted in theology courses at Nungalinyia College. While these pastoral positions within the Uniting Church have been stable over time and Yolŋu executive officers within the Uniting Church continue to live and work in Darwin, Yolŋu men's careers as ordained ministers tend to presuppose a commitment
to their return to lead and develop the Church in Yolŋu remote communities.

Nungalinya College also offered at least one permanent position and several fixed-term secondments for Aboriginal employment on campus. In 1993 and in previous years, these positions were significantly taken by Yolŋu. For example, a Yolŋu man had for many years held the permanent position as community development officer and in 1993 another Yolŋu kinsman was appointed as an assistant to him and one Yolŋu woman was employed as an assistant in Women's Studies. At least one Yolŋu man was employed to teach in theology studies.

The Yolŋu man who was the community development officer had served in similar capacities for many years at Nungalinya, and he, his wife and family were long-term residents of Darwin. The other Yolŋu staff tended to be recruited from remote communities and their residence and work on campus were more short-term contracts for a year or so. Typically it was a wife of one of the other Yolŋu staff members who assisted in the Women's Studies courses (see also 4.5.1).

A Yolŋu man was employed as an Aboriginal health worker and community adviser for the Council for Aboriginal Alcohol Program Services (CAAPS). This mature aged Yolŋu man was monogamously married to a Yolŋu wife and he and the younger of their children were long term resident in Darwin. His wife had briefly held part time employment in women's studies at Nungalinya but not concurrent with my research, so she is not numbered among the sixteen Yolŋu employed in Darwin in 1993. At this time, CAAPS also employed an Aboriginal woman from Maningrida, an Aboriginal community in Arnhem Land. So as to keep strictly to an account of Yolŋu language speakers she was not included in my tally of Yolŋu who were employed in the city in 1993.

There were four Yolŋu women employed by the N.T. Department of Education, two in full-time employment and two in part-time and short-term positions. Of the full-time employed, one was a band 1 teacher employed in curriculum development for Aboriginal homeland schools and the other was currently employed in a suburban pre-school and had been so for many years. Another Yolŋu woman had found part-time employment as a teaching assistant at Kormilda College, a privately run boarding school and she maintained this position while undertaking teacher training via Batchelor College. In 1993, there was also a Yolŋu woman employed as a health worker at Danila Dilba, an Aboriginal medical service in Darwin which is largely funded by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Council (ATSIC).

Of the sixteen Yolŋu employed in Darwin in 1993, all were in various ways employed in the provision of services, church, retail, health and education services, either designed to
benefit Yolŋu and other Aboriginal groups in Darwin or services directed towards remote Yolŋu and other Aboriginal communities. Ten Yolŋu, seven men and three women, at this time living and working in Darwin, owed their jobs in some measure to the influence of the Uniting Church. The five men and two women who were employed by the Uniting Church and Nungalinya College were most obviously associated with the Church and its role in pastoral care over Yolŋu in northeast Arnhem Land and in Darwin. Less apparent was the connection of the Church with secular employment contexts.

Although the Arnhem Land Progress Association (ALPA) had formally separated from the operations of the Uniting Church (see Wells 1993:ix), there was still a strong connection for the Yolŋu between the Uniting Church and ALPA and this was reflected in Yolŋu in employment in Darwin. For example, the young single woman who was the receptionist at ALPA head office was the daughter of a Yolŋu man (since deceased) who was then an associate executive officer of the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress.

Likewise, the Council for Aboriginal Alcohol Program Services (CAAPS) is now largely an Aboriginal organisation funded by a combination of funds from ATSIC, Aboriginal Hostels Ltd. and the N.T. Department of Health and Community Services. However, three Christian Churches, including the Uniting Church, are on the board of management and continue the Uniting Church's involvement from when these services were first set up and known as the Gordon Symon Substance Abuse Centre. The long-term employment of a Yolŋu man at CAAPS dated from this early Church connection.

In sum, it has been largely Yolŋu men who have found long-term employment in Darwin, either directly and more obliquely associated with the Uniting Church. While in their separate employment these men dealt with issues and services focused on Yolŋu in remote communities or in town temporarily, their own careers were nevertheless firmly urban centred.

In the next section, I describe the general picture of Yolŋu women and their paid-employment histories and their profiles of marriage and movement to Darwin and not just the particulars of the few who held employment in 1993. For this purpose, I have arbitrarily divided Yolŋu women with whom I interacted in Darwin into several categories which distinguish them according to age, marital status and Western educational and occupational attainment.
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10.4 Women's histories of employment and of mobility.

Among the Yolŋu women who were living in Darwin during the period of my fieldwork, some were senior women in their fifties and sixties. This age group of Yolŋu women had little formal Western education but typically they had some experience of paid employment in their remote communities during and after the mission era as domestic help and child-carers. They had worked in the homes of Balanda, firstly missionaries and later government employed teachers, and as cleaners in local schools and mission hospitals.

Among this older age group, some women were renowned among kin for their indigenous knowledge and skills, particularly in ceremonial dancing and artefact production. A few of them had been employed as casual education officers (EOs) to help with the cultural content of school curricula in remote Yolŋu communities. To date, there are no mechanisms in the city whereby senior Aboriginal women's indigenous knowledge and skills are valued and employed, for example as EOs taking an Aboriginal cultural content into suburban schools. Darwin also lacks the development of Aboriginal cultural and resource centres and services that would provide Aboriginal people with a place and the means to develop their cultural pursuits in town and to obtain employment in the Aboriginal culture and tourism industry.

When they came to Darwin, senior Yolŋu women continued to forage for traditional foods and around the city and to collect the raw materials for and make traditionally woven and died pandanus mats and baskets. Their foraging skills had continuing social, cultural and economic value among Yolŋu in Darwin and their traditional artefacts and crafts were valuable as presents to give to Yolŋu kin and to Balanda and other Aboriginal friends and patrons in the city. Very occasionally Yolŋu women were able to sell their artefacts and craft work in the city to retail outlets which specialise in Aboriginal arts and tourist souvenirs. However, Yolŋu women in town do not have a structural relationship with these urban retail outlets, which typically bought from Aboriginal art and craft centres and cooperatives in remote Aboriginal communities. While they had little or no options for sale and wage based incomes in the city, this age group of women were typically widowed and had the alternative of pension incomes, which were readily transferable to an urban address.

A few Yolŋu women who were slightly more skilled in a Western sense and somewhat younger, were among the earliest group of Yolŋu women to migrate to the city and find work in domestic and child-care duties within Aboriginal specific contexts. As described in the case studies which follow, a small number of Yolŋu women did obtain paid employment in Darwin in the late 1970s and early 1980s, for example as a teacher aide in the pre-school at Bagot, as a house-mother for boarders at Kormilda College, then an
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Aboriginal transitional school, and as a tea-attendant at an Aboriginal organisation centred in Darwin.

Yet in each circumstance, urban employment proved short lived, a fact which was in large measure because the Aboriginal specific employment opportunity was itself fragile and came to an end. The Yolnu women in question had work experience with Balanda and skills in domestic work which helped them to adjust to urban life and to contract inter-ethnic marriages. Each of these Yolnu women found an alternative source of income when they married inter-ethnically and their Balanda or mixed-descent Aboriginal 'de facto' husband became the bread-winner.

In remote communities, there are job opportunities for Yolnu women as cleaners for local schools, clinics and other community buildings. In recent years, however, the education and occupational-training of Yolnu women, although still typically restricted, offers women and girls a broader range of skills, a higher standard of education and, at least the expectation of a skilled and well paid position in local community services and local government. In northeast Arnhem Land, mature aged, typically married women are employed as health-workers, school principals and teachers and they are employed in adult education, in literature production, in women's and other resource centres and in administrative, clerical and retail positions, art and craft outlets and the like in local communities.

In general, Yolnu women in remote communities have been able to balance paid employment with married life and responsibilities in children. While women have gained more personal autonomy in the workplace and by means of their wage or salary incomes, they are still typically constrained by familial pressures and the politics of local community power structures. When Yolnu women in remote communities experience a build up of pressures in their marital, family and working lives, one option is to move to Darwin. Case studies in this chapter and in chapter 5, refer to Yolnu women who not only quit their jobs in their remote communities but also broke with Yolnu marriage customs in that they remained single, deserted Yolnu husbands, married non-Yolnu men or waited until they were widowed to make their move to Darwin.

The case studies also demonstrate that young single Yolnu women have also sought occupational training and paid employment in Darwin, and some have found their first job opportunity in the city. However, these younger women are typically seen to drop out of training and to have abbreviated careers in urban employment. The death of a parent or guardian kin leads older brothers and wider family to re-assess the circumstances of their life and employment in the city and pressures to return home are brought to bear on them, including the offer of scarce employment opportunities in remote communities. Illicit sexual
relations, pregnancy and the birth of a child as a single mother typically lead to Yolŋu girls and young women dropping out of school, vocational training, or employment in town and returning to their community of origin, at least temporarily, even if they later return to live as single mothers in Darwin.

Whether in remote communities or in Darwin, Yolŋu women's employment contexts tend to bring them into contact with Balanda, as co-workers and superiors in remote community services, or those whom they meet when they attend courses, workshops, conferences and the like in Nhulunbuy, Batchelor, Darwin and elsewhere, and those with whom they work in Darwin. In these ways, some Yolŋu women have an educational and vocational related history of rural-urban mobility, and they have developed a familiarity with Darwin and a rapport with Balanda and other Aboriginal people.

There is a correlation between the educational and occupational attainment of Yolŋu women, their working relations with Balanda and their inter-ethnic marriages and urban migration. Yolŋu women who have skills, education and work experience which are valued by Balanda in general, are also more liable to aspire to paid employment in the city, and to meet and marry Balanda and other Aboriginal men whose employment careers are better served in urban centres than in remote communities. However, in moving to Darwin, Yolŋu women are not usually able to transfer within employment but have to take their chances at developing urban employment careers, rely on their eligibility for pension incomes and subsidised urban housing or on a male provider, typically a marital partner, whether a Yolŋu husband or a Balanda or other Aboriginal spouse.

There are Yolŋu women who have moved to Darwin to support their husband's employment opportunities rather than their own. For example, Yolŋu women as wives, mothers, sisters and daughters accompany their husbands, sons, brothers and fathers when Yolŋu men find work in political and cultural representation in the city and in the Church and its secular agencies and at Nungalinya College. There are also Yolŋu women who move to Darwin to further their non-Yolŋu husband's employment opportunities, even when this is detrimental to their own employment prospects.

Yolŋu women in the young and mature age groups also move to Darwin, the better to exercise personal autonomy outside of marriage all together and to pursue urban employment careers before, after and instead of marriage. Whether it be as young single girls, as wives estranged from their Yolŋu husbands, as widows, or as mature but never married women, Yolŋu women are pursuing employment careers in remote communities and some have undertaken the difficult task of pursuing their careers in Darwin. In these many and varied ways, Yolŋu women have set out to "speak for themselves, to work for the
families" in Darwin and they are represented in the case studies which follow.

10.5 Case studies.

The case studies illustrate the relationship between Yolŋu women's marital status, educational background, rural-urban mobility and their employment opportunities in remote communities and in Darwin. They also give a historical perspective on Yolŋu women who have been coming to Darwin and finding work during a twenty year period, from the mid 1970s to the mid 1990s. Yolŋu women's profiles of urban employment suggest that Aboriginal employment opportunities have tended to be short term, liable to be phased out, and typically did not lead Yolŋu women into permanent employment. The studies also reveal that the few Yolŋu women who found urban employment did so via informal and 'ad hoc' rather than structural links to urban employment.

The case studies also show that employment opportunities and the impediments in the way of Yolŋu women and their non-Yolŋu husbands and mixed descent children obtaining suitable employment in remote communities, sometimes necessitate the migration of inter-ethnic families to urban centres, including Darwin. Similarly, employment opportunities and lack thereof also serve to prevent Yolŋu women and their non-Yolŋu husbands and urban reared children from reverse migrating to remote communities, and if they do, may still serve to prevent them from re-integrating into those communities.

10.5.1 Wurrapa, a widow and house-mother at Kormilda College.

Wurrapa was widowed early when her Yolŋu husband was killed in a vehicle accident at Galiwin'ku. The Uniting Church accepted some responsibility for the widow and her young daughter and arranged for them to live at Kormilda College in Darwin, where the daughter could board as a student while her mother was employed as a house-mother to Aboriginal students in the boarding school. Kormilda College was operating as a 'transitional' school to bridge the gap between schooling in remote Aboriginal communities and urban secondary schools but it closed in the early 1980s, when the purpose and value of Aboriginal transitional schooling was called into question (see 3.4.2).

Wurrapa received a lump sum payout for superannuation and leave entitlements and stayed on in Darwin. Her daughter returned to her home community where she trained as a health worker. She was able to visit her mother in Darwin when en route to study on campus at Batchelor College. At this time, the daughter became a single mother and dropped out of work and training.

Wurrapa never drank alcohol when she lived and worked at Kormilda College, but
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when she became unemployed she joined the Aboriginal alcohol-drinking scene in and around the city. Wurrapa said that she only drank a little alcohol, mostly with milk, and she must have maintained a sober lifestyle as she was able to retain a room for herself at an Aboriginal hostel. At this time, she formed a 'de facto' relationship with a Mediterranean migrant who was a tradesman in Darwin. He persuaded her to use the savings from her termination pay to buy a combivan fitted out with cooking and sleeping facilities so that they could travel together while he looked for work in rural areas. He was able to find work in rural areas and in Darwin but Wurrapa never looked for paid employment again.

The couple returned to Darwin and as Wurrapa was Aboriginal, they were able to live relatively cheaply in an Aboriginal hostel. During the days when her Balanda 'de facto' husband was working, Wurrapa kept company with other Yolŋu in town especially those who frequented alcohol-drinking camps. Occasionally she would not return to the hostel for the night and her Balanda husband would go looking for her, but there were times when she went missing for days and nights. Eventually her health was broken by this lifestyle and in 1990 she returned to her remote community to die.

10.5.2 Burala, a widow and career woman.

Burala was introduced earlier as the widow who left her remote community in controversial circumstances and moved into a 'de facto' relationship with a Balanda in Darwin. Later, she regretted that she had to resign from a responsible, salaried position as a teacher in her remote community. She wished that she had been able to transfer to a teaching position in another Yolŋu community, where she had close ties to kin and country. Alternatively, she wondered if she had been able to study full-time on campus at Batchelor whether she would have found a better way to have 'time out' from the pressures of living and working in her home community. There were no prospects for her to transfer within employment in the N.T. Department of Education and so she had to resign and lose her employment continuity when she migrated to the city.

In the city, Burala experienced what it was like to be unemployed and dependent upon the income and accommodation provided by her Balanda 'de facto'. He was a shift worker who worked long hours and he placed restrictions on which kin she could have to visit and stay with her. Burala tried to fill in the hours as best she could, she even considered taking up gambling at cards as did many Yolŋu women, even though she had not done so in her remote community. She also contemplated learning from older kinswomen how to dye and weave pandanus into artefacts for sale, as her mother had done, but Burala had followed the way of Western education and paid-employment, so she was not skilled in traditional
Burala began to look for work in Darwin and she said that she would apply for an advertised position as co-ordinator of the Aboriginal women's resource centre, an Aboriginal agency associated with the Uniting Church. However, she lost confidence in this idea and said that the position was likely to go to an Aboriginal woman of mixed-descent who had led all of her life in the city.

At this time, Burala had a fortunate encounter which resulted in her bi-lingual, bi-cultural skills being recognised and remunerated in town. While shopping in K-Mart, she met a Balanda woman, an educationalist, who knew Burala when she was a teacher trainee alternating studying on campus at Batchelor College and teaching in her remote community. This Balanda woman suggested that Burala should apply for employment within the N.T. Department of Education and on a special project, funded in part by the federal Department of Employment Education and Training (DEET). While the project itself was limited, Burala took up this opportunity and briefly held this position as a Yolŋu adviser on curriculum development for Aboriginal homeland schools. This employment allowed her to represent her own people, though in remote communities rather than in Darwin.

Burala's employment also helped her to offer young kin from her home community a place to stay in her suburban house and the opportunity to further their education in Darwin. These included her own adolescent daughter, and one of her brother's in the home community sent two of his daughters to stay with his sister in town and finish their secondary schooling at a suburban high school. One of these young woman went on to tertiary education at the Centre for Aboriginal and Islander Studies (CAIS), within the Northern Territory University. As she was at the time the only Yolŋu student attending the course, her confidence faltered and this young woman dropped out of study and returned to her remote community after only one term.

Not discouraged, Burala later helped four young adult and adolescent relatives to come to town and study at the recently renamed Faculty of Aboriginal and Islander Studies (FAIS) centre within the Northern Territory University. Burala continued her own urban career and left the employ of the Department of Education for a position as an Aboriginal language and cultural adviser and lecturer in further education. Even though Burala had set out to exercise more personal autonomy by migrating to Darwin (see Ch. 5), she had not abrogated her responsibilities to family and wider kin. On the contrary, urban employment gave her the opportunity to represent her own people and to provide better opportunities for her own family and wider kin in remote communities and in Darwin.
10.5.3 Wurrpan, a single girl and her employment options.

Wurrpan, was introduced earlier as a young single girl who lived with her Yolgu mother in Darwin (5.3.2) and later as a single young mother living in other kinship households in the suburbs (6.3.1). Wurrpan obtained employment soon after she and her mother moved into a Housing Commission house at Palmerston in 1988. A close classificatory sister was expecting a baby and planned to resign from her employment as a tea-attendant at an Aboriginal agency in the city. She introduced her young kinswoman to her place of work and to the Aboriginal staff and as a result Wurrpan took over the position.

With her wages, Wurrpan was able to contribute to her mother's household, buy a second hand car, obtain a driver's licence and be relatively autonomous in the city. She enjoyed the work and the company of the mainly mixed-descent Aborigines who were her co-workers and supervisors. From being an extremely shy girl from a remote community, her self-confidence grew and as an adjunct of her employment, Wurrpan did some photographic modelling for an Aboriginal newspaper.

While her siblings were happy for their little sister to live in Darwin when she was chaperoned by her mother, they were not happy once these circumstances were altered by their mother's death. Wurrpan returned to her remote community for the funeral ceremonies and stayed for an appropriate period of mourning. Wurrpan briefly returned to Darwin after the funeral ceremonies for her mother and she reluctantly resigned from the position in the Aboriginal agency in town. She returned to live in her home community where her family were able to find her paid work, firstly, in the local store and later in a family run fast food business. During this period she said that she felt "too tired" in her remote community (see 5.5.3).

Within twelve months of her mother's death Wurrpan returned to Darwin, where she proclaimed that she would return to her former workplace in an Aboriginal organisation. Her optimism revealed a naivety about the urban employment context, yet previously she had been extremely fortunate both in Darwin and in her home community in terms of informal and kinship access to employment.

As described in a previous chapter, Wurrpan became pregnant in a casual and inter-ethnic relationship in Darwin and she returned to her remote community for much of the pregnancy and went to Nhulunbuy hospital for the birth. After the birth of the first child she briefly worked as a school cleaner in her community of origin. Since then she has relied on a supporting parent pension and has been readily able to move between her remote community and Darwin. By now a mother of two children, Wurrpan spends much of her time with her children in town and resident with close family in suburban housing or in
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Aboriginal hostels in the city.

10.5.4 Marrŋu, a single career woman.

I first met Marrŋu in 1974 when she was a 17-year-old school girl living in her remote community. Even then she was showing a strong sense of purpose and desire for personal autonomy. She was attending school regularly, she said that she would not marry her promised husband, and she was living in a single women's house. Marrŋu had a boyfriend of similar age who lived in another Yolŋu community and she said that she would not marry at all if she could not marry him. After she had finished post-primary school in the local community, she hoped to go to Batchelor College to train as an Aboriginal health worker and work in the clinic in her own community.

When next I met Marrŋu in 1988 in Darwin, she told me her boyfriend had died of rheumatic heart disease and that she was still single and had no intention of marrying. She was already a qualified Aboriginal health-worker living and working in her remote community and was only in Darwin en route to an advanced course she was undertaking in Aboriginal health at the University of Newcastle. This course entailed the alternation of several periods of intensive study away from home with in-service work in the clinic in her home community. This scheme meant that Marrŋu had to spend some time in Darwin in transit, which gave her opportunities to visit urban-dwelling kin and to become used to the Aboriginal hostel system and to life in the city.

During this time her unmarried sister, who had been living a precarious life with a Yolŋu boyfriend in kava drinking circles in her remote community died within months after the birth of her second child. Marrŋu and her mother had to take responsibility for the dead woman's three month old baby and other young child and both children were in need of medical attention. After the funeral ceremonies for her deceased sister were over, Marrŋu arranged to take twelve months off her work and study schedule and to live in Darwin, so that the baby could have an operation and the better to improve the health of both children in general. She and her mother moved into Aboriginal hostel accommodation with the children and settled into the life of Yolŋu in Darwin.

During this year Marrŋu was mostly on paid leave and while she had given up her plans for study, she intended returning to work in the local clinic in her home community. At the end of the twelve months, she, her mother and the children returned to their community and Marrŋu recommenced work. However, she was not as content with her life as she was before, and as one of the children had continuing frail health, she decided it was best if they all returned to Darwin. This time she resigned from her employment as a locally
employed Aboriginal health worker within the N.T. Department of Health and Community Services (HACS) and took up her entitlement to a supporting parent pension. She and her mother, who was in receipt of a widow’s pension, moved back to Darwin with the children and into the same Aboriginal hostel and urban lifestyle to which they had become accustomed.

Marrŋu was known and respected as a health worker by a number of Balanda who were in HACS employment in Darwin and from them she heard informally that work might be found for her in town should she be interested. One suggestion was that she join a short-term project on Aboriginal nutrition within HACS employment but she did not take up this opportunity. Later, what she believed to be a permanent position became available in the Aboriginal medical service, Danila Dilba, which was being funded by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC) and was at the time being set up in two clinics in Darwin, one in the city proper and another in the former HACS clinic at the Bagot Aboriginal community. Marrŋu joined the Aboriginal medical service and continued to work there until 1995, when the future of the service became uncertain and there was speculation that it would have to close.

During this period of uncertainty, Marrŋu decided to resign but to stay on in Darwin with the youngest child of her deceased sister, although she had already sent the older of the two children back to the remote community to live with kin and go to the bilingual, bicultural school there. The younger child was now of pre-school age and Marrŋu was considering whether to enrol him in a suburban pre-school or keep him with her and in the company of other Yolŋu women, who were out of the labour market and their children who were not enrolled in or were regularly absent from school.

10.5.5 Ijaŋili and Latjin, and their Balanda husbands.

In the 1970s, Ijaŋili was a young woman who was training as a linguist and bi-lingual literacy worker in her remote community. In this role she had close contact with Balanda educationalists, both in her remote community and when on work-study related trips to Darwin and Batchelor College. She was married, not according to the promise system but by elopement into the bush with a Yolŋu man of her choice. However, after years of marital life and no children, her husband was pressured by kin to take his promised wife, a young adolescent, as a second wife as was his right in Yolŋu polygynous marriage. In the late 1970s, Ijaŋili left her husband because he insisted on his polygynous rights and she would not accept polygynous marriage. She left her remote community and migrated to Darwin.

With her Balanda contacts, Ijaŋili was able to obtain a position as a teacher’s aide at
the pre-school in the Bagot Aboriginal community in Darwin. Subsequently the pre-school at Bagot closed and Aboriginal children living at Bagot went to the nearby mainstream pre-school and primary school. I am not certain whether the closure of the pre-school was responsible for Tjañili dropping out of the workforce or whether it was the fact that by this time she had married a Balanda. Certainly, she began to shape her life more to his employment related moves. The couple went to live in Adelaide and Brisbane for short periods as he pursued employment. In Brisbane, Tjañili tried, unsuccessfully, to obtain employment as an Aboriginal linguist in an Aboriginal studies course offered at a tertiary institution.

The couple returned to Darwin and at some stage in the 1980s, they decided to try to find work in Tjañili's community of origin in northeast Arnhem Land. Her Balanda husband wanted to develop a ferry service taking Yolŋu people, mail and small goods between island and mainland communities. With an Aboriginal wife and the support of her kin and community, he hoped to obtain an Aboriginal development grant for his proposed business. Although the couple spent approximately two years in the remote community planning, applying and negotiating towards this end, the scheme never became a reality. Tjañili was able to find paid employment in her home community but her Balanda husband did not. The couple's stay provoked disharmony in the remote community, particularly between Tjañili and another Yolŋu woman, who had earlier brought her Balanda husband and mixed-descent children back to her home community to live.

The other Yolŋu woman, Latjin, was introduced earlier as an example of a Yolŋu woman who had, after years of absence from her remote community, worked at a permanent return for herself, her Balanda husband and their mixed-descent children to her remote community of origin (see 7.3.5). When Latjin, her Balanda husband and their children returned to live in her home community, Latjin worked at obtaining employment, first for her Balanda husband, herself and later for the children as they matured into adulthood. In this she was remarkably successful: at one time five of the six members of her family were in paid employment and the sixth, a daughter, was married to a Yolŋu man and living with him and their children in his own community.

Latjin and her family and close supporters among Yolŋu kin closed ranks against Tjañili and her Balanda and were not predisposed to allow any challenge to their own interests and competition for resources and employment opportunities. That one Yolŋu woman, her Balanda husband and their children had already come to hold so many local employment positions when employment opportunities were chronically scarce, was not in itself well accepted in this remote community. The success of this family was attributable to the
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remarkable personality of Latjin herself and to her strong totemic and land-owning ties to that community (see Keen 1994:100). From certain Yolŋu accounts, this success was envied and resented by other kin networks in the same community.

The local community was apparently not ready for Îjaṭilî and her Balanda spouse to also come into competition with local Yolŋu for limited resources, particularly positions of employment. The scheme to start a ferry service was not well supported locally, there were recurring confrontations between Latjin, Îjaṭilî and their respective kin factions which resulted in community disharmony. As a result, Îjaṭilî and her Balanda husband returned to Darwin.

This couple has lived in Darwin ever since; the Balanda husband has found permanent employment, and Îjaṭilî has remained out of the workforce. She was infertile but the couple adopted a Yolŋu baby, born to a teenage single mother, a daughter of one of Îjaṭilî's sisters. Even with child-care responsibilities, Îjaṭilî was prepared to take up any paid-employment opportunities which came her way. At one time in the 1990s, she was invited by Balanda to work on a short-term casual basis to speak in Yolŋu matha (Yolŋu language) and explain in English the terminology and workings of the Yolŋu kinship system to predominantly non-Aboriginal students studying Anthropology at the Northern Territory University. In 1994, she was introduced by her kinswoman, Burala, to work with Balanda on a project being organised in Darwin by the Curriculum Development Branch of the Northern Territory Department of Education and for use in Aboriginal homeland schools. Again the opportunity was informally recruited, casually based and short lived.

10.6 Further discussion.

10.6.1 Family factors and employment.

In moving to the city, a Yolŋu wife may have to give up her own employment in a remote community in favour of that of her Yolŋu or Balanda husband's employment career and with no certainty that she may rejoin the work force in Darwin. While in remote Yolŋu communities it has been married women who have predominated in employment in local community services, the contrary is true of the few Yolŋu women who have found employment opportunities in Darwin. Apart from the small number of positions offered to married Yolŋu women by the Church and its secular agencies, and usually in association with their Yolŋu husband's (and in one case father's) employment, when Yolŋu women have otherwise found employment in Darwin, they have typically done outside of Yolŋu marriage and rarely as wives married to Balanda men.

For example, the Yolŋu woman who was a teacher in an urban pre-school was
widowed, the Band 1 teacher in curriculum development within the Education Department was widowed, and the Yolŋu woman who worked as a health worker was a mature-aged career woman who had never been married. Of the four Yolŋu women who were employed by the Northern Territory Department of Education in 1993 and lived in Darwin, two were widowed, three had at sometime been estranged from their Yolŋu husbands and had pursued, at some stage of their lives, sexual-marital relations with non-Yolŋu men in the city, while one was 'de facto' married to a Balanda and had lived with him in Darwin for many years.

In Yolŋu remote communities, a woman's sexual-marital life is bound up with her total life and her opportunities in local employment and access to housing are, in part, shaped by familial criteria of allocation. A Yolŋu woman who is attempting to go her "own way" in terms of sexual-marital life in a remote community is likely to experience family pressures and sanctions that impinge on all dimensions of her life, not only her social and ceremonial obligations but which also intrude into the local employment context and circumstances of housing (see 5.4.3, 5.5.2).

In remote communities there are many pressures on Yolŋu women who have considerable status and authority within the family and wider kinship community. While older women have demands made upon them by "all the families" by virtue of their seniority, traditional knowledge and skills and because they have pension incomes, the family and wider kinship community also expect much of mature aged and younger women, who are Western educated and hold responsible positions in paid employment in local community services.

In remote communities where paid employment is limited, Yolŋu women value their working careers and their wage and salary incomes. It is invariably persuasive circumstances and not indifference to their employment opportunities which causes Yolŋu women to leave remote communities and quit local employment when they move to live in Darwin. As described earlier, especially in Chapter 5, Yolŋu women move to Darwin for a complex of reasons, which include putting distance between themselves and the concentration of pressures on them in remote communities and seeking more personal autonomy, higher standards of living and more opportunities in the city.

Among the Yolŋu, young women and girls are able to live in the city, further their education and more rarely find urban employment on the condition that their urban circumstances are approved and monitored by close family. In this way, Yolŋu women and girls can live with kin in urban housing, and on residential campuses, if they are appropriately chaperoned and provided that their purposes in town are approved by the wider family.
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Young single women are particularly vulnerable to altered circumstances and family pressures which curtail their own plans to live and work in the city. Life cycle events such as the death of close kin and young women's sexual-marital affairs and pregnancies seemed to be times when the immediate family and wider kin re-assess young women's urban circumstances and seek to re-emphasise care and control of them, in ways which impinge upon the women's personal autonomy and curtail their ability to live, study and work in the city.

A young woman's kin are sometimes in a position to offer her employment in her home community and will do so to induce her to return home and to compensate her for giving up opportunities in Darwin. Considering the limited scope for paid employment in Yolŋu remote communities and the ability of kin to allocate what is available, such an offer is a significant but not an invariably successful incentive for the young woman in question to return home (see 5.4.3).

Generally speaking, young women are unable to go against the wishes of "all the families" and the authority of particular kin and affines by returning to live in the city and to urban employment, which was originally available to them, dependent upon their family circumstances and subject to family approval. Moreover, Church and Aboriginal agencies in the city tend to take the view of the Yolŋu family and Yolŋu remote community when it comes to a re-assessment of a Yolŋu woman's status in Darwin. For example, in the case of the Yolŋu wife and daughter, their urban employment was from the outset linked to their Yolŋu husband's and father's employment, as an executive officer in the Aboriginal Christian Congress, and when he died their urban employment was not renegotiated. The Uniting Church and secular agencies associated with the church, and to some extent Aboriginal agencies, are unlikely to promote Yolŋu women's urban employment opportunities if by doing so they go against the wishes of a woman's relatives and remote community.

Because so few Yolŋu have attained and maintained wage-salary employment in Darwin, Yolŋu women have fewer and less apparent introductions to urban employment via family links and informal mechanisms than they do in their own communities. Even so, Yolŋu women who seek and obtain employment in Darwin are more likely to do so through informal mechanisms first, although written application, interviews and the like may be secondary and ultimate mechanisms for recruitment into urban employment.

Of the nine Yolŋu women who were employed in Darwin in 1993, three had work which was contingent upon the urban employment of a male member of their immediate family and in association with the Uniting Church and secular agencies. A wife was employed in translation work, a daughter as a receptionist and another woman found work
in the women's studies courses at Nungalinya College in association with her Yolŋu husband's role on campus. In the longer period of my field work, a similar pattern emerged.

Yolŋu women also informally helped each other to find employment, as for example was the case when a Yolŋu woman introduced a young kinswoman to the position she was vacating at an Aboriginal agency in town. Similarly, when Burala found employment in the curriculum development branch of the N.T. Department of Education, she introduced two close kinswomen into part-time and short-term employment on a particular project.

Yolŋu women also receive informal introductions to wage-salary employment in Darwin through contacts they have made with Balanda personnel or with urbanised Aboriginal people. These informal introductions to urban employment are typically shaped by Yolŋu women's interaction with Balanda as co-workers, supervisors and mentors in employment and training contexts in remote communities and when Yolŋu women travelled to Darwin and Batchelor for courses, conferences and the like. The incidence and success of such informal and circumstantial introductions to wage-salary employment is limited and often leads to short-term, project oriented employment and rarely to full time employment and integration into urban employment structures. Even so, as the case studies and women's employment histories demonstrate, some two or three Yolŋu women have developed more long-term urban careers. Typically they have done so as maritally autonomous women and, with few exceptions they have been relatively unimpeded by the responsibilities of caring for young children at the time.

10.6.2 Children and child care.

The particular circumstances where Yolŋu women have succeeded in obtaining employment in Darwin include those where women were childless, or their children were no longer of dependent age, their children were in the permanent care of remote-dwelling kin, the day-time care of close kin in Darwin, or the circumstances of their employment included child-care.

Examples of the latter circumstances include, for example, the Yolŋu widow who was employed as a house mother in the boarding house at Kormilda College, whose only dependent child attended the school as a boarding student. There are also on campus child-care services at Nungalinya and Batchelor College and arrangements for school aged children to attend school, so Yolŋu and other Aboriginal women from remote communities can study and more rarely be employed on campus and be assured of child-care.

It appeared to be more difficult for Yolŋu women to keep to educational courses and paid employment when child care had to be negotiated informally with kin living in hostels
and suburban housing and at inconvenient distances from place of study or employment. In Darwin, Yolŋu women typically do not use mainstream child-care services such as day-care, creche and after-school care. Moreover, Yolŋu women in Darwin are burdened with the care of school-age children who have not been enrolled in or who irregularly attend suburban schools (see 7.2.1). In consequence, Yolŋu women are inhibited from seeking, obtaining and retaining paid employment in Darwin because they and their children are alienated from mainstream child-care services and schooling.

Some Yolŋu women and concerned kin resolve the problem of children growing up in Darwin without suitable care, socialisation and schooling by taking and sending children back to remote communities without their parents, there to live with kin, go to bi-lingual and bi-cultural schools, the better to grow up the Yolŋu way. As single parents and married to Yolŋu husbands and inter-ethnically married, Yolŋu women may also decide that even though the city holds many opportunities, it is in their own and their children's best interests that the family unit return to remote communities. For Yolŋu women who have lived long-term in the city and especially for those who are committed to inter-ethnic marriages this is not an easily made decision.

10.6.3 Inter-ethnic marriage, migration and employment.

There are Yolŋu women who decide to return to remote communities after leading more personally autonomous lives in the city and those who want to bring their non-Yolŋu spouses, typically Balanda but also mixed-descent Aboriginal men, and their urban-reared and mixed-descent children back with them and to integrate them into the life of the community. They may, however, find the welcome in their remote community is very strained.

Introduced policies and powers which operate in Aboriginal communities as well as local community tensions and a familial disposition of limited resources, especially of housing and employment, make it difficult for Yolŋu women to introduce their non-Yolŋu husbands and urban-reared children into permanent residence in remote communities and to see them fully integrated into Yolŋu social and ceremonial life. Ordinarily a Yolŋu woman has no difficulty in taking her non-Yolŋu spouse home for visits, but my research suggests that the integration of a non-Yolŋu husband into permanent residence and employment in Yolŋu remote communities is rare and hard won (see 7.3.5, 10.5.5).

At the time they first form sexual-marital relations with non-Aboriginal men, whether with professionally qualified men and tradesmen working in remote communities or with
men they meet in Darwin and elsewhere, Yolŋu women typically encounter the disapproval of close family, wider kin and possibly of the whole remote community. The immediate family and wider kin may disapprove of inter-ethnic marriage in general or the particular circumstances of an inter-ethnic marriage may generate tensions in the remote community. In some circumstances these tensions may fade with time, in others, tensions persist indefinitely, at least in some kinship quarters.

There are other reasons why it is difficult for Yolŋu women who are married inter-ethnically to live and work in their communities of origin. A Balanda spouse's income and employment career is limited in remote communities and more profitably pursued in urban centres. He and his Yolŋu wife almost inevitably decide that they will move to Darwin or some other urban centre in order to obtain a higher standard of living, especially in housing, education and health care and via his employment prospects. In remote communities, Yolŋu relatives make demands on time, money and other resources, for example a couple's house and vehicle. Although they may not want to, or be able to make an absolute break with the claims of kin when they move to Darwin, Yolŋu women and their Balanda husbands are more able to manage and minimise the claims of kin when they live in the city.

In Darwin in the last years of the 1980s and in the early 1990s, there were several marriage-based households in which Balanda and other Aboriginal males were Yolŋu women's marital partners. Sometimes, the Yolŋu wife was the pensioner householder and the non-Yolŋu 'de facto' was marginal both as a resident and as an economic contributor. More commonly, however, the non-Yolŋu husband was the breadwinner and householder. These households were typically based on the non-Yolŋu spouse's employment income, but in one instance the husband received an invalid pension. In each case the Yolŋu wife was unemployed and economically dependent on her non-Yolŋu spouse.

As argued earlier (see 6.2.1), Yolŋu women's commitment to inter-ethnic 'de facto' and more rarely legal marriages is in part shaped by the ability of the male spouse to provide a reliable economic base for the Yolŋu wife and her dependent children (cf. Collman 1988:124). A Yolŋu woman's commitment to an inter-ethnic marriage, and her reliance on her spouse's income is a major factor in her move with her children to live in Darwin, but marriage and a reliable male income in themselves do not prevent Yolŋu women from maintaining and developing employment.

In their remote communities, Yolŋu married women predominate over single women and youth in holding employment, and as married couples Yolŋu men and women are able to have separate employment careers in the same community. Therefore it is not the fact of being married and having a husband with a reliable income that prevents Yolŋu married
women from obtaining employment and developing employment careers in Darwin.

However, in order to sustain inter-ethnic marriages, advance the employment potential of the Balanda husband and to seek urban services and opportunities, Yolŋu women are usually prepared to leave their wider kin and remote communities, quit local employment and move to Darwin, elsewhere in the Northern Territory and to another state. For some Yolŋu women this involves loss of highly responsible and well paid professional and para-professional employment as teachers and health workers in community services in Arnhem Land and migration, and resultant economic dependence on a non-Yolŋu spouse in Darwin or elsewhere.

Yolŋu women have variable potential to introduce a non-Yolŋu, typically Balanda 'de facto' husband into permanent residence and employment within Yolŋu communities. Even when a Yolŋu woman was born and raised in a Yolŋu community, she may not be in a strong position to return to her remote community after long absence and with a non-Yolŋu 'de facto' husband. Remote Aboriginal communities have limited powers of local self-government including the powers to issue, withhold and revoke permits for non-Yolŋu persons to enter, live and work in remote Aboriginal communities. Among the Yolŋu, the permit system is not typically used to exclude people who are accepted as kin, including Yolŋu women's non-Yolŋu spouses and Yolŋu women's mixed-descent children, but the permit system is a power which ultimately can be used to exclude and expel any persons designated as unwanted strangers (see 3.6.3).

Moreover, powers of local self government enable Yolŋu town councils and community elders to declare their communities 'Dry', that is places of alcohol prohibition under the Northern Territory 'Dry areas' legislation and to invoke the policing of this prohibition by the Balanda system of law, of the police and the courts. For Yolŋu women married to non-Yolŋu spouses who are used to drinking alcohol and living in the city, the 'dry' status and remoteness of Yolŋu clan lands are disincentives for many inter-ethnically married couples who consider returning to live permanently in Yolŋu communities.

Some Yolŋu women and their alcohol-drinking partners have moved back to the Yolŋu community of Ramingining and to the urban centre of Nhulunbuy and nearby camps, where they have been able to re-integrate into local kinship communities to some extent, while still having access to alcohol and in some instances while continuing to pursue an alcohol dominated lifestyle. In such circumstances, the Yolŋu wife and her non-Yolŋu partner are typically unable to gain and retain scarce local resources, including housing and employment. Such couples live as much on the fringe of Yolŋu lands and communities as they did in alcohol-drinking camps on the fringes of Darwin.
Chapter 10. Speaking for ourselves, working for the families.

How well a non-Yolŋu husband adjusts to Yolŋu community life determines how long inter-ethnic couples and families remain in Yolŋu remote communities and to what extent they integrate into Yolŋu social and ceremonial life. It is not, however, simply a matter of how well Yolŋu women, their non-Yolŋu spouses and their urban reared children fit in when they return to live in remote communities. It is also a matter of relations of power and distribution of resources. While there may be no specific sanctions against a Yolŋu woman's return to her remote community, she may well find that a claim for housing for her family and employment for her Balanda or other Aboriginal spouse is not readily met. In Yolŋu communities, housing is chronically and sometimes acutely in short supply and employment opportunities are scarce. These highly valued resources are largely allocated along established kin and clan lines and a familial order of priorities.

A Yolŋu woman can find herself not well placed to insist on a house for her family and employment for herself and her non-Yolŋu husband when she returns, perhaps after years of absence, to her community of origin. In Aboriginal communities today there are inequalities in rights and access to resources which are in large measure shaped by historical processes of settlement (cf. Anderson 1988:15-17). For example, the missions attracted various Yolŋu clans to settle at mission locations on particular clan estates and so historically many Yolŋu came to live in the former missions (now the major Yolŋu communities) and on clan lands for which they were not the owners (Keen 1978:17-18; 1994:26). Even after several generations in the one community, these Yolŋu have weaker claims than members of local clans to the limited resources of those communities. In consequence, Yolŋu women who wish to maintain and develop resident and employment rights for their non-Yolŋu husbands within their own communities of origin in Arnhem Land, have less potential to do so if the latter do not correspond with clan lands in which the women have established rights. Keen (1994:100) suggests that it was 'exceptional' in the 1980s when a Yolŋu woman and her Balanda husband and mixed descent children prospered in her community of origin after years of living away, and he attributed her success to the strength of her totemic affiliations with land.

If they move away and marry strangers and then return with their spouses and children to the remote community, Yolŋu women may find that their position has deteriorated and they have little or no claim on such important and chronically limited resources as housing and employment. If they have stronger claim in country and on kin and community resources in a small homeland centre rather than in their community of origin, then it is more likely to be a success if they and their non-Yolŋu spouse and urban-reared children return to live there. However, as small homeland centres are at one extreme in terms
of differences in lifestyle, availability of amenities and services and employment opportunities, from life in urban centres and the capital city, it is an exceptional couple who make the decision to permanently return with their urban reared children to small, isolated homeland centres.

Another consideration is that the policy to Aboriginalise the work force and provide work for locals can work against the integration of Balanda and even of husbands who are of other Aboriginal and mixed-descent origins. Although Balanda are still employed in significant numbers for their professional, managerial and trade skills in Yolŋu remote communities, the process of Aboriginalisation of the workforce is in progress, in line with self-determination policy and the expressed desire of Yolŋu communities to minimise the recruitment of non-locals into a restricted employment field.

Yolŋu women confirm that "jealousy" over who obtains scarce wage-salary employment is a major factor in why inter-ethnically married couples feel the brunt of community tensions when they live in the Yolŋu wives' communities of origin in northeast Arnhem Land. Competition and tension is intensified if Yolŋu women introduce their non-Yolŋu spouses and/or mixed-descent adult or adolescent children into the same community.

Moreover, it is typically the Balanda husband who asserts his right to an autonomous income and to some measure of control over the household economy and over the claim of wider Yolŋu kin on household income and resources. These male-female, Balanda-Yolŋu economic relationships within inter-ethnic marriage almost invariably lead to the couple and their children migrating from Yolŋu communities to Darwin.

While their non-Yolŋu spouses may have been disadvantaged by the policy aimed to Aboriginalise the local workforce in remote communities, Yolŋu wives find that the urban employment field does not readily accommodate them. Whether they migrate to Darwin as maritaly autonomous women, with Yolŋu husbands, or as inter-ethnically married couples, Yolŋu women find that they cannot readily transfer within employment from remote communities into the city.

10.6.4 Employment structures, recruitment criteria.

Certainly the education levels, occupational skills and work experience of Aboriginal men and women in remote communities has the effect of restricting the employability of remote-dwelling Aborigines to remote communities and of limiting their social and geographic mobility via employment. Certain schemes to promote Aboriginal employment in remote communities have exacerbated these tendencies.
Chapter 10. *Speaking for ourselves, working for the families.*

The federally funded Community Development and Employment Program (CDEP), a 'work for the dole' scheme, was devised specifically to create local paid work for the otherwise unemployed in remote Aboriginal communities. There has been a limited transference of the scheme to Aboriginal 'communities' in urban centres. Aboriginal community leaders have largely welcomed the scheme as a way of getting community tasks done and the young and able working, but there have been criticisms of the scheme both from within Aboriginal communities and externally.

While CDEP has accounted for much of the growth in Aboriginal employment recorded in the intercensal period 1986 to 1991 (Taylor 1993a), one criticism is that the apparent growth in Aboriginal employment due to the CDEP scheme has tended to disguise real levels of unemployment, of under employment and a stagnation in the development of full-time employment for Aboriginal people in remote communities and urban centres (Taylor 1993a, 1993c). One of the most cogent criticisms is that,

One of the unintended consequences of the CDEP scheme has been its ability to trap large numbers of Aboriginal people (now 22,000 in over 200 locations) into low-paid, part-time employment often subject to the patronage of powerful elders and community leaders (Tyler 1994:17).

While the policy was devised without anticipating these consequences, white administrators in urban centres and Aboriginal elders and leaders in remote communities have different reasons for wanting to tie Aboriginal people to remote locales and hence keep them out of urban centres.

Whereas local employment and CDEP monies tie individuals to a particular community and to a localised employment task or program, women's pension incomes, child support subsidies and the student allowances of young people do not. These monies, together with access to subsidised housing and residential campuses in Darwin, provide the means for Aboriginal women, children, and adolescents, to move to the city.

Another factor that inhibits Aboriginal people from moving from remote communities and local employment in order to take advantage of urban employment, especially positions in Aboriginal sector employment and Aboriginal liaison in mainstream employment is the result of differences in education, training and previous work experience. Aboriginal people in remote communities have been exposed to 'culturally relevant' and 'community oriented' education and occupational-training and employment (Harris 1990:18 & 26) which fits, and to an extent limits, them to employment in remote communities.

This narrow focus of Aboriginal education and training disadvantages Aboriginal people in remote communities in their ability to realise standards of living which are comparable with the majority society and effectively prevents them from utilising their
employment skills and experience elsewhere, in particular in urban centres. Aboriginal community leaders and educators are critical of so-called 'culturally relevant' education and vocational training when this amounts to lower educational standards and limited employment skills and opportunities (Harris 1990:18 & 26).

Yet another consideration is that employment conditions and criteria of recruitment in Aboriginal and government sector employment do not facilitate transfer within employment or recruitment into urban employment of Aboriginal people from remote communities. In the 1980s, the Northern Territory Public Service (NTPS) and the Australian Public Service (APS) put in place recruitment policies which aimed to increase the percentage of Aboriginal people employed within their respective services (see Manuel 1985:101).

In order to promote Aboriginal employment, criteria of recruitment emphasised that effective communication with Aboriginal people and an appreciation of Aboriginal contact history and of Aboriginal culture were pre-requisites. These requirements have to date not resulted in Aboriginal indigenous language speakers as well as effective communicators in English obtaining regular employment within the respective public services in urban contexts in the Northern Territory. The limited success in the recruitment of Aborigines into the public service, Aboriginal Liaison positions within government departments and Aboriginal domain employment has been largely confined to urbanised Aborigines, who have English as their first and often only language.

So far, initiatives which are designed to promote Aboriginal employment have largely failed to create career paths for Aboriginal language speakers within urban services and in Darwin. This is a missed opportunity since many Aboriginal people from remote communities in transit or more permanently in Darwin speak indigenous languages and have difficulty communicating in English. As a result, they have difficulty in properly utilising and fully benefiting from urban community services and Aboriginal liaison provisions which are set up to facilitate Aboriginal access to the very services which brought them to the city. Moreover, as Rowse (1992:56) suggests, 'in times of rapid changes, and the insecurities associated with them, people may adhere to very restrictive notions of who 'belongs' to them and who, therefore, can represent them'.

In the 1990s, the value of Aboriginal languages and of indigenous language speakers in urban contexts has belatedly begun to be recognised (HRSCAA August 1990). A report in progress for the Northern Territory government on the need for Aboriginal language interpreter services (Carroll 1995) highlights the deficiencies in government delivery of services resulting from difficulties in cross-cultural communication. In Darwin and as late
as 1995, Aboriginal interpreters were still found on an 'ad hoc' basis for employment in policing matters, legal services and in the law courts and were often not formally accredited or integrated into a coherent Aboriginal interpreter service. In the public hospital, an informal approach to the need for Aboriginal interpreters went even further; non-Aboriginal medical staff and Aboriginal liaison officers often sought out Aboriginal visitors to the hospital to mediate communications between Aboriginal patients and non-Aboriginal doctors. Aboriginal patients from remote communities often have little or no understanding of English, particularly young children and elderly patients as well as others too ill or too frightened to communicate effectively other than in their own languages.

As local agents for and clients of local community services, Yolŋu women are used to representing themselves, their families and wider kin and community by communicating in Yolŋu matha and in English. In Aboriginal remote communities, indigenous language speakers are integral to the provision of local community services but not so in the provision of urban community services, even though both remote and urban community services are run by the same departments of government.

Theoretically, Yolŋu employees in these local agencies of government departments should be able to transfer within departmental employment as can Balanda who work alongside Yolŋu in community services and other local agencies of government in remote communities. That Aboriginal people from remote communities, including Yolŋu, cannot readily transfer within employment in local government and community services into equivalent departmental employment in urban centres and in Darwin is inequitable.

Those Yolŋu, in particular women, who have chosen to break away from the pressures and the limitations of local employment and remote communities by moving to live in Darwin, find that they cannot readily transfer within employment but typically have to resign and take their chances at renewing their employment careers in the city.

In Yolŋu remote communities, local conditions of employment are such that Yolŋu are largely able to balance their obligations in kinship and ceremony, while maintaining their responsibilities in paid-employment, particularly as agents of local government and local community services. For example, employment conditions include flexible leave entitlements and job-sharing as mechanisms to accommodate and promote Aboriginal employment. In urban centres in the Northern Territory, and elsewhere in Australia, Aboriginal people have not found government sector employment to be particularly accommodating to Aboriginal culture (cf. Manuel 1985:103). Yolŋu in paid employment in remote communities and in Darwin typically make adjustments in the timing of their commitment to cultural "business". To this end, much
Yolnu ceremonial life and many cultural activities are today patterned into week-end, school-holiday and end-of-year schedules, so that Yolnu-cultural life and majority-cultural education and employment schedules are least disruptive of each other (Harris 1990:63). Yolnu in Darwin use holiday and other leave entitlements to allow them to participate in ceremonial life by returning for these purposes to remote communities. However, obligations in kinship and in ceremonies are not always amenable to timetabling and in particular, Yolnu are sometimes obliged to return to remote communities for funeral ceremonies. These and other commitments to kin, country and ceremony need not spell the end of urban careers. However, at these and other critical times, Yolnu women, especially young single women, are particularly liable to family pressures to re-assess their urban circumstances, re-define their kinship responsibilities and to have them return to live in Yolnu communities in northeast Arnhem Land.

10.7 Conclusions.

While a small number of Yolnu women have developed employment careers in Darwin and another few have from time to time joined the urban work force, in the main Yolnu women have not been able to maintain urban employment because of a combination of constraints including family and wider kinship responsibilities, limited education, training and experience and lack of employment criteria and conditions which value and accommodate their indigenous knowledge, languages and lived cultural experiences. When Yolnu women have found urban employment there has been an historical and contemporary trend towards this type of employment being short-lived, either because the program, service or scheme was short-term in the first instance or was being phased out, due to policy changes and financial constraints. Yolnu women have tended to find urban employment by means of informal links via kin already employed or via Balanda and other Aboriginal people who are "adopted" kin and associates known from earlier work and study related contexts. These types of linkages to urban employment are not structural, do not typically lead to Yolnu women being fully integrated into the urban work force and in consequence, Yolnu women's urban careers tend to be highly vulnerable.

There is also evidence that employment, and lack thereof, determines whether Yolnu women who marry non-Yolnu husbands, typically Balanda or men of other Aboriginal origins, are able to stay in or return to their communities of origin. Yolnu women face difficulties when they try to retain and develop employment careers for themselves and their non-Yolnu spouses and ultimately for their mixed descent children in remote communities where employment is limited, a policy to Aboriginalise the local work force is in place and
where limited employment opportunities and scarce housing resources are largely allocated along family and clan lines.

Yolŋu women in paid employment in community services, whether in remote communities or in Nhulunbuy and Darwin, are agents of the family and of the state. If appropriate circumstances of employment were available to them in Darwin, they could play similar roles in town, particularly in urban community services. Indeed, as demonstrated, two or three Yolŋu women have already began to do so in education and health services in Darwin but they have had to do so against odds, both familial and external constraints.

When Yolŋu women lose their ability to be able to "speak for ourselves" and "work for the families" in paid employment, whether in remote or urban community services, there is a concomitant erosion of the contractual relationship, or more balanced relations of power, which the Yolŋu have been developing between the family and the State, and between the Yolŋu and Balanda ways of life.
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11.1 The meeting of the waters.

Some Yolŋu use a metaphor of the meeting of the salt and fresh waters to describe their aspirations for more harmonious, more equitable relations of power in cross-cultural interaction and inter-ethnic relationships between Yolŋu and Balanda (Marika-Mununggirritj et al. 1990:12; Yunupingu 1991:98-106, 1994:8-9; see also 2.1). While there is turbulence when and where the salt water tide and fresh water stream meet, it is a creative turbulence and something new, brackish water, is created out of a mixing of the waters, a balance of the two.

A deep pool of brackish water, fresh water and salt water mixed. The pool is a balance between two different natural patterns, the pattern of the tidal flow, salt water moving in through the mangrove channels, and the pattern of the fresh water streams varying in their flow across the wet and dry seasons.... For Balanda, brackish water is distasteful. But for us the sight and smell of brackish water expresses a profound foundation of useful knowledge-balance. For Yolŋu Aboriginal people brackish water is a source of inspiration (Yunupingu 1994:8-9).

Ultimately, however, the salt water tide and the fresh water stream remain distinct, retain their own characteristics and momentum. As Yolŋu argue,

In this way the Dhuwa and Yirritja sides of Yolŋu life work together. And in this way Balanda and Yolŋu traditions can work together. There must be balance, if not either one will be stronger and will harm the other (Marika-Mununggirritj et al. 1990:12).

The metaphor, as Yolŋu explain it, is about both Yolŋu and Balanda recognising the creative potential of the meeting and mixing of Yolŋu and Balanda peoples and ways of life, of the way one may limit the other, and of the need for a balance of powers so that one does not overpower the other.

While this Yolŋu metaphor has been used as a model of ideal relations of power between Yolŋu and Balanda, the reality of cross-cultural interaction is neither balanced in remote communities nor in the city. In northeast Arnhem Land, Yolŋu are the local indigenous land-owning group. They have limited powers of local self-government, they are the majority population, and Yolŋu languages, cultural knowledge and a Yolŋu way of life prevail. Even so, they are an encapsulated people largely dependent on the provision of goods, money and services by Balanda, particularly via government agency in remote communities and in the circulation of remote-dwelling people through urban centres.

In Darwin, the Yolŋu not only experience what it is like to be Yolŋu within an all
encompassing Balanda social order, but the particulars of what it is like to be a transient, migrant and in some cases itinerant minority among other Aboriginal groups, other ethnic minorities and amidst the majority Balanda population and dominant society in the city.

My argument is that relations of power between Yolŋu and Balanda are largely constituted by the articulation of two systems of nurturance (cf. Myers 1986), the one an Aboriginal system of governance (Keen 1989) exercised in kinship and in ceremonial life and the other, the Balanda system of government by monies and services. Following Donzelot (1979:92), I have also argued that State mechanisms of 'government through the family' have been superimposed on and intervene in a Yolŋu system of 'government of families'. The State (and the Church) have intervened in Aboriginal family life, promoted 'a liberalization of intra familial relationships (Donzelot 1979:91) and particularly made women and children a 'target' for services of care and of strategies for social change.

However, in the case of Yolŋu and other Aboriginal groups, the effectiveness of State government has been attenuated by the limitations of extension into remote and relatively autonomous Aboriginal communities and lands, and by coming up against an Aboriginal system of governance. This 'frontier for the relationship of power' (Foucault 1986:225) has meant that government strategies have come to rely heavily on 'governing' Yolŋu, and other remote-dwelling Aboriginal people, by bringing them to Darwin and other urban centres, there to be cared for and, and if all goes to plan, repatriated to remote communities and lands.

While government policies and schemes shape much of the movement of remote and rural-dwelling Aboriginal people to urban centres and capital cities, on the other hand, Yolŋu and other Aboriginal people have plans of their own. Individual life trajectories and a kinship dynamic also shape the movement of Yolŋu to and settlement in Darwin. As Yolŋu move to Darwin to seek more opportunities, to go their "own way" in the city, to "sit down" with family and settle in town and "keep company", especially in times of sickness and worry, the movement of Yolŋu to Darwin takes on a momentum of its own.

A Yolŋu system of 'control as care' (cf. Keen 1989:27) has had to be extended, albeit attenuated by extension into the city, where Yolŋu live dispersed and far removed from the concentration in Yolŋu communities and clan lands of a Yolŋu system of governance by kinship and ceremony. Some Yolŋu women (and youth) attempt to escape
the constraints of a Yolŋu familial system of governance by attempting to go their "own way" in Darwin, Nhulunbuy or other urban centre. A few find themselves and to some extent place themselves on the fringe of both Yolŋu and Balanda systems of care and control, when they become 'lost to grog' in Darwin (cf. Burbank 1988:112).

In many respects, the Yolŋu familial system is more tenacious than the Balanda system of services in respect of a 'duty of care' towards Yolŋu who as migrants, transients and itinerants are often disoriented if not actually 'lost' in the city. A Yolŋu system of governance by kinship and ceremony has had to extend into the city, to care and where possible control kin and if all else fails, at least reclaim the Yolŋu dead.

While most Yolŋu experience difficulties in town, most live sober lives in the city and do not place themselves disadvantageously in Darwin in terms of both systems of nurturance. They have come to Darwin to seek greater personal autonomy, more opportunities, better life chances, but not at the expense of ties to and rights in kin and clan country and of a distinct Yolŋu social and ceremonial life. Yolŋu try to obtain the best of both worlds and to balance märrma' rom (two laws, cultures, right ways) as they move to and "sit down" in Darwin. As they transit through and settle in Darwin, Yolŋu attempt to balance "two ways, both ways", the Yolŋu and the Balanda ways of life and to seek the best of both by maintaining their indigenous rights in country and developing their rights as citizens in the city. They also constantly reaffirm their Yolŋu identity and group loyalties in Darwin by helping and housing visiting kin from remote communities and by returning to remote communities for social and ceremonial purposes. Most significantly, Yolŋu bring together a small scale bapurruru, defined in this context as clan group for funeral ceremonies, when they gather after the death of kin to perform certain mortuary rituals in Darwin.

Yolŋu adjust variously to life in the city, but most say that it is hard to live "two-ways, both ways" in Darwin. In town, the Yolŋu dimensions of life must be more consciously maintained because the Balanda way is all pervasive. The problem is that many of the strategies which Yolŋu employ to uphold the Yolŋu way of life in Darwin, including moving between town and country, hosting and housing kin in extended family households and gathering for wider group sociality in outdoor and public places, appear to urban administrators as though the Yolŋu are unsettled and intractable in a town situation. There is little or no recognition on the part of Balanda that it is government bureaucratic interventions, municipal authorities and urban services which are in many
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ways inimical to Yolŋu self-determination in Darwin.

The Yolŋu stay for a time and live more permanently in Darwin in contexts as diverse as the public hospital, various campuses, in hostels and suburban housing as well as at occasional and more permanent camp sites. They visit each other in these contexts, socialise more widely in outdoor settings and in focused gatherings, including those which form for hunting and eating bush and marine foods, collecting raw materials for art and craft work or for gambling at cards and drinking alcohol. Lacking a territorial or property base in Darwin, the Yolŋu have had to pursue much of their wider group sociality in public places, for example, in the forecourts of the hospital and of hostels, on foreshores, in parks, and even their mortuary rituals to farewell their dead are held in the car-parks of air-charter companies and on the tarmac beside the plane chartered to repatriate their dead.

While much of the distinct social and ceremonial life of the Yolŋu goes unseen in the city, civic authorities and the public gaze focus on certain Yolŋu (and other Aboriginal) group behaviour as a disturbance in the neighbourhood and an eyesore on the urban landscape (cf. Edmunds 1989:93-120). In these circumstances, the official response is to move Aboriginal people out of suburban housing, move them on from public places and there are urban authorities that would have them banished to the bush. While the lifestyle of some Yolŋu individuals and the behaviour of some Yolŋu groups leads to them being characterised as itinerants in the city, the responses of urban authorities also structures and confirms this itinerancy.

Most Yolŋu, however, who move through and settle in Darwin are sober living people who integrate relatively inconspicuously into urban life. There are Yolŋu who have lived in Darwin for five, ten, fifteen, twenty years, mostly in hostel accommodation and suburban housing, although some have been homeless for similar periods of time. In the main, Yolŋu make a fair effort at living "both ways" and of balancing the Yolŋu way and the Balanda way of life in the city. However, they do so at considerable cost because in order to integrate without assimilating, the Yolŋu minimise their engagement with urban community services and derive less benefits from them while they maximise their efforts to maintain and rely on the company of kin and on familial services.
11.2 Summary of themes and chapters.

Throughout the thesis, I have described how Yolŋu seek to maintain their distinct identity in the city, particularly at critical times and via significant relationships, and how a Yolŋu system of alignment to kin, country and ceremonial life is adjusted so as to encompass Yolŋu who "sit down" in Darwin. I investigated how Yolŋu women in Darwin and their concerned kin in remote communities develop ties to kin and country for women's urban reared children, whether born within Yolŋu marriage, in "wrong-side" and casual sexual relations with Yolŋu men, or in casual and enduring inter-ethnic unions with non-Yolŋu men.

Some Yolŋu women are seen to move to Darwin the better to express their autonomy of Yolŋu marriage, their choice in sexual-marital partners and to put distance between themselves and family tensions in remote communities. While these women may be 'stepping completely out' of a Yolŋu system of marriage (Burbank 1988:111-12), I argue that they are not so much turning their backs on an Aboriginal system of 'control as care' (Keen 1989:27) as they are manoeuvring for more personal autonomy in Darwin.

In the city as in the country, concerned kin act as agents of familial governance when they offer inducements, impose social sanctions and sometimes threaten mirriri (ritualised violence) in efforts to ensure that women and girls conform to Yolŋu expectations, especially norms of sexual-marital life. Girls and young women who refuse to or are otherwise unable to marry promised Yolŋu husbands and those who become single mothers, are often said to be "minded" by older Yolŋu men, who do not necessarily claim sexual-marital relations with them. This is more than one man's plan as family lineages and clan alliances are behind the effort to shape the "straight way" marital destiny of Yolŋu women and girls. The mechanism of "adopting" strangers into appropriate relationships of moiety, subsection, kin and clan can be used to give Yolŋu legitimacy to women's marriages to non-Yolŋu men.

In moving to Darwin the better to exercise more personal autonomy and to contract and sustain inter-ethnic marriages, Yolŋu women do not lose their rights among kin and country. They would be in danger of weakening them by long absence and failure to perform their obligations in social and ceremonial life, if it were not for the fact that Yolŋu women themselves, and their concerned kin, work at maintaining these ties and developing them for the women's children. Yolŋu have specific strategies to at least point the way for urban reared children to develop ties to Yolŋu kin and country. These include
the bestowal of names from *riggitj* (place sacred to particular people) on infants and the development of matrifiliation and social, if not genealogical patrifiliation, for children born outside Yolŋu marriage and being brought up by Yolŋu women in Darwin.

For children to be "grown up" the Yolŋu way even if they are largely reared in the city, further Yolŋu family efforts are entailed. They include Yolŋu women keeping young children in the company of kin and largely out of mainstream child-care and schools, sending children in mid childhood to live with kin in remote communities, where they can "grow up" with wider kin in the Yolŋu way and go to bilingual, bicultural schools. Moreover, Yolŋu parents, single mothers and Yolŋu women who are inter-ethnically married must also decide when and whether to send their urban reared boys to live with kin in remote communities and in time to prepare for *dhapi’* (circumcision rituals), which thereby initiate Yolŋu boys into male social and ceremonial life.

If the opportunity to "grow up" and "make men" of boys the Yolŋu way is missed because of boyhood spent in the city, then the opportunity is hard won later in life or may never eventuate even if Yolŋu women and their urban reared sons return to remote communities. This is particularly critical for Yolŋu women and their young sons growing up in Darwin, for among Yolŋu people a man’s ceremonial, and to an extent his social, progress in life, is shaped by his boyhood initiation into ritual peer groups and subsequent participation in Yolŋu male ceremonial life and access to cultural knowledge.

In the main, Yolŋu parents and guardian kin have opted to minimise their children’s involvement with suburban schools, especially in the early years when schooling competes with Yolŋu parents and wider kin for the socialisation of children. In later childhood, when their children’s socialisation the Yolŋu way has been confirmed in Yolŋu social contexts in Darwin and by sending children to live with kin and participate in ceremonial life in remote communities, Yolŋu parents may then have the confidence to send their children to suburban schools, particularly for them to complete their schooling at boarding colleges and high schools in Darwin.

While it is sometimes necessary for Yolŋu to return to remote communities to fulfil obligations in kinship and in ceremony, it is also possible for them to fulfil some of their responsibilities in social and ceremonial life in Darwin. For Yolŋu, this is crucial to their integration in the city as it allows them to develop social and ceremonial solidarities and to discharge some of their cultural obligations to remote-dwelling kin, without the necessity of constantly returning to remote communities. For example, Yolŋu who are
already established in town, whether on campus, in hostels, suburban housing or in drinking camps are obliged to help kin who are visiting town in need of familial services in a strange place.

In particular, Yolŋu are obliged to "keep company" in good times and in bad, especially in times of sickness and distress. Because seriously ill Yolŋu are often transferred to the public hospital in Darwin, urban-dwelling Yolŋu have many opportunities to visit their sick kin in hospital and to help and to house the support group of kin who accompany the patient to town. At the same time, they may also be helping and housing other kin who have more light-hearted purposes in the city.

Yolŋu households in the suburbs expand and contract along familial lines and according to kinship obligations, rather than merely because the Yolŋu are unfamiliar with urban ways or oppose Balanda norms of the family unit and housing regulations. In hosting and housing kin to the point of household malfunction, Yolŋu do not carelessly subvert urban housing regulations. Rather, they help and house kin as agents of a familial system of nurturance, largely in default of alternatives in housing and of other urban services of care.

While Yolŋu urban households reflect social and marital change, as evident in Yolŋu monogamous marriages, inter-ethnic 'de facto' unions, and Yolŋu women's matrifocal family units, even so they are still shaped by more culturally distinct familial forms. When Yolŋu households in the suburbs extend beyond the nuclear family unit contrary to tenancy agreements, they do so according to Yolŋu concepts of "the families", and they are shaped by: relations of kinship and affinity, descent from an apical ancestor, polygynous family forms in present and previous generations, laterally extended sibling-cousin sets and by classificatory kinship.

Another very significant aspect of Yolŋu social organisation and cultural life in Darwin is evident when Yolŋu come together after a death within kinship networks which span urban and remote-dwelling kin. Yolŋu perform mortuary rituals to "smoke" suburban houses associated with the death of kin and to "farewell the coffin plane" as they start the ritual dimensions of the homeward journey of deceased kin for funeral ceremonies and burial in remote communities. Yolŋu organise these dimensions of wider group solidarity and of ceremonial life in the city in order to adjust to government interventions and the agencies of the hospital and coroner at the time of death. Yolŋu ensure that their dead are repatriated "both-ways", physically and spiritually, according to
Chapter 11. Conclusions

Yolŋu and Balanda systems of care and control.

For the time being, government policies and bureaucratic schemes will continue to bring the seriously ill and the dead to Darwin and to repatriate patients and the deceased to remote communities. While this pattern of movement and of intervention continues, Yolŋu will no doubt continue to hold mortuary rituals in Darwin to start the spiritual homeward journey of their dead. This is crucial to urban-dwelling Yolŋu as they are able, to some extent, to maintain their social and ceremonial obligations even as they live and in some cases work in the city.

The residential campus at Nungalinya College provides limited means and a base for Yolŋu, who live dispersed throughout the city, to gather together, especially in times of anxiety and grief, to organise for mortuary rituals in Darwin. Yolŋu who are staff and students at the College are in a position to form an emergent interface between the family, church and state in the management of death among the Yolŋu. They provide the urban hub of Yolŋu lines of communication, the core of the limited gathering of the bāpurru (clan group for ceremonies) and typically the leadership for Yolŋu mortuary rituals held in Darwin.

In their own remote communities, the Yolŋu have begun to develop a more contractual relationship between Yolŋu clan families and the church and state in local church, local government and local community services. Yolŋu men, and to a lesser extent Yolŋu women, who have come to represent wider Yolŋu interests in Darwin and beyond, have mainly done so living based in remote communities and representing remote communities and constituencies via business trips to town. Remote-dwelling Yolŋu, in the main, have not been well placed to represent the needs of Yolŋu who have transient purposes in the city, have settled in the suburbs and those who are itinerant and living on the urban fringe. The few Yolŋu who hold paid employment positions in church and secular contexts in the city, while better placed than remote-dwelling kin to understand Yolŋu needs and interests in Darwin, are also mainly employed to represent Yolŋu interests in remote communities.

To date, there have been few opportunities for Yolŋu to represent their own people as they transit through Darwin, settle in the suburbs and camp on the urban fringe. Yolŋu have not substantially penetrated Aboriginal sector employment or Aboriginal liaison in mainstream, government contexts of employment such as urban housing, health and education services. In their own remote communities, where Yolŋu can "speak for
ourselves" and "work for the families", while acting as agents both of a familial system of governance and of external government, they have gone some way towards a more contractual relationship between Yolŋu clan-families and government services and bureaucracies. They are largely denied similar opportunities in the city and hence more balanced relations between Yolŋu and Balanda in Darwin.

Yolŋu women who are used to representing family and wider community needs in local community services have already gained experience in bilingual and cross-cultural contexts. Yolŋu teachers, linguists, adult educators, health workers and the like are at the forefront of interaction between the family and wider kinship community and local agencies of government. When they move to Darwin for various and often compelling reasons, Yolŋu women find that they cannot readily transfer within employment or secure similar employment in Darwin, even though their bilingual, bicultural skills and cross-cultural experience could be put to good use in urban community services. This is a missed opportunity for Yolŋu in Darwin and for urban administrators alike. For many Yolŋu people experience difficulty in communicating their needs and purposes in the city and therefore in satisfactorily gaining access to the very services which led them to Darwin.

In some circumstances, Yolŋu women have moved to the city to advance their non-Yolŋu, typically Balanda husband's employment prospects only to find that it has been at the expense of their own employment continuity. The policy to Aboriginalise the local workforce and the local community employment context make it difficult for Yolŋu women's non-Yolŋu husbands to obtain suitable employment and develop employment careers in remote communities. On the other hand, the awkward integration of remote and urban community services and the lack of integration of remote and urban structures of employment results in penalising Yolŋu women, who have to drop out of employment when they migrate to Darwin in order to further their non-Yolŋu husbands' paid employment careers. Yolŋu women tend to be structurally excluded from urban employment opportunities and contexts, while their non-Yolŋu husbands have fewer employment opportunities in remote communities and under the policy to Aboriginalise the local workforce and, to an extent, subject to a familial disposition of jobs.

The powers of Aboriginal community leaders and town councils to permit or prohibit strangers and alcohol within remote communities can also be used to effectively exclude Yolŋu women whose non-Yolŋu sexual-marital partners are not welcome in
Yolŋu communities and clan lands. Yolŋu men and women who want to drink alcohol must do so in urban centres and in some areas on the fringe of Yolŋu communities and clan lands. Yolŋu nevertheless try to "watch out for" and to an extent "look after" their kin who have detoured indefinitely into the alcohol drinking scene in Darwin and Nhulunbuy. In such circumstances where a familial system of care and control has little success on the living Yolŋu still reclaim their derelict dead for funeral ceremonies and burial among kin and in clan lands.

11.3 Present situation and future trends.

The dynamics of Yolŋu mobility between remote communities and Darwin are shaped by the combination of institutional schemes, personal decisions and familial factors. This movement has now taken on a self-generating momentum including the chain-migration effect. Sufficient Yolŋu individuals and family groups have settled in Darwin to provide a kin-based resource in the city, thereby promoting and providing for more kin to move to Darwin for transient and more long-term purposes.

Moreover, recent medical and health department reports (Munoz, Powers & Matthews 1992; Plant, Condon & Durling 1995; Rubin and Walker 1995) suggest that the high rates of Aboriginal morbidity and mortality among remote-dwelling Aboriginal people and especially among women and children will be addressed in large part by increased hospital admissions and hospital based services. In the Northern Territory and other parts of Australia, health care strategies continue to rely heavily upon Aboriginal patients moving to urban hospitals and health services. Despite recommendations to this effect, there has been no fundamental turn around in policy whereby better, more comprehensive health services might be delivered in Aboriginal remote communities, thereby tackling Aboriginal health issues in context, in the early rather than later part of the disease cycle, more by prevention than cure and in remote communities rather than in urban hospitals.

My data suggest that medical related transience is likely to become health related migration. The urban institutions involved, namely hospital, hostel and housing authorities, have already put in place measures whereby remote-dwelling Aboriginal people such as the Yolŋu might slide from transient into long-term, and permanent residence in Darwin. For example, there are procedures for medical and welfare referrals whereby remote-dwelling Aboriginal people are able to bypass the normal procedures
and processing time to obtain public rental housing from the Housing Commission. Other measures are more a matter of turning a blind eye to the long-term residence of women and children and married, family groups in Aboriginal hostel accommodation, which by design was meant for Aboriginal people who have transient purposes in the city.

The schemes to move remote-dwelling Aboriginal people to Darwin and to accommodate them there for the duration of their medical treatments have not taken full account of the cultural imperative felt by some Aboriginal groups, including the Yolŋu, to "keep company" with their sick. Many more kin accompany Yolŋu patients to Darwin than are institutionally moved and accounted for and urban-dwelling kin have to host and house them. Moreover, there is the personal and kinship dynamic and present evidence reveals that when Yolŋu women and family groups become familiar with urban hospital based services and with urban housing, they have more confidence and motivation to move to and settle in Darwin. They come without institutionally arranged travel and accommodation and therefore rely more exclusively on kinship help and housing in the city.

As hospital in-patient and out-patient services and health related movements have been to date the major institutional engine driving the movement of Yolŋu women, children and family groups to Darwin, it can be predicted that Yolŋu will continue to move to Darwin to hospital and for health related purposes, most probably at an expanded and accelerated rate.

While medical priorities are set to increase the volume of Aboriginal women, children and family groups moving from remote communities to and settling in urban centres and the capital, there are other trends of a similar but contrary nature. For example, Aboriginal teacher education and vocational training strategies under the Remote Area Tertiary Education (RATE) program operate according to a de-centralised model. Batchelor College has reversed its former emphasis on Aboriginal students moving from remote communities via Darwin to study on-campus at Batchelor, in favour of inservice training, distance education and mentor-student contact time in remote Aboriginal communities and to an extent in urban regional centres.

This turn around was a result of a re-appraisal of the strategies of Batchelor College and the combined weight of opinion of white educationalists and Aboriginal community leaders that movement from remote communities and lengthy stays on campus had ambiguous educational results and disrupted Aboriginal students' marital and
family lives and their wider responsibilities, for example in kinship and ceremony.

While the number of Aboriginal students and trainees has risen, the volume of movement and length of stay on campus at Batchelor has decreased in recent years. The Batchelor-Darwin route, whereby a small but nonetheless significant number of remote-dwelling Aboriginal people, including Yölju women, detoured indefinitely into Darwin and often into inter-ethnic liaisons and marriages, has largely been contained although not closed. Even so, Yölju women can be expected, in the foreseeable future at least, to continue to seek marital choice and autonomy from marriage and more opportunities in Darwin, but the vocational-training scheme of movement has been largely reversed and is no longer a predictable route for Yölju women to move to Darwin.

Other educational schemes continue to bring remote-dwelling Aboriginal people to Darwin and there has been an expansion and acceleration of this process under Commonwealth government initiatives, particularly since the One Nation strategies implemented in the first half of the 1990s. Federal funding under the Abstudy scheme and Department of Employment, Education and Training (DEET) provide Aboriginal families with the means to send their children, often by air travel, to secondary boarding schools in Darwin or to stay in kinship households and attend suburban high-schools as day scholars. Private schools have welcomed government funding via capital grants and ongoing schemes which are designed to improve the access of all remote-dwelling students, and particularly Aboriginal students, to better schooling. As a result, private school boarding and teaching facilities in Darwin are being expanded, and increased enrolments of Aboriginal students from remote communities, including the Yölju, are anticipated.

Similarly, small numbers of Aboriginal students from remote communities have for some time been enrolling in courses at the Northern Territory University and particularly in the Faculty of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, but success measured in retention rates and study outcomes has been ambiguous. Aboriginal students' travel to the city and accommodation in Darwin are largely funded by Commonwealth monies such as Abstudy and DEET and sometimes in connection with employment in Aboriginal agencies and Territory government departments. These students from remote communities typically stay in Aboriginal hostels and in kin-based households in the suburbs rather than in residence on campus. The Yölju seem to be grasping these more recent openings to further and better the Western dimensions of their education in
Chapter 11. Conclusions

Darwin. If outcomes are successful from a Yolŋu familial rather than strictly an academic perspective, Yolŋu will progressively seek more educational opportunities in the city. Urban-dwelling kin will be expected to house and to chaperone them, largely in default of suitable alternatives.

While the institutionalised movements of remote-dwelling Aboriginal people to urban centres and in particular of Yolŋu to Darwin are designed to be strictly circular and well controlled, urban accommodation and housing services have been struggling to keep pace. Although the Aboriginal Hostels were primarily set up to provide transient accommodation, to varying extents and for various social, welfare, educational and medical reasons all have come to provide some long-term accommodation, thereby decreasing rooms available for Aborigines who have short-term purposes in the city. On the other hand, the Housing Commission is geared to provide long-term and permanent rental housing by due processes of application, wait and allocation of housing. The Housing Commission has responded to the urgency of medical and welfare referrals for Aboriginal family groups from remote communities to obtain emergency and out-of-turn (OOT) housing, but again not so much by an expansion of public housing allocated to Aboriginal clients as priority allocation of existing housing stock. In this case, it is permanent housing which is being directed into emergency accommodation purposes for Aboriginal family groups from out-of-town.

The transient accommodation and permanent housing situation in Darwin has not been geared to keep pace with the volume of remote-dwelling Aboriginal people, including the Yolŋu, who are currently and can be expected in the foreseeable future, to be moving to and settling in Darwin for various purposes. In the meantime, Yolŋu who are relatively settled in Darwin are obliged to help and house kin who are itinerant in the city, those who have transient purposes in town and others who are waiting for urban housing in their own right. They have to provide a kinship service to host and house kin who have various purposes in Darwin, often as incompatible as keeping company with sick kin and going on a drinking binge. In consequence, the viability of already established households is put at risk, not simply because Yolŋu who are "sitting down" in Darwin provide a familial service of care but also largely in default of appropriate alternatives in housing and of care.
Appendix I. Yolŋu and AHL Hostels, Darwin 1993.

I have organised the data obtained from fortnightly registration forms at Silas Roberts, Galawu, and Daisy Yarmirr hostels in 1993 into approximate monthly intervals (2 x fortnight) and under the following three categories: the number and percentage of Yolŋu registered guests compared with the total of all guests registered (Total); Yolŋu women and children as a number and a percentage of all women and children (W & C); and Yolŋu registrants as a number and a percentage of all guests who were registered under the Patient Assisted Travel Scheme (PATS) (see Tables 1, 2. & 3).

Silas Roberts Hostel.

During 1993, at Silas Roberts Hostel the Yolŋu ranged from a maximum of 53 persons or 38.69% in the period ending 7/8/93, to a minimum of 22 or 16.67% of registered guests in the period ending 30/10/93. Yolŋu women and children (W & C) ranged from 50 guests or 36.50% to 20 or 15.5% of all guests registered in the same two periods. Medical transients under the Patient Assisted Travel Scheme (PATS) recorded an overall maximum of 9 persons or 6.67% of registrations in the period ending 12/6/93 and a Yolŋu maximum of 4 PATS or 3.67% of guests registered in the period ending 20/3/93 (see Table 1). The average Yolŋu occupancy at Silas Roberts hostel during 1993 is shown as follows (see Chart 1).

Chart 1. Average Yolŋu occupancy at Silas Roberts Hostel, 1993.

Yolŋu averaged 37 persons and 28.81% of registered guests at Silas Roberts Hostel, 33 women and children (25.27%) and 1 person (1.10%) of PATS registered guests. Silas Roberts Hostel is designated as transient and family accommodation and while PATS registrants are accepted, Silas Roberts Hostel does not specialise in medical transience.
Table 1. Silas Robert Hostels, 1993.

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Galawu Hostel.

At Galawu Hostel in 1993, Yolŋu ranged from a low of 32 registered guests or 32.99% of occupancy in the period ending 20/2/93, to a high of 101 guests or 73.19% of all those registered during the period ending 7/8/93. The occupancy rates of Yolŋu women and children (W & C) were also lowest at 26 persons (26.80%) and highest at 87 persons (63.04%) in the same two periods. The actual number and percentage of medical transients registered under the PATS scheme was relatively small, with an overall peak of 9 individuals at 7.14% of occupancy in the period ending 15/5/93 and a Yolŋu peak of 7 PATS registrants at 6.36% of total registrations during the period ending 12/6/93. In the pre Christmas period, Yolŋu comprised a percentage high of 79.01% of all registered guests during the period ending 25/12/93 (see Table 2). The average occupancy rates of Yolŋu at Galawu Hostel are set out below (see Chart 2).


Yolŋu averaged 61 persons and 55.36% of registered guests at Galawu Hostel in 1993, 53 women and children (47.81%) and 3 persons (2.63%) of PATS registered guests. Yolŋu registrations at Galawu reflect the strong association which Yolŋu have with this particular hostel. Again PATS registrations were relatively insignificant compared with Daisy Yarnirr Hostel.
Table 2. Galawu Hostel, 1993.

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<td>7.31</td>
<td>5.10</td>
<td>4.69</td>
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</table>
Daisy Yarmirr Hostel.

During 1993 at Daisy Yarmirr, the hostel nearest to the hospital and most geared to medical transience, Yolŋu occupancy peaked at 18 registered guests or 16.36% of all guests in the period ending 15/5/93. In the same period, Yolŋu women and children (W & C) made up 11 persons or 10% of registrations. In two consecutive fortnights ending 4/9/93 and 2/10/93 there were no Yolŋu identified as registered guests. Yolŋu PATS transients peaked at 13 persons and 11.82% of the total number of registered guests in the period ending 15/5/93 (see Table 3). The average occupancy of Yolŋu at Daisy Yarmirr Hostel during 1993 is illustrated as follows (see Chart 3).


Yolŋu averaged seven persons or 5.10% of all registered guests, five women and children or 3.29%, and five PATS or 3.32% of registered guests at Daisy Yarmirr Hostel in 1993. Yolŋu used Daisy Yarmirr hostel predominantly for medical transience rather than for more independent and longer-term purposes in the city.

In my 1993 figures for Yolŋu registrations at Daisy Yarmirr, there was a marked predominance of Yolŋu from the two most easterly communities of Gapuwiyak and Yirrkala, no doubt because Yolŋu from the three major communities of Galiwin’ku, Milingimbi and Ramingining are familiar with and prefer to use the other two AHL hostels and the Bagot Aboriginal community when they come to Darwin for transient purposes (see Table 4).
Table 4. Yolŋu by previous address at Daisy Yarmirr Hostel, 1993.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Gove</th>
<th>Yirrkala</th>
<th>Gapuwiyak</th>
<th>Galiwin'ku</th>
<th>Milingimbi</th>
<th>Ramingining</th>
<th>Total</th>
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</thead>
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<td>31</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td>4.21%</td>
<td>32.63%</td>
<td>33.68%</td>
<td>7.37%</td>
<td>10.53%</td>
<td>11.58%</td>
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</table>

During 1993, 32 Yolŋu from Gapuwiyak registered at Daisy Yarmirr and they comprised 34% of all likely Yolŋu registrations from the northeast Arnhem Region. There were 31 (33%) from Yirrkala. Ramingining Yolŋu were the next most numerous at 11 persons (12%), while there were 10 Yolŋu (11%) from Milingimbi and 7 from Galiwin'ku at 7% of total Yolŋu registrations. People whose names suggested they were Yolŋu, and who were registered as from Gove, were included even though they were not positively identified as Yolŋu, and they numbered 4 persons and 4% of the total.
Appendix II. Yolŋu and the Housing Commission, Darwin 1993.

Table 5 is a record of actual Yolŋu households in Darwin and Palmerston in 1993 and of their composition and income base according to the tenancy agreement then current. The dates for the allocation, and in one case subsequent re-allocation of housing, are shown in the column on the extreme left; followed by the female, child and male (F/C/M) composition of original tenants; the community of origin of the tenants; prior residence in Darwin and whether a referral for Out-of-Turn (OOT) housing applied; whether the householder was female or male. The right hand column indicates the income status of the household, whether based on that of one or more supporting parent pensions (PP), invalid pension (IP), aged pension (AP), unemployment benefits (UB) or on an employment income (EI).

Of the fourteen Yolŋu householders who held Housing Commission housing in 1993, 10 were females and four were males. Nine of the female headed households were based on pension incomes, predominantly supporting parent pensions, and only one female householder had an employed income. At the same time, of the 4 males as head of Yolŋu households, 2 had employed incomes, 1 received an invalid pension and 1 was on unemployment benefits. Of these, one was a Yolŋu male householder with an employed income and another was a Yolŋu man, who had been on the Community Development and Employment Program (CDEP) in his own community and went on unemployment benefits when he and his wife and children obtained a Housing Commission house in Darwin. Two male householders were non-Yolŋu 'de facto' spouses of Yolŋu women and one of these had an employed income and the other received an invalid pension. Four of the fourteen households were obtained by Out-of-Turn procedures based on medical referral (see Table 5).

Table 6 is organised in much the same way as Table 5, except that in the first column there is no date of housing allocation but rather an indication of whether the application was pending or terminated. The column for previous address and housing referral gives some indication of the circumstances in which Yolŋu were living when they applied for Housing Commission housing. For example, they were living at the time in Darwin, with family, in Aboriginal hostels (AHL), in Housing Commission (HC) housing held by kin, at the Bagot Aboriginal community, Christian Outreach Centre (COC), Darwin Aboriginal Women's Shelter (DAWS) and on the beach and in the "long grass" (camp). Those indicated as requesting housing included 20 women, 67 children and nine men and where referral procedures were initiated, these included paediatric, medical and social referral (see Table 6).

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<th>Date</th>
<th>Original Tenants</th>
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<th>Previous Address &amp; Comments</th>
<th>Head of House</th>
<th>Income Status</th>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<td>PP</td>
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bala', shelter, shade, house.
bambay, blind, ext. invisible, term used by a brother to address his sister; syn. wakingu.
bapa mukul, father's sister.
bapa, father.
bapurre, clan group (so described at funeral ceremonies).
baru, crocodile.
bath, dilly bag.
bilm, clapsticks.
birrimbirr, soul, spirit which goes to totemic site.
buku-lup, cleansing ceremony, end part of mourning.
bul'manydji, shark.
bundurr, family name, clan name, surname.
buggul, ceremony, ceremonial dancing.
burala, bird, Darter.
burralala, cyclone.
buthalak, yellow ochre.
card-djam, lit. working at cards, card gambling.
dalkarra, dalkarramirri, leaders of Yirritja ceremonies.
darpa, snake, King Brown, Western Brown snake.
dhaggi, tree and its edible fruit, Plachonia careya.
dharpi', circumcision ceremony.
Dhuvu, moiety.
dhuway, father's sister's child, husband category.
dirramu, man, male.
Djajambu, hollow log ceremony, part of mortuary ceremonies.
djama, work.
djamarrkulji, children.
Djambarrpuygu, clan name.
diritidi, bird, Kingfisher.
Djuguwan, ceremonial complex including circumcision rituals and funeral ceremonies.
gadaku, boy child, uncircumcised male.
galay, mother's brother's child, wife category.
galka', sorcery.
gamunugu', white clay.
gandayala, species of kangaroo.
garkuyi, fish, mullet.
Galpu, clan name.
gathu, man's child, father's child.
giyapara, mangrove tree.
gudirri, tree, Eucalyptus (confertiflora & bleeseri).
gulikulimirr, feathered, fluffy.
Gunapipi, regional ceremonies, fertility ceremonies.
gunda, stone, stones in the hearth, ext. minerals.
gupurr, tree, white Gum.
Gupapuygu-Birrkili, clan aggregate name.
Gupapuygu-Daygurrgurr, clan aggregate name.
gurrung, avoidance relationship, son-in-law.
gurruru, relationship, kinship.
gutharra, daughter's child, sister's daughter's child.
lajin', mangrove worm.
Liyagalawumirr, clan name.
liya-lup, ritual washing.
lumbalumba, emu.
Glossary

*mabarn*, traditional healer, central-west Australia.

*madayin*', sacred, secret; sacred object(s); sacred ceremony.

*māl*, subsection.

*mālu*', Dhuwa word for father.

*manbiri*, eel tailed cat fish.

*man'tjarr*, (lit. leaves), cleansing ceremony after a death.

*manikay*, song, ceremonial singing.

*manymak*, good, OK.

*maranydjal*, stingray.

*mari*, trouble, arguing, fighting.

*māri*, mother's mother, mother's mother's brother, MM, MMB.

*māri-gutharra*, grandparent-granchild; mother's mother, mother's mother's brother-daughter's child, sister's daughter's child.

*marridju*, traditional healer, Western Arnhem Land.

*marr*, spiritual power.

*marratja*, grand-child, son's child.

*marrma*', two.

*marrggitj*, traditional healer.

*marrju*', northern brush tail possum.

*maypaj*, shellfish.

*miku*, red ochre.

*minhala*, freshwater tortoise, snake necked tortoise.

*miny'tji*, painted design.

*mirriri*, ritual violence, avoidance relationship between sister and brother.

*miyalk*, woman, female.

*miyapunu*, sea turtle.

*mokuy*, ghost, wandering spirit.

*momu*, father's mother.

*momu-gaminyarr*, father's mother-son's child reciprocals.

*mori*', Yirritja word for father.

*mulunda*, bird, wood swallow.

*mumalkur*, mother's mother's brother's wife, mother's mother's brother's daughter, mother-in-law's mother; an avoidance relation.

*gamma*', affectionate term for mother, mummy.

*nāndi*, mother.

*nāniti*, alcohol, alcohol-drinking.

*napipi*, mother's brother.

*gathi*, mother's father.

*gathirraminyarr*, mother's father-grandchild (MFDC-FMSC).

*patili*, red tailed, black cockatoo.

*nyirrk*, bird, sulphur crested white cockatoo.

*nyoka*, crab, mud crab.

*riggitj*, place sacred to particular people.

*rom*, culture, law, custom.

*rumaru'mukul*, wife's mother.

*wāk*, bird, Torresian crow.

*wakingu*, without kin; syn. *bambay*.

*wakuru*, mother's child.

*wągara*, camp, home, household.

*wągura*, at home.

*Waparr*, totemic ancestors.

*warragaj*, cycad palm.
Glossary

Warramiri, clan name.
wäwa, brother.
weŋi, wallaby.
wurrapa, everybody.
wurrpaŋ, bird, emu.
yaka, no.
yāku, name
yapa, sister.
yawirriny', initiated boys, youths, bachelors.
yindi', big.
Yirritja, moiety.
Yolŋu, black people, Aborigines of N.E. Arnhem Land.
Yolŋu matha, lit. Yolŋu tongue, Yolŋu language(s).
Yolŋu yāku, Yolŋu names.
yothu, child, baby.
yukuyuku, younger sibling.

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