

Case Study Report



Southern Grampians
SHIRE COUNCIL

Enabling Resilience with Southern Grampians Shire Council

An output of the Rural
People; Resilient
Futures Project



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Images

Courtesy of Southern Grampians Shire Council

Disclaimer

The views expressed herein do not represent those of the Victorian Government. They are the views of the report authors.

This case study report is a co-developed research output of the Rural People; Resilient Futures project, funded through the Victorian Adaptation and Sustainability Partnership Grant Scheme, through the Victorian Department of Environment and Primary Industries. This report was co-written by the Southern Grampians Shire Council, the Southern Grampians and Glenelg Primary Care Partnership, as well as researchers from RMIT University. Chapter 3 of this report outlines information gathered through consultations undertaken throughout the project and the report captures the views of the project partners and the researchers involved.

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1. About us

Southern Grampians Shire Council (SGSC) is located in the South West of Victoria spanning 6652 square kilometres encompassing the city of Hamilton (population approx. 16,500) and smaller townships of Peshurst, Dunkeld, Tarrington, Balmoral, Coleraine, Cavendish and Branxholme. The Southern Grampians Shire Council provides a range of local government services and within the Rural People: Resilient Futures project the Community Services, Community Development, Environment and Emergency Management participated.

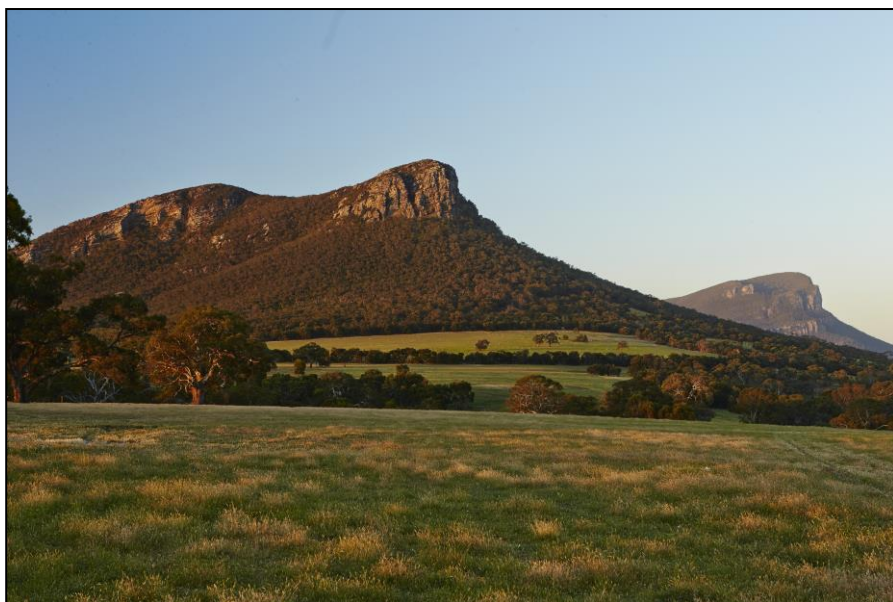


FIGURE 1: SOUTHERN GRAMPIANS SHIRE COUNCIL LANDSCAPE

2. The Rural People; Resilient Futures Project

2.1 The project

Our organisation is a member agency of the Southern Grampians and Glenelg Primary Care Partnership (PCP in the following), who has been involved in a project funded by the Victorian government through the Victorian Adaptation and Sustainability Partnership Grant Scheme. The project entitled '*Rural People; Resilient Futures*' (RPRF in the following) has been conducted to investigate the nature of vulnerability in a rural shire, understand how this will vary under the impacts of climate change, and how the capacity of these groups can be increased and who can help.

The project is a collaborative endeavour between the Southern Grampians and Glenelg Shire (the Shire in the following), the PCP and researchers from RMIT University. Eight member agencies of the PCP, and various other stakeholders were involved in all phases of the project, and facilitated engagement with community members throughout the Shire.

2.2 The process

The RPRF project involved four phases, over a 12 month period. Key member agency engagement was facilitated through one-on-one consultations with the PCP and researchers, as well as workshops throughout all phases of the project. The project phases are outlined below:

Phase 1:

Baseline Understanding
What does vulnerability look like in SGSC.

Phase 2:

How does climate change complicate this vulnerability?

Phase 3:

What can we do locally?
Focus on integration into plans and policies

Phase 4:

Information sharing to inform community and stakeholders

3. Getting started

3.1 Why we wanted to participate

SGSC was a member of the RP:RF project consortium and project management group and recognised the increasing impacts of climate change on the Southern Grampians Community.

We recognised that local government has a major role to play in adaptation and particularly working with our community to reduce vulnerability"

- In recent times the Aged and Disability department has concentrated on reducing the vulnerability of Home and Community Care (HACC) clients to heatwave. A major project was undertaken in 2010 involving staff training and client awareness as well as introduction of home adaptations. The heatwaves we had already experienced demonstrated the urgent need to develop key strategies.
- We saw an opportunity through participation in RP:RF to review our policies and procedures
- We were very interested in gaining further insight into vulnerability in our community.
- Upskilling the workforce as well and considering the wellbeing of the workforce was also a significant factor for participating in RP:RF
- We were interested in starting conversations with our community and encouraging forward thinking by both the SGSC and the community.

At the time of expressing an interest in the project, work had been carried out with HACC to reduce the impacts of heatwave as well as review of policies and procedures around a range of extreme climatic events such as bushfire and flood.

SGSC plays a key role in Municipal Emergency Management Planning however we also recognised the RP:RF was more about enhancing community resilience than emergency management.

SGSC facilitate a Community Safety and Resilience committee bringing together stakeholders to build safety and resilience in our community. SGSC is a large and diverse workforce and we promote health and wellbeing throughout the organisation.

4. Engagement in the Process

4.1 Initial consultations - Phase 1

We initially engaged with the PCP for this project throughout 2014 through meetings and interviews with staff from Aged and Disability Services, Community Development, Rural Access and Maternal and Child Health. During these meeting, PCP representatives engaged with us on the following questions:

- Who do you work with?
- What makes life tough for community members?
- What are community members doing to make life easier?
- What happened during the last heatwave?
- How can we make life easier?

Our key response to these questions outlined:

- We work with a diverse community providing services across the range of demographics from young to older residents of the community with a range of abilities.
- People who have limited social connection or who are isolated seem to be doing it tougher than others. This can be further complicated by age and disability as well as geographic isolation.
- Local support networks, both for the community and for agencies to network and learn from each other. Also transport being a concern

in a rural community so outreach, use of IT and smarter ways to reach the community seem to make life easier.

- HACC staff was able to have a conversation with clients to ensure they were more prepared. Staff across the shire seem more aware and able to link community with advice. There still is a lot to learn about the balance of health and safety for our agency and wellbeing of the community and this can cause conflict in the community and requires a high level of engagement.
- One way to make life easier would be to include everyone in the conversation so we all understand the reasoning behind decision making. For example if Meals on Wheels are not going to be delivered on high fire risk days, the community could already have a “back up plan” in place.



FIGURE 2: SGSC STAFF INVOLVED IN THE PROJECT

During this phase, an informal community consultation workshop was undertaken at SGSC as well as a Stakeholder workshop where we were invited to discuss the means to manage the complexity of vulnerability in rural Victoria. These workshops were purposed to understand what vulnerability really means in the Shire from the perspective of the community.

Simultaneously, the researchers from RMIT University undertook a literature review to understand what the academic and grey literature said about vulnerability. This was presented to our team through a workshop in Phase 2.

We worked with the PCP to complete a climate and vulnerability workbook produced by the research team, to help understand what our organisation, service delivery and clients may be vulnerable to already.

From this process, we understood that currently, we are most vulnerable to:

- All extreme weather events including heatwave, bushfire, flood and drought.
- As a priority we need strategies and policies to reduce the vulnerability of our workforce and our community to these events.



What does climate change mean for your community service organisation?

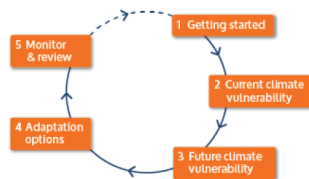
Activity Book

Rural People; Resilient Futures Project
Southern Grampians and Glenelg Primary Care Partnership
Southern Grampians Shire Council
RMIT University

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Purpose: to determine the impacts of climate change on your service delivery and clients' vulnerability, and what can be done to manage this.¹

The Adaptation Process²



¹ Workbook adapted from:
NHS – Adaptation to Climate Change for Health and Social Care Organisation
UKCIP – Local Climate Impacts Profile: how to do an LCIP
UKCIP – Adaptation Wizard Notepad

² UKCIP Adaptation Wizard, <http://www.ukcip.org.uk/wizard/>

FIGURE 3. THE CLIMATE AND VULNERABILITY WORKBOOK

4.2 The impact of climate change-Phase 2

During this phase, the RMIT Researchers and the PCP ran a workshop to understand how climate impacts may affect our organisation, service delivery and clients. We were taken through a climate impacts table, which PCP representatives later met with us to complete.

The table demonstrated what impacts are likely to occur to 2070, highlighting specific events and how they might increase in intensity or frequency. The table then investigated the 'Receptor: thing being affected', the 'Consequences', the 'Threats: negative impacts' and 'Opportunities: positive impacts' that may occur as a result of each climate impact.

At the end of the workshop, we ran through two possible scenarios that could affect our organisation and the shire; heatwave combined with bushfire, and an extreme rainfall and flood event, illustrating a critical disaster point. We then worked back through time, over six months, two years, and five years to brainstorm adaptation actions that would have helped us to avoid the disaster in the first place. These formed the basis of our adaptation action planning and highlighted things that we are already doing to increase resilience.

During this workshop, we participated in a film on the project.



FIGURE 4. FILM PRODUCTION

4.3 Current adaptation actions

Through the process, we understood that we are already undertaking actions that aid in building resilience within our community.

We have spent considerable time looking at policies and procedures particularly in relation to Heatwave and HACC clients as well as occupational health and wellbeing of the HACC workforce. This ranges from staff training through to client education and awareness. Among other strategies, we developed in-home temperature thermometers that highlight the standard human comfort zone and enable a visual prompt for clients as well as a discussion opportunity between HACC staff, family members and other carers.



FIGURE 4: IN-HOME THERMOMETER RANGE

The Community Safety and Resilience Committee have invited the project participants to speak about the project to increase the reach of the project between stakeholder workshops and consultations.

We have begun a review of policies and procedures and engaged staff and community in that process.

We have networked with agencies and shared resources and information.

4.4 New adaptation actions – Phase 3

In October, the project team ran a workshop to demonstrate some adaptation action case studies that were relevant to our organisation. We then participated in a facilitated brainstorming session to decide on what actions we would commit to including in our existing practices.

We committed to share resources with member agencies to promote awareness of what to do during extreme events.

We commit to support forward planning and facilitating adaptation in a proactive way

We commit to seek pathways to further financially support this project moving forward and to look what else can be done, to seek opportunities.

We commit to share the stories of success – what’s already happened and to promote the multiple benefits of these actions across different sectors.

"I realised that as a Home and Community Care Worker that I play a major role in working with my community to reduce the vulnerability of my clients to climate change"

5. Outcomes of the process

5.1 What did we learn?

- We learnt that we need to focus on workforce as well as community.
- We learnt about vulnerability across the shire and how this is really context specific.
- We learnt about the importance of community conversations and community engagement when embedding adaptation actions.

5.2 What was challenging?

- Balancing the impact on staff and community and engaging the community in these conversations.
- Sometimes the language of climate change can be disengaging whereas we know there will be an increase in extreme weather events and that this will have broad impacts on our staff and community.

5.3 What has changed during this process?

- We have had more conversations on a range of levels throughout the shire and are learning to use common language to engage staff and the community.

5.4 What was most important for us?

- Understanding the role of our shire in engaging the wider community and all staff further in the conversations.
- Forward thinking and moving beyond emergency management.

6. What next? Moving forward.

The SGSC will continue to embed climate change adaptation into our everyday policies and procedures and engage across the organisation and the community. We believe the networks and information generated through the project will continue to be used throughout the shire.

It is important to us to continue to also engage other local government areas, government, research agencies, broader staff and community in future planning to ensure a good understanding of the values and knowledge that underpins policy decisions and procedures.

SGSC is an active partner of the PCP and will continue to learn and share information using the PCP platform



FIGURE 5. HOME CARE WORKER ASSISTING IN THE COMMUNITY