

Food security in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in remote Australia during the COVID-19 pandemic: An analysis of print news media and press releases

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Abstract

Objective: This article aims to examine the framing of the issue of food security in very remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in print media and press releases during the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020.

Methods: Newspaper articles were identified following a systematic search of the Factiva database, and press releases were identified from manual search of key stakeholder websites from January to June 2020 and analysed using a combined adapted framework of the Bacchi's *What's the Problem Represented to be? Framework* and the *Narrative Policy Framework*.

Results: A food delivery "problem" dominated representations in press releases, and food supply at store level had prominence in print media. Both presented the cause of food insecurity as a singular, identifiable point in time, framed the issue as one of helplessness and lack of control, and proposed policy action.

Conclusions: The issue of food security was represented in the media as a simple issue requiring an immediate fix, as opposed to a complex issue requiring a systems-level and sustained policy response.

Implications for public health: This study will help to guide future media dialogue to impact on both immediate and longer-term solutions to food insecurity in very remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in Australia.

Key words: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, COVID-19, food security, food supply, media, remote communities

Introduction

The media can shape people's attitudes and beliefs towards an issue and in turn influence policy actions by providing awareness, accessibility, and engagement of the public and policymakers.^{1,2} The relationship between policymaking and news media is dynamic, with increased policy attention coinciding with increased media attention on a topic.³ By manipulating the framing of an issue or promoting specific ideas, concepts, or solutions, the media can influence the emotive response of the public and policymakers

and potentially create a call to action or a sense of urgency.^{3–5} Media around an issue can also highlight relations of power, the entity benefitting and those being harmed, through the presentation of a chosen narrative.⁶

Media analysis is the process of critically analysing the content of various types of media.⁷ It has been used to understand the framing of an issue and examine the media's influence on the understanding and prominence of a topic and the policy response.^{7,8} Analysing the components of an issue that are both emphasised and silenced in the media can give insight into public perception of an issue.⁸ For

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example, obesity has previously been represented in the media as an individualised problem with corresponding individual-centric solutions. In contrast, representation of socio-economic influences on health has been limited in news media despite extensive research showing their influence on health outcomes, including obesity.^{9–11} While there is a lack of available evidence to draw conclusions on the media's influence on policymaking outcomes in the health sector,¹² it can drive policy discussion, which may impact overall policy decisions.¹² Understanding representation of issues in the media may therefore provide policy advocates insight into how policymakers' attitudes can be influenced.²

One such area where the media may influence policy decisions is food security. Food security traditionally consists of four dimensions: food availability, food access, food utilisation, and stability. It is defined as “when all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life.”¹³ Food insecurity is a constantly evolving problem, requiring a multidisciplinary approach to create effective, sustainable responses.¹⁴ The COVID-19 pandemic has threatened food security globally.¹⁵ In Australia, impacts on food security have included reductions in personal incomes and increased vulnerability of food supply chains among others.^{16,17} Lockdowns have been used to control the spread of COVID-19 but have had financial, economic, and social repercussions.¹⁸ These include a rise in stock piling of food, as seen during large-scale disasters that initially resulted in short-term supply shortages across Australia.^{18,19} This behaviour in Australia can impact “very remote” Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, where food insecurity is experienced disproportionately to the non-Indigenous Australian population.^{19–21} Food insecurity in these communities is underpinned by political and social structures of settler colonialism that continue to disadvantage Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples²² and manifest as inequities in employment and household income. Factors such as remoteness and extreme weather events also affect access and supply to healthy, nutritious, and safe food in remote communities.²³

In response to the threat of COVID-19 to food security for remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, governments and a number of organisations have put structures in place to mitigate this threat. Governmental and societal responses to the COVID-19 pandemic have revealed the magnitude of food security issues for these communities. This provides an opportunity to analyse the ways in which print media is used as a vehicle to encourage and shape response through its framing and representation of food security issues. Media in the form of press releases and print media (also referred to herein as newspaper articles) can identify impacts the food security of those living in remote communities, impacts the food security of those living in remote communities. Media efforts by organisations in the form of press releases have been found to often have no direct influence on news media outputs.²⁴ With a focus on press releases from government and peak organisations representing, or working closely with, remote communities, in addition to print media, the presentation and framing of the issue of food security gives insight into how the issue is being responded to.

We aimed to examine how the issue of food security in very remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities was framed in print media and press releases during the beginning of the COVID-19

pandemic in 2020. Knowledge gained from this study, including who is raising the problem, how it is framed, and what effects are produced by this representation, may help to inform future advocacy to improve food security in these communities.

Methods

This qualitative study examined the media representation of food security in very remote Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities during the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020.

Qualitative Study Design

Two policy analysis frameworks were combined and adapted for this media analysis: *Bacchi's What's the Problem Represented to be? Framework* (WPR) and the *Narrative Policy Framework* (NPF).^{6,25} The original WPR consists of six core questions that approach policy as a reaction to presumed problematic situations,²⁵ with questions 1–3 and 5 being addressed during data extraction. Two WPR questions were not extracted for—What is left unproblematic in this “problem” representation, and How/where this representation of the “problem” is produced, disseminated, and defended, with these questions being explored through the interpretation of data extraction. The NPF aids in analysing the role a narrative plays in influencing policy, highlighting the core assumptions, and examining power dynamics across the narrative.⁶ Our analysis used NPF principles to guide thinking around the included WPR framework questions, using a meso-level of analysis to focus on the actors, to identify how groups construct narratives around remote food security during the COVID-19 pandemic.²⁶ The frameworks were combined and adapted to apply to media articles rather than policy, following the principle that media as a narrative source puts forward representations of problems to be solved or acted upon.^{26–28}

Context

Western Australia (WA), Queensland (QLD), South Australia (SA), and the Northern Territory (NT) all have discrete Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities within them with a population made up of predominantly Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples²⁹ and very remote classification (i.e., very little accessibility to goods, services, defined using the Accessibility Remoteness Index of Australia [ARIA]).³⁰ Stores in these communities are referred to as community stores. Most commonly, these stores are the sole point of sale for food and essential goods that are freighted by air, sea, road, and rail to the stores.³¹

Identifying relevant media articles: Search strategy

Mainstream print media, found in newspapers responsible for a substantial portion of print news reporting in Australia, and press releases from key stakeholders and peak organisations seen to advocate or engage with discrete very remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, were included in the analysis.³² Press releases were included to identify the actors raising an issue and their framing of the issue.

Print Media

The search strategy, developed in the Factiva database, comprised terms for Population: [Aboriginal OR Indigenous OR Torres OR first w/ 1 Australian* OR remote w/1 communit* OR First w/1 nation*];

Table 1: Inclusion/exclusion criteria for article/release selection.

	Include	Exclude
Participant	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples living/residing very remotely in discrete communities in NT, SA, QLD and WA	All other countries' Indigenous peoples and regions within Australia Broader population of Australia Other priority groups
Intervention	Food security focus – including imported (store/restaurant/café, butcher, etc.), purchased, locally produced, locally procured foods Availability – food stock, food supply, food distribution, food transportation Access – 1. Ability to get food (food outlet trading hours, transport, etc.) 2. Affordability (a. food price, cost of living, cost of non-food items; b. income - wages, social security, superannuation, rent (anything that impacts household income) Use – consumption, factors influencing skill set/knowledge on how to use/access food, housing, storage, etc. Stability – governance structures, decision-making bodies (e.g., food supply committee) that influence food security Any of the above and referring to a health issue	Any other nutrition issues alone Broader social determinants impacting (e.g., Housing, sanitisation, healthcare systems and mental health, employment, policies impacting food supply such as stores but in urban or other areas of the state) Other nutrition, food or health issues alone for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples living remotely, or if focused on Indigenous plants or traditional foods without relation to COVID-19 correlation and remote education during the period. Referring to income without relating to food security directly
Publication type	Were published within the time period 1 st January 2020 – 30 th June 2020 Published media articles available on Factiva database Press releases from chosen organisations	Published before 1 st January 2020 or after 30 th June 2020 Media Alerts, Blogs, Newsletters or other forms of media and communications (such as social media)

NT, Northern Territory; SA, South Australia; QLD, Queensland; WA, Western Australia.

Setting: [covid* OR coronavirus OR epidemic OR pandemic];
Intervention: [food OR store* OR supplies]. A search of the electronic database, which includes the top-selling print newspapers in Australia and ensured representation of all included states and territories, was performed in June 2020 for articles published between January 1 and June 30, 2020.³² The date range was chosen to reflect the deactivation of the declaration of a Biosecurity Emergency under the *Biosecurity Act 2015*, as well as the closure of submissions to an Australian government parliamentary inquiry into food pricing and food security in remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, both ending in June 2020.^{33,34}

Articles retrieved were transferred into Endnote (version X8, Clarivate, Philadelphia, PA), and duplicates were removed. Non-duplicate articles were then screened in Covidence (Melbourne, Australia) by two independent reviewers (EvB, JB), using the full text for relevance, following the inclusion criteria outlined in Table 1. Conflicts were resolved after conversation between the two reviewers.

Press Releases

An established working group of 36 experts collaborating on food security issues for discrete very remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community stores was engaged to assess a developed list of 91 known key stakeholders and peak organisations. The websites of these organisations were manually searched (SH, May and June) using Google database (Mountain View, CA) for publicly available media releases regarding COVID-19, utilising the inclusion/exclusion criteria (Table 1). In addition, working group members shared relevant texts, allowing for validation of the search strategies.

Data extraction

Chosen sample texts of both the print media articles and press releases were analysed using the two analysis frameworks by the first author (EvB) and senior author (JB) and, following discussion with co-authors, any discrepancies in analysis were resolved. Press releases and print media articles were analysed using the combined, modified framework

(EvB, GD) (Table 2). The WPR formed the backbone of the media analysis, with questions 1–3 and 5 being considered in the analysis through the factors described in the NPF (Table 2, Supplementary Table 1). The NPF theory of characters described in a narrative (i.e., victim, hero, villain) gave the authors insight into the context that the WPR was to be applied (i.e., WPR Question 1—what is the 'problem' represented to be).²⁶ Bacchi's second question that relates to assumptions underlying the representation was explored through the NPF concept of plot narrative, which organises characters of a narrative relative to each other and highlights underlying social constructions of a policy, or in this case, media portrayal.²⁶ NPF's theory paradigm was also explored, following the notion that an audience comes to interact with a narrative with their own theories and beliefs shaping their interaction.²⁶ The third WPR question aligned with NPF's focus on evidence (what evidence is cited and for what purpose) and causal mechanism (a narrative element that emphasises relationships within the issue presented).²⁶ The WPR effects (WPR Question 5) produced by the representation were supported by NPF's elements of morals, and cost benefit, where NPF shows the conflicts within a narrative and how this is portrayed with costs and benefits.²⁶ The combined frameworks were used to allocate codes for each section of the framework, resulting in numerical data, or extract text to illustrate the code, giving qualitative data. Each article could be allocated more than one code for each part of the extraction table, for example, two or more codes could be allocated for the problem code (Table 2).

Analysis and summarisation

The completed analysis frameworks were collated and summarised by one researcher (EvB), coupled with discussions with co-authors. Numerical data were analysed descriptively using Microsoft Excel (Version 16.43, Microsoft, Washington). For parts of the framework that were only allocated one code, percentage was reported (e.g., Plot, see Table 2). For sections that were allocated multiple codes, response frequencies were reported (e.g., Problem_code, see Table 2). Text responses for the question "What effects are produced by this

Table 2: Policy analysis framework core themes.

Policy Analysis Framework	Bacchi's What's the problem represented to be? Framework ^a	Narrative Policy Framework ^b	Included Codes	Code Explanation
	Who is raising the problem? ^c	Source Victim Hero Villain	Actor_Source Actor_withproblem Actor_solution Actor_villain	Text Text Text Text
	What is the "problem" represented to be?	n/a	Problem Problem_code	Text 1 = food production 2 = food delivery 3 = food supply (outside store) 4 = food supply (e.g., stock, availability – inside store) 5 = food price 6 = food affordability 7 = food household infrastructure 8 = food use 9 = food governance (e.g., store ownership/ management) 10 = physical access (e.g., border controls, transportation to store) 11 = other (give explanation) 12 = overall food security (encompasses all without mentioning specifics)
	What presuppositions and assumptions underly the representation?	Plot narrative	Plot	0 = no plot present 1 = story of decline 2 = stymied progress 3 = change is only an illusion 4 = story of helplessness and control 5 = conspiracy 6 = blame the victim
			Plot_narrative	Text
		Theory paradigm		0 = absent 1 = social injustice 2 = self determination 3 = human right 4 = moral
	How has the representation come about?	Evidence	Evidence	0 = absent 1 = statistics 2 = observation 3 = anecdotal 4 = opinion
	What effects are produced by the representation?	Solution/moral of the story	Solution	0 = if absent 1 = moral 2 = policy 3 = self determination
			Solution_text	Text
		Cost benefit	Cost_benefit	Text

^aBacchi CL. Analysing policy : what's the problem represented to be? 1st ed. ed. Frenchs Forest, N.S.W.: Frenchs Forest, N.S.W. : Pearson; 2009.

^bShanahan EA, Jones MD, McBeth MK. How to conduct a Narrative Policy Framework study. The Social Science Journal. 2018;55(3):332–45.

^cThis question is not included in the *Bacchi's What's the problem represented to be?* Framework.

representation of the 'problem' of the WPR and characters of the NPF" were inductively coded to identify themes.

COVID-19 timeline

A timeline of events regarding the status of the pandemic in Australia, and policy decisions affecting very remote communities, was developed manually (SH) from government and stakeholder website searches, included and excluded media releases, allowing for contextualisation of issues with responses to COVID-19.

Researcher reflexivity

A researcher's socio-cultural position influences their subjective view of an issue.³⁵ Team reflexivity was therefore used to identify knowledge and values that the researchers brought to the analysis

and data interpretation and to be aware, as Bacchi advises of our own selective ways of problematising and how our research may also contribute to a created social reality.^{36,37} The team of nine researchers (two Indigenous; seven non-Indigenous) share an interest in social justice and believe that food security is a fundamental human right and that established colonial social and political structures in Australia perpetuate the social injustices and resulting health disparities experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples. The research team as a whole have in-depth knowledge and experience of remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community food and nutrition issues, bringing strength to data interpretation. The team met regularly to discuss emerging findings and interpretation of these in relation to biases and the lens through which the researchers viewed the issue.

Table 3: Included press releases by month of publication and state.

Month	National Releases	QLD releases	NT releases	SA releases	WA releases	Total Number of Press Releases
March	11	2	5	2	4	24
April	8	3	6	0	1	18
May	4	0	2	0	0	6
June	3	0	0	0	0	3
Total	26	5	13	2	5	51

QLD, Queensland; NT, Northern Territory; SA, South Australia; WA, Western Australia.

Results

COVID-19 timeline

Australia's first case of COVID-19 was confirmed on January 25, 2020 (see [Supplementary Table 2](#)). On March 12, 2020, a one-off \$750 payment to social security recipients was rolled out. On March 20, 2020, the *Biosecurity Act 2015* was operationalised to restrict access to remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities from March 26, 2020. On the April 8, 2020, the National Indigenous Australians Agency (NIAA) established the Food Security Working Group to identify solutions to food security issues faced by remote Australia, and the Standing Committee on Indigenous Affairs launched an inquiry into food pricing and food security in remote communities on May 21, 2020. On June 5, 2020, the *Biosecurity Act 2015* was eased, and travel restrictions for residents to remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities were therefore also eased. The authors note a more succinct timeline was published by the Parliament of Australia after analysis was completed.³⁸

Media analysis

Fifty-one press releases met the inclusion criteria, of which 26 releases were national, concerning all of Australia ([Table 2](#), [Supplementary Table 3](#)). The majority of included releases were published in March (n=24), with less released in April (n=18), May (n=6), and June (n=3) 2020 ([Table 3](#)). Press releases published by government were most

common (n=31 [61%]; federal government, n=16 [31%]; state and territory governments, n=12 [24%]; local governments, n=3 [6%], [Supplementary Table 3](#)). Twenty-eight newspaper articles were included in the final analysis (refer to [Figure 1](#), [Supplementary Table 5](#)).

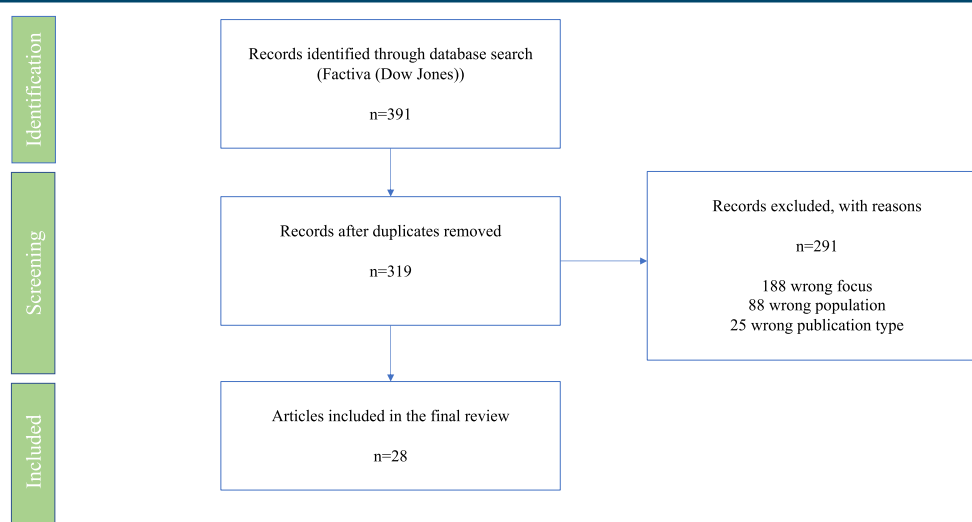
Who's raising the problem? (NPF characters)

The “problem” was raised by the government in 26 (51%) press releases (federal government, n=12 [24% of total press releases]; state and territory governments, n=14 [27%]), by Aboriginal corporations in 23 (45%) releases, and remote community stores (n=7; 14%). Nine newspaper articles (32%) presented a “problem” raised by Aboriginal corporations, seven articles (25%) highlighted a “problem” raised by the media source itself, and the government raised the “problem” in five articles (18%; local government, n=2 [7%]; federal government, n=3 [11%]).

Following the NPF concept of narrative characters, very remote communities were presented as those most impacted by the “problem” in both media types (press releases; n=41 [80%]), print media; n=14 [50%]) of the releases, with the next most impacted being the broader Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population (press releases; n=5 [10%], print media; n=3 [11%]).

The government was seen as enacting, proposing, or considering a solution in the majority of press releases (n=37 [73%]; federal, n=23 [45%]; state and territory, n=14 [27%]) and print media (n=10 [36%], federal, n=7 [25%]; state and territory, n=2 [7%]; local, n=1 [4%]).

Figure 1: Flowchart of newspaper article search results and article selection.



Aboriginal corporations such as Aboriginal Medical Services enacted, proposed, or considered a solution in 13 (25%) press releases.

COVID-19 was the entity causing the “problem” in most of the press releases (n=44, 86%), implied as causing food supply challenges across Australia. The activation of the *Biosecurity Act 2015* featured as the next most common (n=5, 10%) cause, impacting on physical access to community stores and the flexibility of those residing in remote communities to shop elsewhere. This was also seen in the included print media articles; however, the Australian government was highlighted in four print media articles (14%) for protracted inaction against high food prices and food insecurity in remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

What’s the problem represented to be? (WPR Question 1)

Food delivery was presented as the most common “problem” in press releases (n=34, 67%) with a recurring theme of restricted access to remote communities presenting food delivery logistical challenges:

"With road closures food security has become a significant issue for people out bush" – (Coles, April 24, 2020).

Food supply within the community store was represented as the “problem” in 21 (41%) press releases, whereas media articles most commonly focussed on this, including stock and availability (n=13, 46%). This was mostly related to stores failing to stock basic goods as a result of increased customer demand during the pandemic:

"Some stores are running out of fresh food three days after their weekly delivery" – (NT News, April 30, 2020).

Other newspaper article representations included restricted food delivery (n=8, 29%), limited food supply outside the store (n=6, 21%), food production (n=5, 18%), and food affordability (n=5, 18%).

What presuppositions and assumptions underlie this representation? (WPR Question 2)

Exploring the NPF plot narrative, or the social constructions of a narrative, 30 press releases presented a narrative describing helplessness and lack of control that undermined agency, mostly referring to border controls restricting access to remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and its impact on food supply chains and community access to food. Twelve (43%) media articles described a similar narrative of helplessness and lack of control, exploring the way in which panic buying in metropolitan areas affected smaller remote stores:

"With the supply chain already under pressure to meet demands from larger supermarkets, smaller stores are missing out" – (NT News, April 14, 2020).

The next most described narrative was stymied progress (press releases; n=18 [35%], media articles; n=6 [21%]), where the pandemic was seen as hindering progress to date:

"Aboriginal art centres are facing extreme financial hardship as key art markets are cancelled ... People are really worried about getting money to pay for food, and one artist feeds many family members" – (Laurie, March 20, 2020).

Most commonly, social injustice was identified as the NPF narrative content of theory paradigm in the included press releases (n=36, 71%), with the majority referring to the *Biosecurity Act 2015* inadvertently creating unfair circumstances:

"Residents in remote communities have been very patient and compliant with the restrictions but they're becoming increasingly frustrated that despite no community transmission and no active cases they are still unable to move about." ... "Enjoy the rights and freedoms that Territorians in towns and cities do, such as access to shops and services" – (The Hon Greg Hunt MP, May 27, 2020).

Morality was the most common NPF theory paradigm explored in newspaper articles (n=14, 50%), exploring actions or inactions that impact food supply, such as panic buying in metropolitan areas. Another common theory paradigm implied in print media included self-determination (including ability to practice cultural ways of life, n=9 [32%]). Two (4%) press releases presented self-determination as a theory paradigm, with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities having control of decisions impacting their lives:

[Decision to] "restrict access to Wurrumiyanga has been requested by the Traditional Owners who are concerned about protecting their elders and others who are vulnerable due to health conditions" – (Office of Township Leasing & National Indigenous Australians Agency, March 13, 2020).

How has the representation come about? (WPR Question 3)

Data extraction explored the NPF notion of shaping a narrative through the use of evidence. Thirty-three (65%) releases and 15 (54%) newspaper articles built the representation of the “problem” upon observational evidence, drawing on what the source had seen in remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. With regard to the NPF element of causal mechanism, 37 (73%) press releases and the majority of newspaper articles (n=19, 68%) described an inadvertent cause for the “problem” represented: highlighting restricted access to remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities as inadvertently affecting the delivery of food and the spread of COVID-19 impacting on factors influencing food security, respectively. Newspaper articles also proposed a mechanical cause (n=8, 29%), mostly referring to impacts on supply and demand of essential goods.

What effects are produced by this representation? (WPR Question 5)

Fifty (98%) press releases outlined a solution (NPF cost–benefit distribution) to the “problem” involving policy action, the majority proposing the guarantee of food supply and delivery to communities. Five (10%) press releases proposed a moral solution, mostly referring to panic buying in metropolitan areas. The majority of newspaper articles (n=15, 54%) also outlined policy action as a solution, suggesting both short and long-term economic interventions (n=4, 27%) such as government subsidies, charitable donations, and the setup of programs to present the opportunity for economic stability and increased independent, local food security in remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities:

"We are talking to Food Ladder ... to create food and economic security for communities otherwise reliant on aid and affected by poverty" – (Shipway, June 7, 2020).

Other proposed or instigated policies in print media included food delivery (n=4, 27%), mostly in regard to the activation of the *Biosecurity Act 2015*. Three (11%) articles implied that remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities want the right to self-determine their solutions to address food insecurity:

"Indigenous learning and kinship systems could help to shape our future in a post-COVID world. Cultivating the land and eating

seasonally has always been central to our existence" – (Glynn-McDonald, May 26, 2020).

In most press releases (n=46, 90%) and print media articles (n=15, 54%), those benefitting from the proposed solution were remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. The entity that was to bear the solution cost was mostly the government in press releases (n=39 [76%]; state and territory governments, n=12 [24%]; local governments, n=2 [4%]) as well as media articles (n=9 [32%]; federal government, n=6 [21%]; state government, n=3 [11%]). Seven (14%) press releases indicated remote community stores would bear the cost of the solution proposed, including purchasing of additional stock or reducing prices of essential items, among others, whereas this was only seen in two (7%) media articles. No included press releases or media articles gave an opposing solution, and therefore, none provided a beneficiary or cost bearer of an opposing solution.

Discussion

To the authors' knowledge, this is the first study of its kind to analyse both print media articles and press releases in order to examine the representation and framing of the issue of food security across communication mediums.

Different dominant "problem" representations were depicted in press releases and print media articles. In the analysed press releases, restricted food delivery dominated as the immediate issue impacting food insecurity in very remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities between January and June 2020, and content tended to focus on the immediate food insecurity issue faced by very remote communities and advocacy for the guarantee of food supply for very remote Australia. In contrast, the included print media focussed on the community store and its diminished capacity to stock an adequate food supply for its customers. Both however highlighted a precarious food supply, making comment that very remote communities are highly prone to adverse consequences of national food supply shocks. The stability dimension of food security involves being food secure at all times. Stability lies across all aspects of food security; access, availability, and utilisation, with changes such as weather events, natural disasters, pandemics, political, and economic factors impacting this. More shocks are likely in the future, and therefore, more sustainable responses are required for food secure communities. Few print media and press releases highlighted more sustainable responses such as local food production or policy to secure access to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander food systems to create both food and economic security for remote communities.

Food security in very remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities of Australia is a complex issue that requires a system-wide approach to sustainable responses^{39–42} and yet both press releases and print media highlighted food insecurity as an issue at a particular, identifiable point in time. The complex issue of food security in remote communities was not indicated in press releases nor print media although blame was directed to the Australian government in some print media articles for longstanding inaction against high food prices and food insecurity. As the media promotes specific ideas or concepts through the framing of a "problem", future framing of food insecurity as a complex issue may influence responses that have the potential to address both the immediate

issue while influencing long-term, sustained, and systems-based policy decisions.

The majority of press releases and print media presented a narrative of helplessness and lack of control, but nearly half (45%) of press releases presented a "problem" raised by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander corporations, with the majority of these asking the Australian government to take action, reflecting either the urgency of the situation, or the viewpoint that the pandemic requires government response. This dominant underlying assumption likely reflects the reality of the unprecedented context of a global pandemic, with issues being raised that communities may well have no control over, such as border restrictions. This has revealed however the lack of a governance structure to deal with food security crises concerning very remote Australia and moreover, the lack of a structure comprising those most impacted; Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples of very remote communities. During the time of this research, the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Indigenous Affairs commenced an inquiry into food pricing and food security in remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities,⁴³ and the Australian Government established a food security working group for the NT. The resulting report from the parliamentary inquiry emphasised the breadth, interconnectedness, and interactivity of food security issues.³¹ It gave the recommendation that the food security working group be continued, including representatives from store groups, private and public sector supplier supports, and government representatives, with the Australian Government committing to support 10 of the 16 recommendations, and suggesting others need to be supplier driven.⁴⁴

In the included texts, narratives of self-determination were present and usually framed as a solution. If self-determination for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples in relation to food security is to govern and lead localised policy to assist in alleviating and/or mitigating food insecurity including through food system, cultural knowledge, and kinship systems, it should be framed as a right and a process rather than a solution. Through recognition of self-determination as a right and with this, adequate support by the state, territory, and Commonwealth governments, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities could be sitting front and centre in policy decisions to guarantee food supply to remote communities.

Each media type analysed presented different theory paradigms in their story telling—social injustice and morality for press releases and print media, respectively. The assumption of social injustice with regard to food insecurity in remote communities mirrors that of the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO) deeming food a human right, with social justice leading to a fulfilment of this human right.⁴⁵ It recognises the inequity faced by remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities enhanced by the COVID-19 pandemic.⁴⁶ On the other hand, the underlying assumption that food security in remote communities is an issue of morals in the majority of the print media may be due to this story's heightened attractiveness to readers. Personal responsibility represented in the media has been shown to elicit a more emotive response to the issue, with readers more likely to remember the 'problem' after reading.⁴⁷ However, it is most likely going to result in responses that address personal responsibility rather than systems-level responses that underpin personal behaviour. These in turn can divert the blame from

the government and wider society to the individual and further fail to address the more complex issues.

This study was limited to newspaper print media and did not analyse other forms of media, including social media and online newspaper articles, which have substantial readerships. Review of these media may give additional insight to inform future advocacy methods. The inclusion of specific Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-led or owned media outlets (e.g., Koori Mail) may have also given further insight into coverage and advocacy of the issue. However, print media articles and their newspapers were chosen in order to reflect the notion that politicians read print media, and thus, there is importance in how an issue is reported and framed in print media. In addition, the data extraction and analysis of the included media covered four of the six WPR questions. The two additional questions (Questions 4 and 6) were explored during the interpretation of results, to build a more comprehensive picture of the framing of remote food security during the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. As indicated by Bacchi (2016), the authors recognise the risk that recommendations from research may inadvertently reproduce the structures and modes of governing that support forms of marginalisation and domination.³⁶ Our research has sought to make explicit the problem representation of food security in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in the media during the COVID-19 pandemic and from this offer a different way of representing the issue of food security that may help to alter the structures that support food insecurity in this context.

Conclusions

This study has shown that the issue of food insecurity in very remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities during the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 was represented in the media as a simple issue requiring an immediate fix, as opposed to a complex issue requiring a systems-level, sustained policy response with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples at front and centre of the decision-making. Further research with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities is needed in order to create more evidence to broaden the understanding of food insecurity as a systems-level issue in remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. This study adds to the body of literature to guide future media dialogue to impact on both immediate and longer-term solutions to food insecurity in very remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in Australia.

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Author contributions

JB: developed the concept with other authors; EvB and SH: completed data collection and data extraction and JB assisted; EvB: led the writing of the manuscript with input from other authors; EvB and JB: had primary responsibility for final content; and all authors read and approved the final manuscript.

Ethical Information

Ethics approval was not required for this study. The study did not include human or animal participants and all data was available in the public domain (newspaper articles and press releases).

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Conflicts of interest

The authors report no conflicts of interest.

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Appendix A Supplementary data

Supplementary data to this article can be found online at <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.anzjph.2023.100058>.