MONASH University

Issues to consider before taking a remote or rural job

If you are thinking about applying for a job in a remote or rural location for jobs (for example: a contract or a FIFO - Fly In Fly Out job) there are many factors to consider, including:

- **Financial compensation -** There can be very good compensation for remote work. However, it can be difficult to motivate yourself only for money.
- **Community –** Living in smaller communities can be very different than big cities. If you have never lived in a small community it can be a culture shock to be recognised and known by others in a small community. It can take some time for you to develop your credentials so don't expect instant acceptance. Every community will have a unique structure and cultural protocols.
- **Limited entertainment and facilities** – Lack of cinemas, nightclubs, bowling alleys, hairdressers and a range of amenities can be confronting for people who have lived in a bigger community most of their lives. However, for some people "going remote" provides an ideal opportunity to focus on other areas of their lives, for example to complete further study (as long as there is good computer/internet access). The long periods of isolation can be filled by many home and local community based activities.
- **Health services -** Those who have experienced chronic medical conditions including mental health issues should seek medical advice before heading out to an environment that is likely to be tough on mind and body. The medical advice should come from a practitioner who has detailed knowledge of the nature of remote work. It may be difficult to access appropriate medical support in remote areas of the country and this is likely to cause difficulties for both you and those around you.
- **Extreme weather conditions** – Living in a rural area can mean you are more exposed to and affected by extreme weather conditions.

It is important to think about your unique qualities. Experienced practitioners in the field have identified some key characteristics of people who are successful at living in remote areas:

- **Adaptability and flexibility** -Rigid views, expectations and plans are likely to come unstuck in remote areas. Are you easily upset if things don't go to plan?
- **Being organised** - It may seem to contradict adaptability and flexibility but planning helps in the preparation for unexpected events. Do you live in the moment or do you have an eye for what will be happening next week, next month or next year?
- **Resilience** - The capacity to bounce back after set-backs that could be personal, professional or social. How easily do you pick yourself up if things aren't going your way?
- **Strong sense of self and a positive self image** - Being aware of your personal qualities and being OK with yourself. Without a strong sense of self, you are likely to be buffeted by the effects of isolation and challenge. How do you cope when you are on your own for a long period?
- **Genuine respect for others and other cultures** - Your sense of social justice should be more than superficial and should apply even when you are out of your comfort zone. Can you respect others' traditions even if they directly inconvenience you?
- **Creativity** – Being capable of seeing options and alternative ways of doing things rather than imposing solutions that suit other contexts. Do you enjoy thinking through a problem?
- **Practical mindset** – It is very important to be practical in remote areas. Theorising and talking about changing a tyre will not get the job done. Are you someone who gets things done without fuss?

Tips for settling into work and a new community:

- It's likely that your new workplace will be different from anywhere you have worked before. Don't be afraid to ask questions.
- Be involved; even though you have never played a particular sport before, this is a great opportunity to start and join clubs. If you are not a lover of sport there may be other groups you could join such as a craft, drama or book club.
- Swap email or Facebook addresses with others who are also new to the country, giving you a valuable support network.

(Adapted from Judith Austin's Remote Ready – Preparing for work in remote locations of the Northern Territory http://www.remoterecruitment.nt.gov.au/docs/remote_ready.pdf)