Social work with Regional, Rural and Remote Communities

A Critical Analysis
Amanda Howard
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• Acknowledgment of Country
Who are we and why this topic?

• Amanda & Meaghan

• Our social work story and background.

• What we bring to and why we are interested in this topic.
This session

• What are we finding so far in our research?

• Your thoughts and experiences as practitioners

• Where to from here?
Our research

- Starting points
- Drawing on experience
- Current and past research
- Theoretical literature
- Interviews with practitioners (30-40 Social Workers from across Australia)
- Data analysis
- Writing it up
Social work with Regional, Rural and Remote communities

• What do we mean by ‘Regional, Rural and Remote’.
• Who defines this?
• How does the definition/s inform our perceptions?
Assumptions and questions

- The origins, shape and character of communities.
- Providing services as a ‘problem’
- Social Work in regional, rural and remote contexts is different?
- Boundaries are different in the bush
- Using binaries to frame our thinking? Is this helpful?
  - Generalist vs specialist
  - Clinical vs community
  - Rural vs urban
What does the literature tell us?

• Themes
  • Generalist services

• Distance

• Power and decision-making

• Relational factors and social capital
What does the literature tell us?

- Community development approaches are important.
- Importance of social work education
- Professional boundaries and identity
- Isolation for workers
What is less researched?

- Some work on environmental issues but mostly linked to natural disasters eg floods, fire.

- Literature about community development but little on practice on the ground using CD approaches.

- Parallels and connections between social work practice in urban, regional, rural and remote communities.

- Small number of studies on impacts of the changing policy and funding context on Australia in the last 3 years.

- Impacts of centralised decision making on social work practice in regional, rural and remote communities.
Discussion

• What are the big issues for you in practice?

• What, if anything has changed in social work practice in regional, rural and remote communities?
Where to from here?

- Interviews
- Data Analysis
- Book
- Ongoing conversations
• Thank You!