

Palya

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Palya is a word used frequently in Pitjantjatjara/Yankunytjatjara and can have a variety of meanings, all essentially translating to 'good', as in 'I am feeling good (well)', or 'That is good'. It is also used in greeting as in 'Nyuntu playa' ('You well?') with the reply 'Uwa-na, playa'; ('Yes, fine').

Media coverage of only the most dire health and social problems sometimes afflicting Aboriginal communities risks generating disillusionment and fails to acknowledge the strength and resilience of the oldest continuous surviving culture on earth.

I have had the privilege of working and travelling with Anangu (the name by which the Pitjantjatjara/Yankunytjatjara refer to themselves) throughout their land for over twenty years. This has provided unique opportunities to photograph the spectacular landscapes throughout years of extensive drought, broken finally by flooding rains and the accompanying explosion of wildlife. In addition, through increasing familiarity over the years, Anangu gradually became more at ease with my presence and having their photographs taken.

From several thousand transparencies, the images for this book were deliberately chosen to reflect the cultural resilience of Anangu and the beauty of their country. The detail in many of these same images, however, also hints at the underlying hardships of life.