

# Challenges from the Margins

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# Overview

## Rural and Remote regions

1. Distinguishing characteristics
2. Issues and barriers
3. Strategies to addressing issues

# What are some distinguishing characteristics of rural and remote communities?

- Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander specific
- Industry specific – eg:
  - Agriculture (crops, dairy, timber, cattle ...)
  - Mining
- Some have a strong presence of people & families associated with armed forces
- Family owned businesses (farms, properties, small businesses)
- Small towns
- Isolation
- Limited/no transport options
- Limited privacy and confidentiality
- Greater presence of fire arms and weapons

# Distinguishing characteristics continued

- Perhaps socially conservative attitudes
- Some diversity – eg “Tree-changers”
- Limited services
  - Health
  - Social support services
  - Crisis services
  - Alternative accommodation
  - Behaviour change programs
  - Police
  - Emergency services
  - Govt services ‘fly in, fly out’
  - Circuit magistrates’ courts

# What issues & barriers do these characteristics pose for programs that aim to support women to remain safely at home?

- Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander specific
  - Living arrangements may involve other family members
  - Risk of pay back
  - Concerns re displacement of men
  - Women's expressed desire to help their men be healed
  - Need for ancillary services (eg: detox, support for ABI etc)
- Industry specific communities – mining
  - Housing may be part of employment package
  - Connection to community is often employment specific
  - Families often relocate to follow the work – displacement from family support
  - Extraordinarily high rents and absence of housing options

# Issues & barriers continued

- Industry specific communities – primary industries
  - Properties are often family-owned: housing considered to be ‘part of the farm’; woman has no claim
  - Asset rich; cash flow poor
  - Attachment to animals and property
  - Accommodation may be part of employment package for farm-workers
- Armed forces (similar issues to mining towns?)
  - Housing may be part of employment package
  - Connection to community is often employment specific
  - Families often relocate to follow the work – displacement from family support

# Issues & barriers continued

- Small towns
  - Limited privacy, confidentiality
  - Risk of ‘gossip’ and ‘political’ position may influence those in positions of power (eg: Police, GP, JPs, clergy)
  - Charity ‘imposed’ on women living with violence
  - May help with monitoring risk?
- Isolation
  - Risks for monitoring safety & responding to threats or incidents
- Limited/no transport options
  - Issues for safety planning and escape

# Issues & barriers continued

- Greater presence of fire arms and weapons
  - Increased access to weapons
  - Tracking if weapons are licensed
  - Relationship between protection orders & weapons legislation
- Conservative attitudes
  - Set gender roles
  - Greater tolerance of attitudes & practices involved with DV?
  - Influence on community attitudes toward domestic violence?
- Diversifying population
  - Tree-changers
  - Retirees
  - Influence on community attitudes toward domestic violence?

# Issues & barriers continued

- Limited services
  - Establishing risk assessment
  - Monitoring safety
  - Staff turnover
  - Absence of behaviour change programs – can't mandate attendance
  - Limited/no alternative accommodation options for abusers
  - Practitioners are known for creative practices, collaborative attitudes, multi-skilling

# Key Features:

## Models for supporting women to remain safely at home

- Over-arching integrated response by key community and government services
- Sound risk assessment
- Safety audits & planning (for immediate & longer term)
  - Improving home security
  - Ensuring contact with emergency services
  - Formal & informal supports to maximise safety
- Risk monitoring
- Alternatives for abusers (accommodation, support needs)

# Strategies- responding to barriers

- Macro 'projects'
  - Integrated responses (at policy levels) MOUs
  - Reviewing legislation & policy directions in Justice
  - Training for magistrates
  - Awareness-raising campaigns – community; service providers
  - Indigenous specific responses (community justice groups?)
- Micro practices
  - Networking, planning (co-ordinating practice responses)
  - Risk assessment tools
  - Training & support