

Introduction

Human Services and Remote Indigenous Communities: Making Room for Diversity and Change

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This special issue of the *Journal of Rural and Community Development* considers the challenges to human services delivery in remote Indigenous communities in developed nations such as Australia, Canada, Alaska in the USA, and Europe's remote north. Change in the context in which services are delivered arises not only from the various transitions (demographic, economic, cultural) experienced by Indigenous people, but also from changes in service provision (ageing workforces, increasing access to new technologies, interactions between the government and non-government sectors). The contributing papers to this special issue reflect investigations from across the social sciences disciplines into the dualistic nature of change in the context of remote service delivery. They provide analyses of the similar challenges faced by Indigenous communities and service providers in various jurisdictions. They also offer some insights into how challenges might be addressed through greater understanding of the diversity of experiences and the factors which facilitate and impede change.

This special issue will be of interest to researchers in sociology, demography, anthropology, economics, education and social policy. There is also a practitioner focus to many of the papers, as they were inspired by the *Beyond Periphery* Symposia in Darwin and Whyalla in Australia in October/ November 2010. The Symposia brought together over 150 researchers, policy makers and practitioners from around the world to engage in discussion about improving the connection between research, policy and practice as it relates to community development in sparsely populated regions. The symposia illustrated that by combining different perspectives and analyses of peripheral conditions, a more holistic understanding is obtained. We hope that through this special issue readers will be similarly inspired to contemplate Indigenous research within the context of peripheral areas, and how we can work together to gain better understandings and outcomes for those who inhabit these areas.