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Mobility message

David Sibenaler

TRAVELLING hundreds of kilometres to buy groceries or watch a game of football doesn't trouble a breed of hardy bush residents.

New research has revealed many remote community residents are happy to travel into town from far-flung outstations for services, provided they can keep their connection to country.

Curtin University researcher Michael Dockery recently released his findings after he studied mobility in 22 remote communities of Central Australia.

"It's clear that connections to homelands, kinship networks and cultural obligations are key to the wellbeing of Aboriginal people in remote Australia," Dr Dockery said.

"Mobility allows them to maintain those connections."

The associate professor, who is employed by research organisation Ninti One, said one major problem for those

living in remote communities was the lack of driver's licences.

His data found only 41 per cent of people aged over 17 had a driver's licence.

"That limits not only their access to services but their employment and education opportunities," Dr Dockery said.

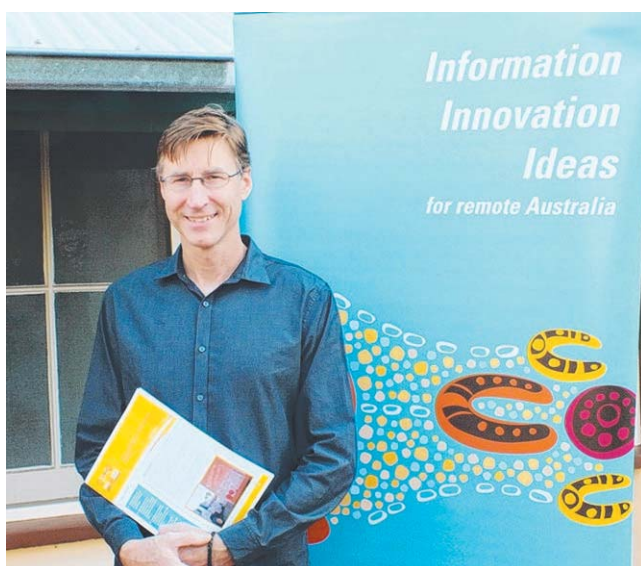
As national discussions about the sustainability of remote communities continue, Dr Dockery said promoting remote industries, improving roads and providing more ser-

vices would have better outcomes. The Territory Government is assessing

which roads and services should be improved.

Transport Minister Peter Chandler said a new remote and regional transport strategy was being formulated.

"The strategy will aim to improve services to allow for better access to employment, education, health services and economic opportunities across remote and regional areas," Mr Chandler said.



Ninti One researcher Michael Dockery presenting his findings on mobility recently in Alice Springs. Picture: DAVID SIBENALER