Rural carers of people with a disability: making choices to move or to stay

Ms Vicki Happ, Carer of Reggie,
Dr Angela Dew, Project Manager Wobbly Hub & Double Spokes project
Challenges to receiving therapy services in rural NSW

› Geographic distance / travel;

› Dispersed client population;

› Recruitment and retention issues;

› Demand for therapy outstripping supply of therapists.
Factors influencing carers choices - to move or to stay?

**Personal factors**
- Family caring responsibilities

**Social factors**
- Informal support networks
- Community

**Economic factors**
- Employment
- Costs of accessing specialist services
“My husband has 3 kids from a previous marriage, but we have shared custody with his ex-wife, so they're here every 2nd week for the week.”

“My husband had to take time off work and my mum was able to come down for one of the weeks. Our eldest three kids stayed with their mum. So it wasn't easy”.

“Given my husband's situation of having been married before and having three kids that live in [town] and their mum's in [town], we're not in a position where we're going to move and leave town, but I do feel like living here in [town], sometimes that we suffer the consequences of living in a regional area with a lack of services.”
“We wanted to be able to afford somewhere that we could not have a mortgage, be on a property, build a house that was going to accommodate wheelchairs, & have a good special school.”

“We enjoy life out here. There’s no way we’re going to move back to a metropolitan area. So if we have to go to Sydney every 3 or 4 months well then we’ll do that. But we’ve got the life out here that we want… we’ve gained more than we’ve lost.”

“That’s one thing I’ve found about [town]…when we first came out here we ended up with people coming up and just starting to talk to us and we’d never had that before and they’d come and talk to [son] "oh, how are you going?“ It took us a little while to realise that that’s just country folk, that’s exactly the way they are. The kids [with a disability] are a part of the community and you know that the people are going to look after them. It’s just so different.”
“It’s just the difference between country and, there is that Great Divide is a real barrier. It really is…you come over that mountain and things change.”

“Well a lot of people said to us from day dot are we going to move up there, and should you move to Sydney or Gosford. But we knew this was the best place for him. Even though we’ve had to travel and fight for his services and things, he’s been in a little community that’s fully supportive.”

“Even for our home modifications the town raised $20,000.00 to help us pay for that. They didn’t pay for the whole lot but they paid for a fair bit of it.”
Rural and Remote Person-Centred Approach

What would make a good life?

Person-Centred Facilitator

Flexible Person-Centred Approach
How do WE make this happen?

What exists locally?
Creative Local Solutions

What do we bring in?
Responsive Outreach

What do we travel for?
Responsive Centre-based

What can we access online?
Innovative Technology

Evolving Process

Dew et al (2012) Addressing the barriers to accessing therapy services in rural and remote areas Disabilty and Rehabilitation
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