

## The Disabilities Services Commission's remote area strategy in Western Australia

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Providing supports and services to people with disability living in the Western Australia outback can be challenging; distances and cultural divides often mean those most vulnerable in remote areas miss out.

The Disability Services Commission's Remote Area Strategy (RAS) is an initiative designed to ensure that people living in rural and remote parts of the state have access to supports and services, through the creation of genuine community partnerships that build up local resources and relationships.

The Remote Area Strategy was developed in response to an acknowledgment that people with disability and their families and carers living in remote rural locations should be provided with services and supports to enable them to remain in their local communities, rather than being forced to move to large regional centres to have their needs met.

Discussions with Aboriginal people further reinforced this view and consultations with a range of stakeholders suggest that flexible approaches based on partnerships with locally based generic service providers were often the most effective, efficient way of providing relevant and responsive services in remote locations.

Initially piloted as a two-year project, the success of the scheme has seen it continued with ten projects running across remote Western Australia. The key to success in projects has been the relationship that has developed between the Commission's 'local area coordinators' and the Aboriginal RAS workers who are all members of their local community. This has helped break down cultural barriers and been instrumental in ensuring services and supports are reaching those most in need.