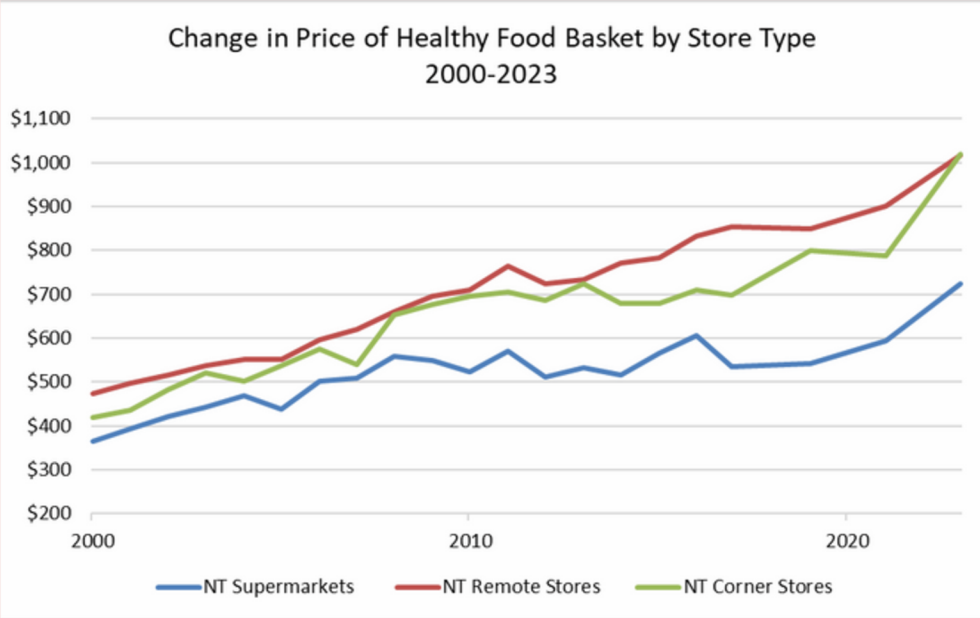


FACT SHEET

Cost of Food in the Northern Territory


The cost of food has been rising at a faster rate in recent years, particularly in remote areas.

The Market Basket Survey, run by NT Health, has been measuring the cost of a basket of food since 2000. The healthy food basket is based on the Australian Dietary Guidelines and feeds a family of six for a fortnight. The data collected shows the increasing cost of food overall, and the widening gap in cost between remote stores and district centre supermarkets.



Across the NT, the average cost of a healthy food basket is 40% more in remote stores than in district centre supermarkets.

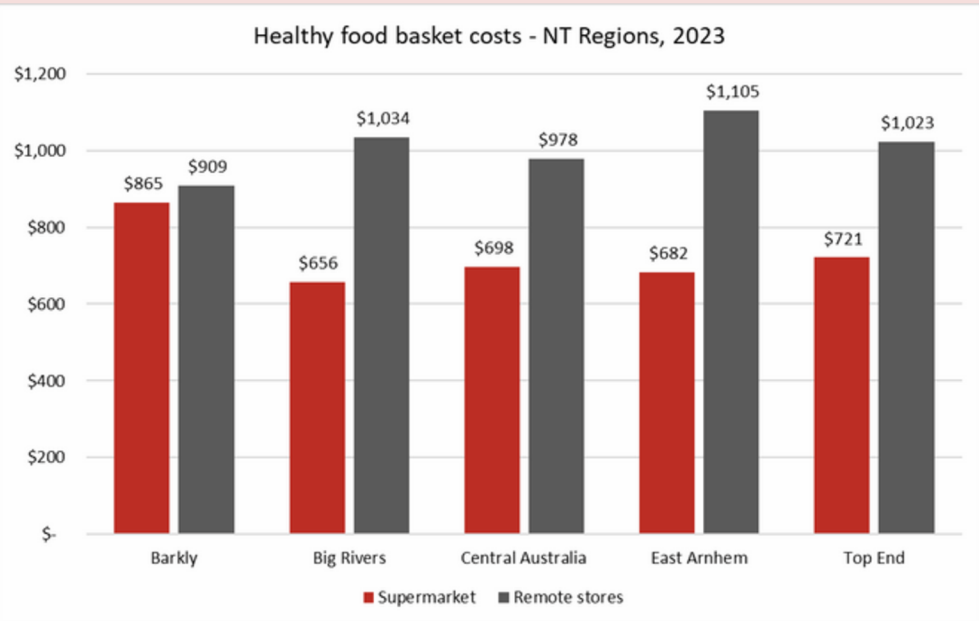
In remote stores, between 2021 and 2023 the average cost of a healthy food basket has increased by 13%. In district centre supermarkets it has increased by 22%.



Remote:
\$1,017



Supermarket:
\$724



Across all regions of the NT, food is more expensive in remote stores than supermarkets in district centres.

In Barkly, this gap is narrowest with a \$44 difference between remote store and supermarket costs when measured in 2023.

East Arnhem has the highest costs with a healthy basket costing \$1,105 at remote stores, this is \$423 more expensive than the same basket would be at a supermarket in the region.

FACT SHEET

Cost of Food in the Northern Territory

Ensuring healthy food is affordable can be an important public health strategy. When healthy food is cheaper than other options, it can enable and incentivise healthy eating.



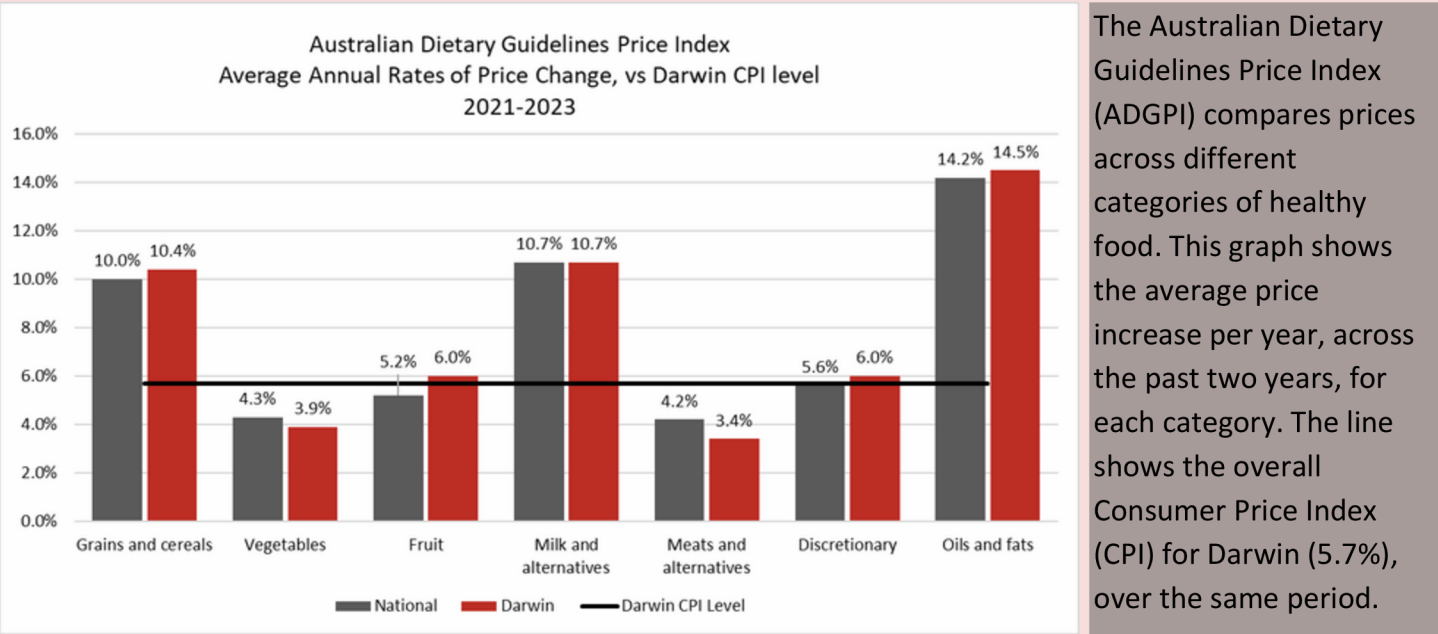
18%
less in supermarkets
(\$724 compared to \$880)



8%
less in remote stores
(\$1,017 compared to \$1,108)

While a healthy food basket was cheaper than a current food basket in all store types in 2023, it was significantly cheaper in district centre supermarkets. This means the incentive to purchase healthy food is less in remote stores.

Note: A Current Food Basket also feeds a family of six for a fortnight but includes less vegetables, more items considered ‘discretionary’ such as biscuits, and more takeaway items than the Healthy Food Basket. [Reference 2]



Across most categories, prices in Darwin have been changing at a similar rate to national averages or slightly lower. For the categories of Grains and Cereals, Fruit, Discretionary, and Oils and Fats, Darwin’s ADGPI is higher than the national average. Of real concern is that prices for these ADG categories (in Darwin and nationally) are also rising significantly faster than the overall CPI for Darwin of 5.7%. It is a concern when prices of healthy food are rising well above the general CPI/inflation rate as it means they are increasing at a faster rate than general costs – putting pressure on household incomes, which are unlikely to keep pace with rising costs. This is especially true for lower income households, where any price increases hits harder.

[Reference 3]

FACT SHEET

Cost of Food in the Northern Territory

The social service sector plays a vital role in supporting people experiencing food insecurity. But demand often exceeds what they can provide.

Case Study - Foodbank

Foodbank provides food relief to those in need across the Northern Territory through their Food Hubs in Yarrowonga and Alice Springs and via the agencies and schools they supply. Each month they provide:



60,000
kilograms of food



120,000
meals equivalent

Through their Hunger Map, Foodbank estimates that:

38% of Territorians experienced severe food insecurity in the 2023-24 year.

1.31 million kilograms of food are needed to meet current levels of demand.

[Reference 4]

Case Study - Anglicare

Anglicare NT provides Emergency Relief (ER) through their programs and offices across Darwin, Palmerston, Katherine and Nhulunbuy, including their youth and financial inclusion programs. ER is provided in the form of food vouchers, either for supermarkets or other food services including charities.



2577 instances of ER were provided in the 2023-24 financial year.

This is an increase of almost 8% from the previous year (2022-23) where 2388 instances of ER were provided.

Anglicare NT estimate that **more than double** this amount of food vouchers would be needed to meet demand.

[Reference 5]

Recommendations

For the Federal Government:

- Raise the base rate of Job Seeker and other working age income support payments to at least \$82 a day, to support people to afford the basic costs of living.
- Increase the Remote Area Allowance for those on income support payments to appropriately account for the higher cost of living in remote areas and set appropriate ongoing indexing arrangements.
- Implement the National Strategy for Food Security in Remote Indigenous Communities with sustained commitment to real partnership with communities and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations.

For the NT Government:

- Ensure housing in remote communities is fit for purpose and has adequate food preparation facilities to support safe food storage and preparation. This includes ensuring reliable power supply, safe and palatable water and culturally responsive housing.
- Invest in the sustainability of the community services sector to ensure they can provide important support to Territorians experiencing food insecurity, including by:
 - Removing the efficiency dividend and budget repair measure from sector funding agreements.
 - Developing appropriate indexation measures to ensure funding reflects real cost of delivering services.

References

1. Northern Territory Government NT Health, 2024, NT Market Basket Survey 2023.
2. As above.
3. Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) 2023, Consumer Price Index, Australia, December 2023, Australian Dietary Guidelines Price Indexes – Australia, Australian Bureau of Statistics, Canberra, ACT.
4. Figures provided by Foodbank NT, October 2024. Food security figures derived from the Foodbank Hunger Map 2023-24.
5. Figures provided by Anglicare NT, October 2024.