

## SEMINAR A – FUNDING & FINANCE

### RRR Reality – Regional, Rural and Remote Viability, Delivery and Development

#### Key themes / issues / questions arising from discussion:

##### Neil Hamilton: A Call for More Responsible Service

Powerpoint Presentation

Henry Lawson poem Borderland, Up the Country

Banjo Patterson response in paper

Composition of bush changed dramatically since written 100 years ago.

RRR and metropolitan work together to get better services for people living in country Australia.

Declining numbers of young people in Country Australia – 3 times as many

City 36% Country 56% in lowest two income brackets

Declining access to services medical health services, banking public infrastructure

Higher levels of family violence,

- Farmers highest at risk of suicide

Social capital breaking down.

Improving Resources Allocation

Health care

How do govt decide quantum

How does community have a say

How do we distribute resources

What are options for debating funding a allocation and service provision

- Service equality – same as others - not achievable
- Service equity – fairness and justice when it comes to service provision
  - How do services to indigenous Australians living in RRR area rate?
  - How do RRR Australians Health, humane services and family law
  - What mechanism exist for listening to needs of RRR Australians?

For best practice in the bush, need State and Federal RRR Advisory Committees to assist with needs analysis and service design.

- Funding that reflects true cost
- OH&S increased risk
- Expansion of services to indig people
- Delivered by local providers
- Better funding for universities undertaking training
- Equity of access to training and education

From paper prepared in March 2005 for Catholic Social Services Australia

Regional Rural and Remote Service Delivery Discussion Paper.

RRR not getting a fair go.

WA State Service contracts at times offer same funding and expect same FTE

What can service providers do?

- Realistic planning, costing of services with achievable outcomes
- Service design – linking services
- Getting the stories out there

- Stronger lobbying voice

**Biggest problem is attracting and retaining staff.**

Extremely high turnover in country towns. Entire population every 3 years in Goldfields.

Due to high pay in mining industry, living costs are high, rents are high

What can Service Providers do?

- Take time to ensure we get the right people
- Additional training and supervision
- Avoiding burnout through realistic framing of what can be done.
- Clear long-term strategies for improving staff condition' celebrate achievements
- Continuity planning

**Sue Kelly-Jones Share and Care Community Service Group Inc,**

Moving Bush

Manages financial counselling and SAAP

Northam

Wheatbelt experiencing population decline due to move to coast for jobs and social benefits.

Low income earners or pension recipients are moving to wheatbelt thinking that costs are lower, better chances of getting housing.

Keystart loans offer innovative and attainable housing

Availability of housing in wheatbelt high.

Cannot afford maintenance of older homes: restumping, replacement of asbestos roofing.

Transport issues are considerable but often overlooked. High wear and tear on vehicles, little or no public transport. Cost of fuel higher

Schooling is limited, and travel required.

Hospitals have limited visiting specialists, booking surgery way ahead of time, travel to metro hospital for the majority of surgery. Accommodation in city difficult, costly. Stressful and financially overwhelming.

Methodone treatment not available and stigma makes it difficult.

Regions are not prepared for complex needs of residents or aging population.

Social workers struggle with mental health issues

Some essential services cost more in country. Gas in bottles.

Phone calls STD. Only one provider, CDMA, Telstra

Food more expensive and less choice. Fresh produce not as readily available.

Purchase clothes on line.

Moving bush limits well being, social isolation and financial hardship.

Comment: While it is a good idea from DHW about providing housing in country areas, by not providing services and support, it creates more problems.

Opportunity to lobby Gov't about making better decisions with knowledge of what happens on the ground, in the bush.

## **Fiona MacKenzie AHURI**

Focus on some of the ambiguities of RRR viability

The Big Shift: 1901 to 2001: rural communities shrinking, coastal and capital cities growing.

Question the premise that population is a salvation. It will make a difference in sea change and tree change communities.

Coastal population increased 171%

In sea change communities significant portion of population very disadvantaged

- High levels of welfare dependence
- Decreasing proportion of retirees
- Low incomes
- Weak employment structure
- High infrastructure costs
- Mismatch between housing affordability and employment
- Problem for all 3 tiers of government

Regional Development Challenges

- High economic leakage
- High population movements
- Land settlement intensification
- Proximity to urban and regional centres an economic dampener
- Infrastructure demand versus supply

Health and Wellbeing

- RRR Australians higher rate of mortality, injury, suicide, diabetes, and coronary heart disease than urban Australians
- Twice as likely to smoke or drink alcohol in unsafe quantities
- More likely to age more quickly than urban Australia
- 1996-2001 3 times more young people (15 – 24) migrated out of RRR Australia than moved in (most to capital cities)
- Life expectancy indigenous less than others
- In 2001 the proportion of indigenous population ages 14 years and less, 19% higher than rest of Australian population
- Women twice as likely to have a tertiary education than men in RRR Australian
- Women more are underemployed, more self-employed

Housing and Transport

- Inappropriate housing stock
- Head works costs often prohibitive (sewerage, water, etc)
- Public housing does not meet demand
- Public transport import for local economies but rarely locally available
- Cost of road maintenance and delivery extraordinarily high in RRR Australian
- Limited transport impacts on local employment opportunities

Government to the Rescue?

- Fiscal restraint
- Neo-liberal government policies diminution of public expenditure, other public structures
- Market forces rather than government intervention drive change

- Devolution of responsibilities and function from government to the private and community sectors Impact on social structure, sporting teams
- Equity
- Rationalisation and centralisation of services of infrastructure

#### Building Sustainability

- Understanding the market
  - Who is market
  - What do they want? Beach? Vineyards? Solitude? Entertainment? Space? Security?
- Mending the divide between locals and visitors
- Value for money
- Tourist service clusters
- Extending/targeting the market

#### Is Diversification Possible?

- Important for robust community that can survive ups and downs of global market. Important to have variety and diversity.
- Communication technology

#### Strategies for a Sustainable Future

- Embrace ideas of new people
- Develop networks and capacities
- Allow people to leave
- Working with resources you have

#### Some Success Stories

- New Norcia
- Kulin
- Kukerin
- Corrigin
- Western Australian Community Foundation

#### QUESTION/COMMENT

Number of young people leaving small communities. In 1991 select committee report stated that young people more likely to return if they have had positive experience/opportunities. In Northcliff, we have the revolving door syndrome. Success for young people equals leaving in small communities. Young people are most non renewable resource.

100% of successful farmers were under 40, had some other career before coming back to farm as a business. People who are well educated and have assets to share with the community are extremely valuable to country areas.

Some farmers still hanging on to farm at age 70. Technology changes to farmwork means less people employed farming. Lack of income means kids not educated, welfare-dependent.

#### QUESTION

What incentives are Government offering? Eg, getting GPs in rural areas.

Fiona: Retention of staff in remote areas of Australia: project studying several towns. Royal Flying Doctor trainees must stay 6 months in country town. Also target Australian doctors who have lived and worked overseas.

Neil: Young graduates attracted to opportunities in country, but don't stay because the incentives aren't there. 5 doctors in 4.5 years in Kalgoorlie. Large mining companies have provided doctors.

Sue: lack of consistent medical care is huge issue. Can't keep up with demand.

### **QUESTION**

WISH – difficulty in developing self-help support groups in RRR WA. Face to face contact. Social capital exhausted. Metro centric processes need to be reviewed. Doesn't translate from city to country, eg, self-help groups include local service providers and their clients.

Counselling service at local GP. Self-help groups available but not taken up because clients don't choose them.

### **COMMENT**

Government needs to invest more in rural areas.