

Visioning a future for rural and regional Australia

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Leadership on the rural policy agenda



**Facilitating robust engagement between
policy makers, researchers and the
community**

Networking researchers and policy makers

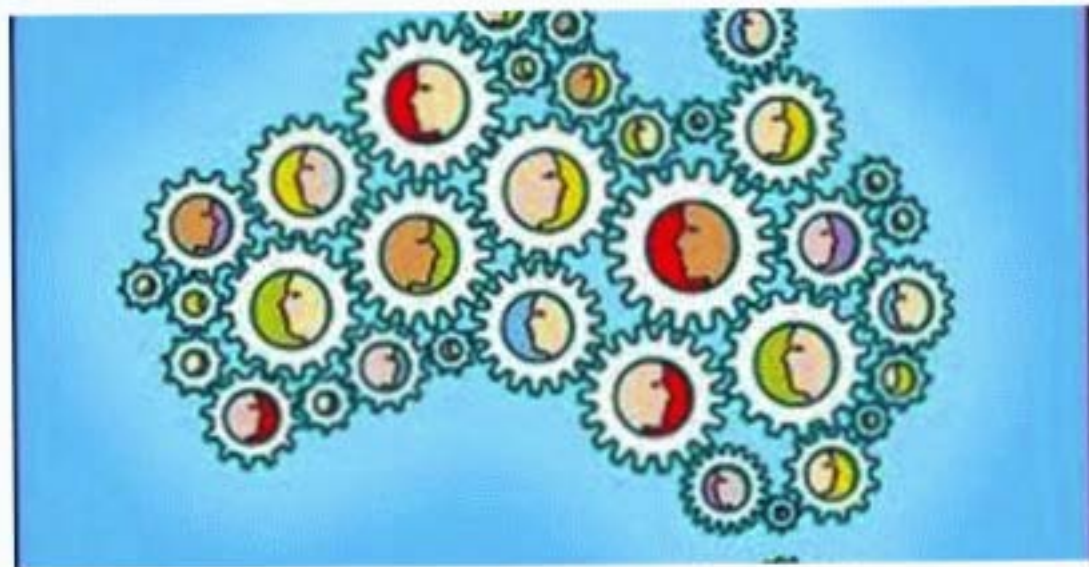


Promoting a trans disciplinary approach to the questions of rural policy



- A research network through lecture and seminar series
- Research partnerships

Engaging with Australian government policy on the rural and regional space



Visioning a future for rural and regional Australia – a scoping study

- What were the major policy initiatives that have shaped rural and regional Australia since World War II?
- What are the current issues facing rural and regional Australia which need to be addressed going forward?
- What are the critical policy issues which need to be addressed going forward?



Methods

- Policy reviews
- Interviews with Key opinion leaders
- Commissioned research projects
- A report integrating the findings
- National consultative forum (April 2012)

NIRRA members provided the following policy reviews

- Collits – regional policy
- Gross – population
- Roberts – education
- Smith & Pritchard – agricultural efficiency
- Price- research and development
- Hogan et al. - Localism
- Cockfield – regional development
- Henderson – water
- Tennant – NRM
- Weller – employment and rural welfare

Key opinion leaders

- Prof. Margaret Alston
- Dr Neill Barr
- Prof. Linda Botterill
- A. Prof. Ruth Beilin
- Prof. Judith Brett
- Prof. John Cary
- Prof. Steve Dovers
- Dr Quentin Farmer-Bowers
- Prof. Vaughan Higgins
- Prof. Geoff Lawrence
- Prof. Stewart Lockie
- Prof. John Martin
- Dr Graham Marshall
- Dr Alaric Maude
- Prof. Lauren Rickard
- Prof. Helen Ross
- Dr Mark Stafford Smith
- Prof. Daniela Stehlik
- Prof. Frank Vanclay
- Prof. John Warhurst

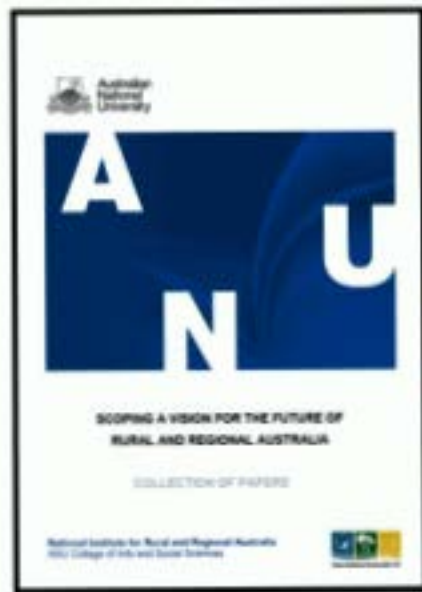
Individual Research Projects

Aspirations of rural and regional Australia -
Dr Catherine Gross

Characteristics of sustainable communities -
Dr Kim Houghton

Mapping the 'patchwork economy' in rural and
remote Australia - Dr Dean Carson

Integration report and collected papers



Project omissions

- Defining rural and regional Australia
- Issues noted but not addressed
 - Aboriginal people
 - Food security
 - Health and Ageing
 - Social impacts of CSG

When we say RaRA what are we talking about?



<http://pool.abc.net.au/media/minotaur>

Current issues

- The Basin Plan ...
- Future of agriculture/Support for agriculture
- NRM – who is responsible for what
- Localism - communities managing their own risks
 - Socio-economic viability of regional settlements
- The changing nature of rural employment & mobile workforces
- Management of the rangelands
- The place of research in sustaining RaRA – industries, environments and communities

The key findings of the integration report

- Shift in economic policy
- The re-emergence of NRM issues
- Policy asymmetry – privileging the economic at the cost of the environmental and the social
- Need for governance structure and national policy coordination
- The need to address questions about inclusion and fairness.
- Role of social science research

Shifts in economic policy – from protectionism to market based approaches

- Removal of tariffs and industry-protectionism aimed at increasing agricultural efficiency and productivity
- Inequities in agri-environmental spending
 - Uk \$1514
 - US \$2177
 - Aus \$453

The re-emergence of NRM issues

**Environmental
stewardship**



**Use of market based
instruments**



Asymmetries in the policy strategy

*"how much longer do we have to wait
before policymakers realise that this
approach is not working at the social
and environmental level"*

Key Opinion Leader - July 2011.

The move to policies of rural self-sufficiency

- National Competition Policy (NCP)
- Drought Policy
- Localism as a vision for the sector

Inclusion and fairness: political representation that serves rural communities

- Is there an increasing disconnect between government and community agendas?
- Is it inevitable that metropolitan electorates determine the political outcomes?



Failure in national policy coordination

- **Vertical policy organisation**
 - Aligning of State and Federal Plans with MDBA Plan
- **Horizontal policy coordination**
 - Over coming government policy silos

Role of social science research

Complexity of issues – and disagreement between stakeholders – requires application of social sciences to understand:

Inter-relationships: local economies/sustainable communities

Tipping points: socio-economic viability



Governance Frameworks

- Given that change is an ongoing process in Rural and Regional Australia the challenge is how this change is managed and to what ends.

Imperative for Govt support for RaRA

- Australians support the ideal that the rural suggests. It is central to our nation's identity.
- Constitutional structure of representation promotes RaRA
- No new vision for the sector since WW II
- Australian Government is practically involved in a wide range of policy issues
- Australian Government is seen to have a responsibility to address issues of national equity
- Some policy issues simply cannot be effectively managed lowest levels. Issues of scale require the involvement of the Australian Government.
- Policy, by its very nature, is not a static entity.
- The urban rural compact

We want feedback!

Visit

<http://nirra.anu.edu.au/forum/2774>

and join the discussion