

## **Community mapping of food access and food services in rural NSW communities: Many Rivers Diabetes Prevention Project**

**Janine Cochrane**, Biripi Aboriginal Medical Service, **Stephen Cochrane**, **Josephine Gwynn**, University of Newcastle, **Nicole Turner**, Durri Aboriginal Medical Service

During 2007 the Many Rivers Diabetes Prevention Project undertook an extensive community mapping project in three rural regions of New South Wales: Taree, Kempsey and the Lower Hunter. This project involved locating and categorising all food and physical activity services/facilities in these communities. These services/facilities were then mapped electronically for each of the participating areas using Map-Info.

Community focus groups were conducted following the completion of the mapping exercise and were held in each of the areas. The aim of these focus groups was to discuss barriers to food and physical activity services and strategies both current and proposed to address issues raised. Between 40 to 50 people attended the focus groups in each area from a wide range of organisations, including Aboriginal organisations and communities. At least 50% of participants in each area were Aboriginal people from the local community.

This paper presents the methods and results of both the community mapping and focus groups in relation to food access issues in rural communities (addressing the key NATSINSAP action area of food supply in rural and remote communities).

Inferences about access to food services will be drawn from the mapping exercise, which highlights issues regarding the location of and types of food services available to Aboriginal communities. Data from the focus group transcript analysis will be presented, and includes themes relating to transport and expense as well as social issues and the ready availability of 'fast foods'. Both sets of data have guided the development of programs to be offered to the participating communities by the Many Rivers project. These programs are aimed at improving access to and consumption of healthy foods in rural communities, and will be described.