



**Desert Blue Connect**

# Rural Support Services Strategy 2020 to 2022

Written June 2020

[www.desertblueconnect.org.au](http://www.desertblueconnect.org.au)



## Acknowledgement of Traditional Owners

Desert Blue Connect would like to acknowledge the Southern Yamatji and Widi peoples as the traditional owners of the land where we are working upon, paying respect to their elders past and present.

Recognising their unique values and ancient enduring cultures that deepen and enrich the lives of our communities where we live and work.



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**Desert Blue Connect**



### **Our Purpose - Empowering and enriching the community**

Desert Blue Connect recognises the importance of communities that are connected, inclusive and safe, and where people feel cared for and respected.

We aim to provide equitable, accessible and appropriate services to improve the holistic health and wellbeing of community members in the North Midlands region.

We provide services to the communities in the regional areas of Mullewa, Mingenew, Morawa, Perenjori, Carnamah, Coorow, Three Springs and Yalgoo.

# DESERT BLUE CONNECT STRATEGIC AREAS

Three strategic pillars that include:

- 1) Strengthen our community connection
- 2) Expand our impact
- 3) Transform our organisation

## Objectives

Develop positive community partnerships

Provide prevention initiatives

Provide a holistic approach for individuals and families

Utilise leading edge technology for service delivery and data collection

Create a stimulating, supportive and encouraging work place





# ABOUT THE RURAL SUPPORT SERVICE STRATEGY

*"the Rural Strategy" will be referred to throughout this document*

Over the past year we have talked to our communities in the North Midlands region and they have provided a clear story of what they want from Desert Blue Connect.

This has shaped the direction of the organisation and this strategy – together we can optimise the health, safety and well-being of all community members.

These talks have informed our commitment across 5 priority areas to achieve certain goals over the next 2 years.

## Priority areas for RSS regions

Mental health and wellness

Men's health promotion

Family support for families

Partnership approaches

Provision of outreach Desert Blue Connect services

## PURPOSE OF THE STRATEGY

The Rural Support Service Strategy is a new initiative, and has a 2 year outlook from July 2020 to June 2022. The Rural Strategy provides a short-term framework for how Desert Blue Connect and the communities in the North Midlands work together to advance a shared goal of optimised health, safety and well-being of all people. This Rural Strategy outlines what we will do as a community organisation and how we will go about it.

The Rural Strategy also provides a clear approach to measuring progress towards meeting these goals.



## HOW THE RURAL STRATEGY WAS DEVELOPED

The Rural Strategy was developed through community and stakeholder engagement

Those who contributed provided us with key areas of need, what was already working in the community and other great ideas. The feedback has provided a framework for how we can work and live together in a strong community where everyone thrives.

We had various methods of engagement during 2019 across the communities in the North Midlands region.

### **We connected through:**

- Stalls and surveys at the Mingenew Expo
- Stalls and questionnaires at the Perenjori Show
- Meetings with key people at all the local Shires
- Local Community Resource Centres
- Pop up stalls at other local events
- Social media
- School communities
- Key stakeholders i.e. police, teachers, health workers, community development officers



## WHO WE ARE

Desert Blue Connect is a not for profit organisation based in Geraldton that provides services across the Midwest and Gascoyne region of Western Australia. These include women's health services, family violence support and counselling, crisis accommodation for women and children, sexual assault counselling, a men's intervention service, community and school based education programs and rural support services. Desert Blue Connect is a regional leader in family violence prevention and response and has a strong community and women's health agenda with a suite of services. We have a rural office in Morawa and three locations in Geraldton: a men's service, a women's refuge and the main town office.

### **Our purpose**

Is to empower and enrich the community

### **Our focus**

Is to provide an inclusive, safe and comfortable environment for the holistic health and wellbeing of our community.



# WHAT DOES DESERT BLUE CONNECT ALREADY DO IN THE NORTH MIDLANDS REGION?

Counselling services to the North Midlands region have been provided for many years by the Northern Districts Community Support Group (Morawa Counselling Services). This service is now part of Desert Blue Connect and continues to be offered from the Morawa office and other locations in the various towns.

Now known as the Rural Support Services, confidential counselling services are available to men and women across the Shires of Morawa, Mingenew, Three Springs, Carnamah, Coorow and Perenjori. Our suite of services include counselling for anxiety and depression, stress, grief and loss, self-esteem, and personal, family or relationships issues.

A Rural Services Coordinator works alongside the counsellor and coordinates outreach services to the community. These consist of Desert Blue Connect's specialist services in the areas of health, family violence, sexual assault and prevention and other visiting practitioners and services.

## Individual outreach services

Child sexual assault therapist  
Adult sexual assault counselling and  
support  
Family violence advocacy and counselling  
Unplanned pregnancy counselling (via  
phone)



## Community services available

Women's health events

Men's health events

Sexual and family violence prevention education in schools and community

Sexuality relationship education for girls 12+ and school support

Child protection and abuse prevention workshops

Information stalls and other health promotion activities

Emergency support, such as blanket and essentials collections and delivery





# RURAL SUPPORT SERVICES 5 PRIORITY AREAS

## 1. Mental health and wellness

- Provide mental health promotion and primary prevention activity that support rural people's needs.
- Support access to rural counselling services.
- Raise awareness and embed practices to reduce stigma and discrimination associated with mental ill-health.

## 2. Men's health promotion

- Provide men's health promotion activity to enhance and support rural men.

## 3. Family support

- Provide support and education to parents and families.

## 4. Partnership approaches

- Enhance coordinated and collaborative approaches within the regions, where Desert Blue Connect and other partners work to improve the health and well-being of people residing in all communities in the rural shires. Key relationships in the community are health services, the 7 shires, school communities, police, sport and business.

## 5. Provision of Desert Blue Connect outreach services

- Increase outreach services (Desert Blue Connect core services) to rural region, addressing key health gaps and emerging issues.
- Increase awareness and access to Desert Blue Connect core services in the rural region through regular promotion and communication.





# Priority area 1

## Mental health and wellness

### GOALS

Increased understanding of the importance of factors that lead to good mental health and well being, as recorded by feedback.

Increase in the number of people accessing rural counselling and referrals to other mental health services, as measured by counsellor data.

An increase in educational opportunities to decrease stigma and discrimination associated with mental health.

Engaged rural communities who have increased awareness of the ways that resilience and mental well-being can be promoted.

At risk families and individuals are able to resolve crises and promote the safety and wellbeing of themselves and their family members.





## **Provide mental health promotion and primary prevention activity to enhance and support rural people**

### **Develop new targeted mental health promotion activities and programs**

Development of additional programs with stakeholders as needed, i.e. adult literacy.

### **Collaborate with existing stakeholders to strengthen mental health education and promote opportunities to screen at risk people**

Participation in community events (i.e. Mingenew Expo, Perenjori show) to provide educational resources, mental health checklists and referral options.

Collaborate with WAPHA, North Midlands Project, police and other partners in existing mental health and suicide prevention activities in the region.

### **Develop tailored education and awareness materials for community**

Communications plan to include social media, feature articles, targeted advertising, and print flyers, cards and posters

## **Support and increase access to rural counselling services**

Communications plan to include advertising local newspapers and magazines, school newsletters, local papers, rural and agricultural printed resources, and other printed materials.

Investigate and introduce new formats of service delivery (i.e. phone and video counselling)

### **Develop tailored education and awareness resources**

Webinars and educational videos on counselling tips, good mental health, dispel myths and stigma around mental health.

Promote culturally and linguistically appropriate resources for different demographics within the communities.



## Priority area 2

### Men's health promotion in rural communities

#### GOALS

Increase in educational opportunities to improve men's health.

Improved knowledge of factors that lead to good health and well-being.

A greater awareness, by men, of local resources for health support available.





## **Provide men's health promotion activity to enhance and support rural men**

### **Increase the knowledge and skills necessary to choose a healthy lifestyle**

Provide gendered resources, guidance, support and information regarding referral pathways to men.

All men across the 7 shires, including priority groups (Aboriginal, CaLD, youth, carers, disability and elderly).

Education via rural print newspapers

### **Develop new community programs and events by Desert Blue Connect or in partnership with existing men's health promotion occurring in the region.**

Provide men's health week activities annually.

Partnership with Checkmate.

Partnership with Rural Men's Health to hold events and health talks for men.

Collaboration with other mental health agencies such as RUOK and Beyond Blue.



## Priority area 3

### Family support for rural families

#### GOALS

New programs introduced across 7 shires that support parents, caregivers and families. Improved accessibility of information and education for parents.

Parents and caregivers have increased knowledge of parenting strategies to provide a nurturing, safe and positive home environment to raise their children.

At risk families and individuals are able to resolve crises and promote the safety and wellbeing of themselves and their family members.





## **Provide support and education to parents, caregivers and families**

**New Desert Blue Connect programs are introduced into the regions that support parents and families and provide strategies to improve child health and wellbeing outcomes.**

**Develop additional targeted programs as required, to address the specific health, wellbeing and social needs of children and their parents/caregivers.**

Introduce Resilience Group for children after school according to identified need.

A special parents and caregivers day/community event is held once per year in rural region.

Develop support services and programs in line with emerging issues.

**Delivery of parent/caregiver information and education program using a variety of methods, focusing on improving parenting literacy and Desert Blue Connect key children's services areas.**

Development of the parent and caregiver information and education program to include;

Email newsletter for Desert Blue Connect - across 7 shires.

Educational videos.

Articles for inclusion in school newsletters (sexual abuse prevention, family violence and child safety, resilience, relationships, parenting, e-safety)

Culturally sensitive and appropriate resources.



## Priority area 4

### Partnership approaches

#### GOALS

Established partnership with all shires and/or regular meetings take place with shire personnel across the region.

Memo of Understanding's and other partnership arrangements are established as needed.

Increase in stakeholder partnerships (i.e. Aboriginal organisations, mining companies, other employers and businesses).





**Enhance co-ordinated and collaborative approaches within the rural region. Desert Blue Connect and other partners work to improve the health and wellbeing of people residing in all communities in the 7 shires through key relationships in the community and health services, schools, police, sport and business.**

**Establish regional partnerships with 7 shires to develop local solutions to better meet the health and wellbeing needs of communities.**

Desert Blue Connect staff regularly participate at community shire meetings.

Work collaboratively with shire events and activities.

**Increase relationships with Aboriginal partners and Aboriginal Controlled Organisations across the 7 shires.**

Desert Blue Connect participates in key significant Aboriginal cultural days.

Regular liaising as part of stakeholder plan in line with Reconciliation Action Plan.

Co-design education and awareness materials and programs with Aboriginal communities.

**Desert Blue Connect to work collaboratively with health, community services, child and family services, aged care, housing, alcohol and other drugs, Aboriginal groups, school communities, police, sport and business.**

Develop a rural counsellor and stakeholder plan to cover rural region of 7 shires, with regular scheduled visits.

Coordinate stakeholder engagement between Desert Blue Connect outreach professionals and rural stakeholders.



## Priority area 5

### Desert Blue Connect outreach services

#### GOALS

##### Women's Health

Women have greater awareness of resources that can be accessed to assist in meeting health challenges, make healthy choices and have greater awareness of social determinants of women's health.

Health professionals have increased knowledge of gender specific health issues in the diverse population and increased knowledge to support women to respond to health needs.

##### Sexual assault

People have a greater understanding of sexual assault and abuse, how they can protect themselves or seek help as needed and how to make their communities safer for everyone.

##### Other

Increase in knowledge and positive health and social outcomes from other Desert Blue Connect programs (i.e. family violence prevention and response education, financial support).

Increase in the number of services available and ability for populations in all shires to access at least one of these.



**Increase core outreach services to rural region, addressing key health gaps and emerging issues.**

**Desert Blue Connect Community Initiative Team will collaborate to strengthen outreach service provision to rural region.**

Support the provision of regular activities and services as identified for outreach services (i.e. women's health promotion days, child safe workshops for parents, sexual assault prevention, e-safety workshops at schools.

Regular activities supported by Geraldton based Desert Blue Connect team members.

**Develop new and additional programs and offer them in rural region according to identified need.**

Training staff and development of new programs (financial program, understanding family violence workshop, explore new groups to provide sexual assault prevent series workshops.

**Participate in Aboriginal activities and collaborations**

NAIDOC week involvement and planning.

**Monitor community issues and respond accordingly**

Address identified needs and issues, work collaboratively with main Desert Blue Connect office, local agencies and community to provide appropriate outreach service responses.

Collaborate with other local programs that work to improve health and wellbeing of rural people.

**Increase awareness and access to Geraldton based Desert Blue Connect services in rural region through regular promotion and communication.**

**Develop a communications plan**

Plan to include promotion of core Desert Blue Connect services in Geraldton and via outreach to rural regions.

Support key professionals with promotion and coordination in the region.

**Increase stakeholder and client awareness**

Educate local services so they can recognise and respond to identified needs within the community and refer to Desert Blue Connect outreach services.



## WE ACKNOWLEDGE THE FOLLOWING STAKEHOLDERS AND PARTNERS

- Shire of Mingenew
- Shire of Morawa
- Shire of Yalgoo
- Shire of Perenjori
- Shire of Coorow
- Shire of Carnamah
- Shire of Three Springs





## Contact Information

### Geraldton office

25 Chapman Road  
Geraldton WA 6530  
Phone: 08 9964 2742  
Email: [info@desertblueconnect.org.au](mailto:info@desertblueconnect.org.au)  
Website: [www.desertblueconnect.org.au](http://www.desertblueconnect.org.au)

### Morawa office

68 Gill Street  
Morawa WA 6623  
Phone Rural Counsellor 0419 348 006 (9-5 Monday to Friday)  
Phone Rural Services Coordinator 0437 768 183 (Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday)

### Midwest Sexual Assault Crisis Line

1800 016 789 Crisis and support available 24/7

### Chrysalis House Women's Refuge

Phone: 08 9964 2173  
Email: [chwr@desertblueconnect.org.au](mailto:chwr@desertblueconnect.org.au)

### Men's Community Intervention Service

98a Chapman Road  
Geraldton WA 6530  
Phone: 0499 348 006