

Case Study Report



mulleraterong
centre inc

disability support

choice

empowerment

support

inclusion

outcomes

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Enabling Resilience with Mulleraterong Centre Incorporated

An output of the Rural
People; Resilient
Futures Project



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Images

Courtesy of Mulleraterong Centre Inc. 2014

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 Mulleraterong Centre Inc., the Southern Grampians and Glenelg Primary Care Partnership, as well as researchers from RMIT University. Chapter 4 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

Mulleraterong Centre Incorporated is a not for profit organisation providing services to adults with intellectual and physical disabilities. We are the leading Disability Service Provider in the Hamilton region of Western Victoria. We have a proud history of providing quality, progressive and individualised programs and activities since 1956.

We currently provide over 55 programs and activities to meet a wide range of needs and requirements. We also design activities to suit individual needs or requests.

Our vision is to be a progressive, quality and sustainable organisation.

Our purpose is to support individual choice, empowerment, opportunity and inclusion



Figure 1: Mulleraterong Centre, Hamilton, Victoria

2. The Rural People; Resilient Futures Project

Our organisation is a member agency of the Southern Grampians and Glenelg Primary Care Partnership (PCP in the following), who have 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, 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

It was important for us to be involved in the project to increase local networking opportunities. We have always found great value in building a local network both formally and informally to support the vulnerable people in our community.

Our organisation was interested in learning more about how we can plan and educate our clients and the wider community on extreme weather and climate change, and how to better support those who access our services. Currently we include actions within our organisation to increase the resilience of our clients, and we wanted to share our experience and learn more from others involved in the project.

"We experienced increased heatwave and hot temperatures over last summer particularly. Hotter weather impacts on the Mulleraterong client groups - many of our clients have limited coping skills during extreme weather periods so we need to adapt our programs accordingly".

At the time of expressing an interest in the project, work had been carried out to ensure that our emergency preparedness policies and procedures were detailed, current and relevant to our organisation.

Being involved in the project supported us to look at better ways that staff can directly support our clients and pass on important life skills. The project has also prompted us to review and update our systems and additional Occupational Health and Safety (OH&S) policies to reflect preparedness for emergencies, extreme weather conditions and other such events where we are required to support those who access our service.

As a result of our project involvement, we have discovered many easily accessible areas to consider climate adaptation education for our

organisation and clients. We considered sources such as Department of Health, Country Fire Authority, Local council and other local organisations to gain valuable knowledge on how to better promote education and ideas to promote building resilience for our clients and the wider community.

4. Engagement in the Process

4.1 Initial consultations – Phase 1

We initially engaged with the PCP for this project in April 2014 through a Phase 1 Consultation Interview. During this 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:

- Our clients are an aging population with a range of abilities;
- Some areas which make life tough for our clients include; lack of transport access, extreme weather conditions (hot/cold), and accessibility to relevant information;
- During the last heatwave outdoor programs were postponed and substituted with indoor activities;
- On “code red” bushfire days the local community bus service operation has been cancelled without notice causing considerable consequences for Mulleraterong clients; and
- Access to clearer information and policies for staff, clients and their families would make life easier during extreme weather conditions.

During this phase, an informal community consultation workshop was undertaken at Hamilton Community House as well as a Stakeholder Workshop where we were invited to discuss 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 outlined 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 the following:

- Extreme weather conditions and code red days.
- Knowing associated procedures on code red days for other organisations that directly affect our services
- Clear understanding of what can be done to reduce heat wave symptoms for both clients and staff
- Ensuring that all information is easy for all clients to understand and accessible

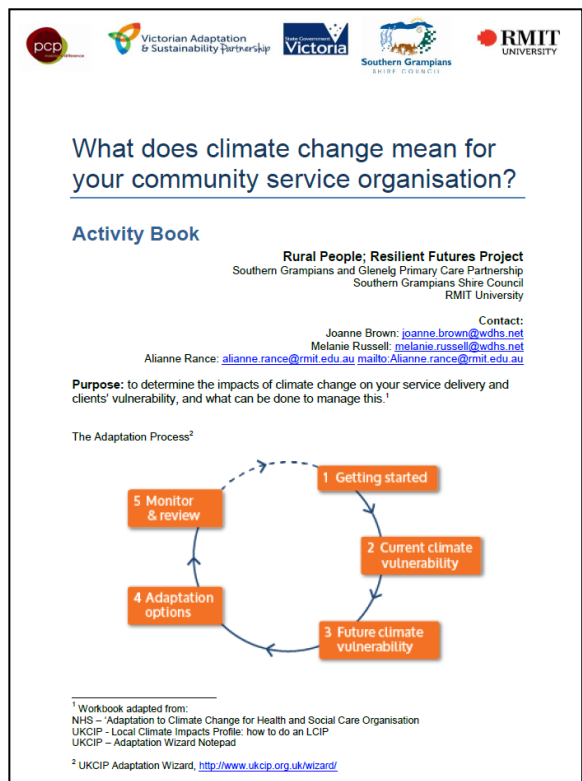


Figure 2. The Climate and Vulnerability workbook¹

4.2 The impact of climate change - Phase 2

During this phase, the RMIT Researchers and PCP ran a workshop to understand how climate impacts may affect our organisation, service delivery and clients. We were taken through a climate impacts table¹, which PCP representatives later met with us to complete.

The table demonstrated which 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 the production of a film on the project.



Figure 3. Filming phase two workshop

¹ Adapted from: UKCIP – Local Climate Impacts Profile

4.3 Current adaptation actions

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

We have updated any relevant policies and procedures and included direct links to Southern Grampians Shire Emergency Management Plan. We have ensured that any excursions and events we attend have clear instruction on what will happen on extreme weather days. This process includes an updated excursion checklist to ensure considerations like hats, sunscreen and extra water are included.



Figure 4. Educating clients – staying hydrated

We have made posters to display educational messages about heatwave information that is easy read and relevant to our organisation and clients.

Some Mulleraterong clients live independently in the community and participate in independent living programs at Mulleraterong. These clients receive support and instruction as to how to cope in hot weather and how to manage their home environment to provide maximum comfort and relief from the heat.

Our Client Representative Council discuss ways of supporting their peers to understand the importance of keeping cool, taking care of each other and re-hydrating during hot days and heatwaves.

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:

- Continuing to network and support other local organisations to ensure that we work together to support the vulnerable people in our community;
- We will educate those who access our service about climate adaptation through newsletters articles, Client Representative council meetings and our Facebook page; and
- We will continue to research up-to-date information about the health impacts of climate change and the ways to reduce any impacts on those we support and our staff into the future.

5. Outcomes of the process

5.1 What did we learn?

- We learnt to use past weather experiences and patterns as a way to plan for the future;
- Networking opportunities are a powerful tool within small communities. Listening and learning from fellow agencies was an extremely valuable experience;
- We learnt that we were already taking steps towards adaptation in the workplace, and that it was simply a case of documenting actions and clarifying policies.

"Alison (Mulleraterong OHS Rep. and Quality Communications Coordinator) has now built relationships with a wide range of local agencies. Alison loves the fact she can now pick up the phone and confidently call fellow agencies and chat about their services and adaptation plans."

5.2 What was challenging?

- It took some time to fully understand the project and how the different phases would work, but we put our confidence in the project team and were amazed how the project unfolded;
- Finding the time to commit to all workshops and meetings took some juggling, the key worker from Mulleraterong often participated in project events on her days off.

5.3 What has changed during this process?

- Some decisions in the past have been an informal process (postponing activities on hot days and substituting with indoor activities), but now more formal procedures have been developed;
- We now consider climate impacts in all our centre planning;
- This project has opened opportunities for discussion between staff and how we can continue to improve services for staff, clients and their families.



Figure 5. Client Representative Council

5.4 What was most important for us?

- Connecting and establishing networks across our community provided opportunities for information exchange and future partnership possibilities;
- Keeping fellow staff and clients updated on the project happenings was an important aspect; if small changes had to be made in policy or everyday client activities everyone remained 'in the loop'.

6. What next? Moving forward.

We will support and liaise with other organisations to share relevant information. We will review relevant policies and procedures regularly to ensure they are up to date. Our staff will continue to educate those that we support to adapt to any impacts of climate change.



Figure 6: Staff and clients at the Mulleraterong Centre

