Case Study: Supporting Safety and Cultural Independence for Aunty Desley on North Stradbroke Island

Participant Snapshot

First name: Aunty Desley Coolwell-Walters
Location: Off-grid residence, North Stradbroke Island
Gender: Female
Cultural identity: First Nations woman
Living situation: Lives with her grandson; other family members visit periodically. Her son, Jay, resides on the mainland, over an hour away by ferry.
Context: Off-grid island home with adjacent land security concerns

Aunty Desley is a respected First Nations woman living on Country in an off-grid environment. She identifies as a "Forgotten Australian" and values independence, cultural connection, and community leadership.

Identified Needs and Risks

Aunty Desley manages Type 2 Diabetes and fluctuating blood pressure, increasing the risk of dizziness, falls, or sudden health events.

Additional contextual risks included:

- Off-grid power supply
- Island geography and delayed emergency access
- Security concerns due to squatters on adjacent land
- Periods of being alone when family members were absent

Her son lives over an hour away by ferry, limiting rapid in-person response if an incident occurred.

Technology Provided

- Technology solution: Talius Safer Smarter Homes Kit
- Additional device: Jewellery-style falls pendant
- Monitoring service: Intelligent Monitoring Services (IMS) – 24/7 professional monitoring
- Additional service: Daily Wake & Well SMS messages to her son Jay

The combined model provided:

- Falls detection and emergency activation
- Passive activity monitoring
- 24/7 professional emergency response
- Daily reassurance messaging to her son

This created both an immediate safety layer and ongoing family reassurance.

Installation and Support Context

Installation required assessment of:

- Off-grid power stability
- Backup battery resilience minimum 40 hours
- Cellular signal reliability minimum 2 steady bars on alarm

The alarm system functioned effectively on off-grid power supply, demonstrating compatibility with non-standard infrastructure.

Aunty Desley was actively engaged in the installation process and was keen to trial the technology to encourage other Elders to consider assistive technology as a supportive, culturally appropriate safety measure.

Early Experience and Observed Impact

At the conclusion of the pilot, Aunty Desley reported feeling safer wearing her pendant at home, knowing she could access police or ambulance support if required.

Since installation, there has been one accidental activation of the pendant. The IMS monitoring team responded appropriately, handled the call professionally, and resolved the situation without unnecessary escalation.

The jewellery-style design enabled discreet use while maintaining dignity.

Daily Wake & Well notifications provided her son with structured reassurance despite geographic separation.

Lessons Learned

- The alarm system functioned reliably on off-grid power infrastructure.
- The Safer Smarter Homes dashboard successfully identified activity patterns; however, higher levels of visitor activity influenced OADL interpretation.
- Activity data in multi-occupancy or high-visitor households requires contextual interpretation.

This highlights the importance of combining automated data with human clinical review and contextual understanding.

Impact on Family and Community

For her son, Jay, the combination of daily Wake & Well calls and 24/7 monitoring reduced anxiety associated with ferry-dependent travel and geographic separation.

Aunty Desley's willingness to trial the technology was motivated in part by her desire to demonstrate to other Elders that technology can support safety without compromising independence or cultural identity.

At the end of the pilot, she expressed interest in applying for a charity grant to retain the technology, indicating perceived value and sustained confidence in the model.

Why This Case Matters

This case demonstrates that:

- Smart home and monitored safety technology can operate effectively in off-grid First Nations environments
- Professional monitoring provides essential reassurance in isolated island settings
- Data interpretation must account for household context and visitor patterns
- Community leadership influences technology acceptance
- Assistive technology can support ageing on Country without undermining independence

Key Takeaway

This case illustrates that a two-layer model — 24/7 emergency response combined with contextual activity monitoring — can enhance safety, strengthen family reassurance, and support culturally respectful ageing in off-grid and island communities.