

# Rural People: Resilient Futures

Stakeholder Bulletin - Edition Two

## Welcome:

Welcome to the second edition of the **Rural People; Resilient Futures** Stakeholder Bulletin – designed to keep stakeholders and community members updated on the progress and happenings of the project on a quarterly basis. If you have any questions or comments about the project feel free to contact our friendly team.

## Overview:

Southern Grampians Shire Council (SGSC) has received funding through the State Government Department of Environment and Primary Industries (DEPI) through the Victorian Adaptation and Sustainability (VAS) Partnership to facilitate an action research pilot project entitled **Rural People: Resilient Futures**.

The project aims to understand vulnerability across the Southern Grampians Shire, and how this will evolve under the impacts of climate change. A particular focus on defining **who** is vulnerable, **what** they are vulnerable to, **how** this will vary in the future and what can be done to **manage** this varying vulnerability.

Southern Grampians and Glenelg Primary Care Partnership (SGGPCP) will lead the research project in partnership with RMIT University providing research direction and SGSC as funds recipient providing valuable community links. Rural People: Resilient Futures is funded until May 2015.

## What has happened?

- **Project Launch** – the Rural People; Resilient Futures was launched on Sunday 18th May at the Hamilton Sustainability Expo. We warmly thank Ms Emma Kealy Nationals candidate for Lowan, representing Hon. Hugh Delahunty Member for Lowen for officially launching the project.
- **Media coverage and communication** – the project has had a number of articles /photos in the local Hamilton Spectator, promoting the project across the wider community. Ali Rance shared the rationale, methodology and preliminary findings of the Rural People: Resilient Futures Project at the International Adaptation Futures Conference in Fortaleza Brazil which was well received at this international level. Next Jo Brown will share the findings so far at the NCCARF Climate Adaptation 2014 Conference in early October.
- **Soft Systems Methodology Workshop ‘Unpacking Resilience and Understanding Complexity Workshop’** (Thursday 12th June) – project partners Dr Hartmut Fuenfgeld and Alianne Rance (RMIT University) facilitated a creative and thought provoking workshop around soft systems methodology techniques and how they can be incorporated into everyday life / workplace practice. The day was a great success with 35 participants taking part. Feedback was extremely positive.



- **Community Workshop** (Monday 16th June) – community members were invited to come along and join the conversation at the Hamilton Community House. Alianne facilitated a discussion around who in our community is “doing it tough” and how we can prepare towards a better future. We thank the Community House for their warm hospitality.
- **Understanding vulnerability (Community Consultation)** – Melanie and Jo have been in the community conducting individual and group consultations with a number of local services, hospital departments and community members. Consultations have been focused around ‘what makes living in the country tough?’ – gaining a broad understanding of what vulnerability looks like in the Southern Grampians Shire. Although consultation data has not been analysed as yet, some recurring groups who have been identified as vulnerable include; groups that are socially or geographically isolated (particularly individuals living alone), people with borderline mental-illness who are missing out on financial and emotional supports ‘slipping through the gaps’, and young families living on a low income.
- **Learn and share Lunch** (Tuesday 17th June) – Stakeholders and partners were invited to a Learn and share lunch where Alianne spoke about her recent experiences as a presenter at the Climate Futures Conference in Brazil which encompassed the work of PCP and community sector. We congratulate Ali on her fantastic efforts.
- **Research** – Preliminary findings from RP:RF research highlights the abundant definitions of vulnerability in different contexts, with few specific and practical descriptions at the local, micro scale. Macro and academic definitions of social vulnerability fail to grasp specific meaning at community level. Literature review investigations indicate that there is a gap between the policy framing of 'vulnerability' at Australian State and Federal government levels, and the meaning of social vulnerability in the context of a rural Victorian Shire. Given that funding models follow such definitions at State and Federal levels, it can be inferred that this gap could result in vulnerable community members 'slipping through the cracks' as such.

Although the next phase of the research will consider climate impacts on existing community vulnerability, research and mounting evidence tells us that climate impacts will in general, exacerbate existing conditions and vulnerabilities. This is concerning, and exemplifies further why research such as RPRF is sorely required. Understanding social vulnerability in context, and how this will change under a variable climate is being achieved by using well-connected and experienced platforms such as the Southern Grampians and Glenelg Primary Care Partnership. As research progresses, it is ever more evident that platforms such as these must be exploited to enable communities to adapt, and cope with climate variability and change.

- Ali is also continuing her work on the literature and policy review, stakeholders and PCP partners have been asked to forward through documents and policies that may support the review. If you, or your agency has any documentation relating to; vulnerable people, community planning and development, welfare or climate change that may assist Ali please feel free to forward through to: [alianne.rance@rmit.edu.au](mailto:alianne.rance@rmit.edu.au)

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## *What's Next?*

**Phase 2: Vulnerability Interactions (Timeframe June – July 2014), to investigate interactions between existing vulnerability, those related to current environmental and weather conditions and those related to the social and indirect impacts of climate change on the rural vulnerable associated with the Southern Grampians Shire.**

- **Climate change and service delivery** – some meetings have been conducted and more planned with local stakeholders to discuss the impacts of climate change on service delivery and the client’s vulnerability, and



what can be done to manage this. Stakeholders will be asked to look at how their service has been affected by recent weather events; how they coped, strategies they may have used, and how services can better plan for the future.

- Future workshops are planned for phase 2 in the next couple of months which will facilitate opportunities for stakeholders to plan together to reduce vulnerability to climate change for their clients and service provision. At this stage these workshops are planned for mid-August.

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## *Project Team:*

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