



Acting for positive change: Improving the health of rural communities

Wilson, E., Aitken, J., Kenny, A., Dickson-
Swift, V.
27 November, 2018, Sydney, Australia

7th Annual NHMRC Symposium on Research
Translation
Ensuring Value in Research

Overview

- Present a summary of a body of work that addresses rural health issues
- Focus on a collaborative research approach utilising university and rural health service partnerships
- Describe how we engaged rural communities in participatory action research
- Highlight the value to partnership members and the communities involved

Background

- Australia's commitment to improving rural health (National Health & Hospitals Reform Commission, 2009)
- higher rates of chronic disease and mortality continue to be endured by people in rural areas compared to people living in major cities (Australian Institute of Health & Welfare (AIHW), 2016)
- poor health outcomes and poor health literacy co-exist alongside reduced access to health services (AIHW, 2016)
- Australian health policy directive to develop locally responsive health services (AIHW, 2016; National Health & Hospitals Reform Commission, 2009)



Research program: Improving the health of communities through participation

- Partnership with 3 rural health services
- Rural Victoria
- Active community participation



- Doctoral students worked directly with 3 rural communities
- 3 crosscutting projects
- Themed workshops over 18 months

Our community partners



Approx. pop. 4,000 each community



Socio-economic disadvantage



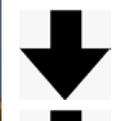
Burden of disease



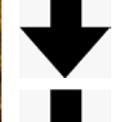
Ageing population



Children at risk of poor health & wellbeing



Income



Education



Life expectancy
(ABS, 2017)

Research objectives:

Focused on capacity building

- To assist rural communities to develop and apply inclusive processes for addressing community health needs
- To develop health service knowledge of community participation strategies to meet accreditation and policy obligations
- To co-design and co-produce locally responsive health planning and interventions that are relevant and sustainable

Three additional doctoral students to pursue crosscutting projects focused on

- international exemplars of community participation,
- the link between community participation and health literacy,
- community inclusion.

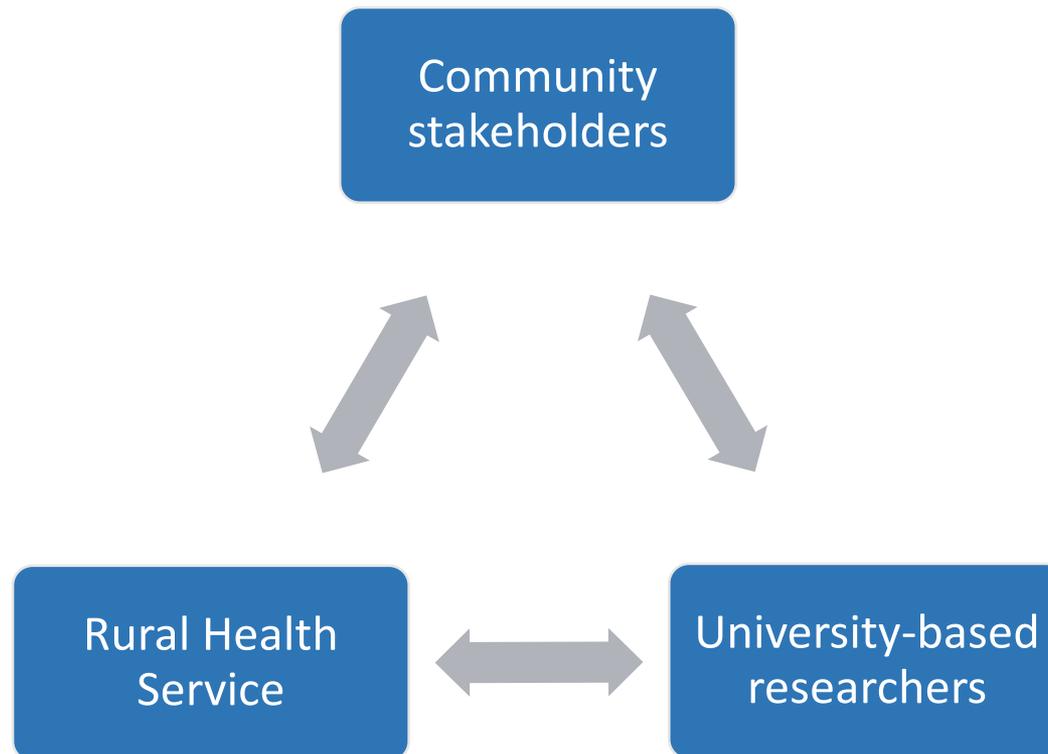
Research capacity to add value



A community-based participatory action research approach underpinned all aspects of project (Minkler & Wallerstein, 2008)

Knowledge transfer

Our collaborative research approach enabled the two-way transfer of knowledge to develop new strategies to improve community health outcomes.



How we achieved research objectives.

- Established a community action research group from each rural community
- Developed deliberate strategies to engage with marginalised groups.



- Sought ideas and perceptions about health needs from broader community

- A photo-voice (Wang & Burris, 1997) project initiated with students to map their therapeutic landscape within the community, with the aim of identifying places where they felt healthy or unhealthy
- The students often felt like outsiders within their small rural community. Recommendations were made to address these issues.

Develop health service knowledge of community participation strategies to meet accreditation and policy obligations

- Worked closely with health services' community advisory committees to include community participation in planning processes
- Provided resources to upskill health service staff and community advisory committees on practical strategies for meeting accreditation and policy requirements
- Shared knowledge through involvement of health services staff and board members in community participation processes
- Introduced health services to research skills, ethics, and the need for rigour in academic research
- Developed capacity of community members to both participate in an action research project and implement, and test, the recommendations of the community action research group.
- Identified missing community groups, and individuals were not participating, who wasn't at the table.

Co-design and co-produce locally responsive health planning and interventions that are relevant and sustainable

- Workshops, community meetings & events to identify health and wellbeing priorities.
- Facilitated groups to envision health and wellbeing future of their community.
- Participants provided with health and social data, needed to make decisions.
- Co-design research programs that use community participation and participatory action research to address emerging health disparities in rural communities, particularly mental health



Research translation

Research findings were translated into practice, policy and further research.

- Governance models were developed for:
 - universities and health services research collaboration;
 - community planning for health and wellbeing;
- Health service boards, management and staff acquired greater knowledge of community participation strategies and their relevance to Australian health policy.
- Six health service wellbeing coordinators appointed to reframe health delivery in response to community needs identified in this research.
- Two subsequent PhD projects initiated
- Potential to inform health policy - Health Policy Issues Brief (Deeble Institute) published



Ensuring value in research for:

- Health Services

Boards - improved knowledge to meet accreditation requirements, reframing models

of care developing new therapeutic spaces within the communities.

- health industry acknowledgement through regional, state and national awards for innovation in health care through collaborative research.

Staff - empowered to act

- Communities

Members - knowledge of how to work together, rather than in silos.

- potential changes in health literacy in each community, regarding key local

health and service priorities (longer term impact 3-10years).

Capacity to ensure research value



- Value of this research was ensured through effectively and sustainably improving knowledge and building capacity for the community, the health service, and researchers.
- Our research approach enabled capacity building in each rural community to collaborate for improved rural health outcomes.

References:

- Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) Ausstats. (2011). Census of Population and Housing: Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA), Australia, 2011
- Australia's Health 2016. Australia's Health Series. 15. Cat. No. AUS 199. Canberra, Australia: AIHW.
- Farmer, J., & Nimegeer, A. (2014). Community participation to design rural primary healthcare services. *BMC Health Services Research*, 14(1), 130.
- Farmer, J., Currie, M., Kenny, A., & Munoz, S. A. (2015). An exploration of the longer-term impacts of community participation in rural health services design. *Social Science & Medicine*, 141, 64-71.
- Guzys, D., Kenny, A., Dickson-Swift, V., & Threlkeld, G. (2015). A critical review of population health literacy assessment. *BMC Public Health*, 15(1), 215.
- Guzys, D., Dickson-Swift, V., Kenny, A., & Threlkeld, G. (2015). Gadamerian philosophical hermeneutics as a useful methodological framework for the Delphi technique. *International journal of qualitative studies on health and well-being*, 10(1), 26291.
- Guzys, D., Threlkeld, G., Dickson-Swift, V., & Kenny, A. (2018). Rural and regional community health service boards: perceptions of community health—a Delphi study. *Australian Journal of Primary Health*, 23(6), 543-548.
- Hyett, N., Kenny, A., & Dickson-Swift, V., Farmer, J., Boxall, A-M. (2014). Evidence brief: How can rural health be improved through community participation? Deeble Institute: Australian Healthcare and Hospitals Assoc.
- Hyett, N., McKinstry, C. E., Kenny, A., & Dickson-Swift, V. (2016). Community-centred practice: Occupational therapists improving the health and wellbeing of populations. *Australian Occupational Therapy Journal*, 63(1), 5-8.
- Hyett, N., Kenny, A., & Dickson-Swift, V. (2014). Methodology or method? A critical review of qualitative case study reports. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies on Health and Well-being*, 9(1), 23606.
- Hyett, N., Kenny, A., & Dickson-Swift, V. (2017). Approaches for building community participation: A qualitative case study of Canadian food security programs. *OTJR: Occupation, Participation and Health*, 37(4), 199-209.
- Hyett, N., Kenny, A., & Dickson-swift, V. (2015). What Motivates Community Participation In Rural Places? A Case Study Of A Rural Australian Community Bank: o326. *Australian Occupational Therapy Journal*, 62, 116.
- Kenny, A., Hyett, N., Sawtell, J., Dickson-Swift, V., Farmer, J., & O'Meara, P. (2013). Community participation in rural health: a scoping review. *BMC Health Services Research*, 13(1), 64.
- Kenny, A., Farmer, J., Dickson-Swift, V., & Hyett, N. (2015). Community participation for rural health: a review of challenges. *Health Expectations*, 18(6), 1906-1917.
- Minkler, M., & Wallerstein, N. (Eds.). (2008). *Community-based Participatory Research for Health: From Process to Outcomes*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Patten, E., O'Meara, P., & Dickson-Swift, V. (2015). Scoping review of the exclusion and inclusion of rural newcomers in community participation. *Australian Journal of Rural Health*, 23(3), 127-135.
- Wilson, E., Kenny, A., & Dickson-Swift, V. (2015). Using blogs as a qualitative health research tool: a scoping review. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 14(5),
- Wilson, E., Kenny, A., & Dickson-Swift, V. (2018). Ethical challenges in community-based participatory research: a scoping review. *Qualitative Health Research*, 28(2), 189-199.
- Wilson, E., Kenny, A., & Dickson-Swift, V. (2018). Ethical challenges of community based participatory research: exploring researchers' experience. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, 21(1), 7-24.
- Wilson, E., Kenny, A., & Dickson-Swift, V. (2018). Rural health services and the task of community participation at the local community level: a case study. *Australian Health Review*. 42, 111-116.
- Wilson, E., Kenny, A., & Dickson-Swift, V. (2015) Ethical implications of community-based participatory research (CBPR). *Rural Links: A newsletter of the Canadian Rural Health Research Society, Special Edition*. August, 2015.



Thank you

e.wilson@latrobe.edu.au
j.aitken@latrobe.edu.au