

# BULOKE LIVING PROJECT; A BOOK OF CONNECTION

## BACKGROUND

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Recognising that ongoing drought conditions in the Buloke Shire pose major challenges to the community, Southern Mallee Primary Care Partnership (SMPCP) initiated, coordinated and facilitated the SMPCP Buloke Community Wellbeing Drought Collaboration meeting in December 2015. This brought together 24 people from local agencies, businesses and community members to discuss resilience and the community's support needs. As a result of, the Southern Mallee PCP Buloke Community Resilience Working Group (BCRWG) was formed to work collaboratively on initiatives addressing resilience, connectedness and enhancing community skills and capacity.

The Southern Mallee PCP BCRWG commenced in January 2016 and decided to initiate a photo story book project, focusing on the resilience of the Buloke people and created by the community. It aims to build community capacity through photography and storytelling, and strengthen local networks.

The Buloke Living Project; A Book of Connection was officially launched in February 2016, followed by sub launches in all ten Buloke towns.

## PARTNERS

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- Southern Mallee Primary Care Partnership
- East Wimmera Health Service
- Buloke Shire Council
- Wimmera Uniting Care
- Communities of Berriwillock, Birchip, Charlton, Culgoa, Donald, Nandaly, Nullawil, Sea Lake, Watchem, Wycheproof

## METHOD

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The Buloke Living Project used an inclusive model of practice and demonstrated the benefit of collective effort. Using photography and storytelling, the project brings together narratives around the themes of community connectedness and resilience, revealing the desire of the local community and to be part of the diverse and often challenging story that is Buloke.

SM PCP harnessed existing relationships and networks across the Buloke Shire to engage the community throughout the project, including finding local photographers, writers and story tellers. Strong relationships were essential throughout the project, from its initial promotion to the launch. These relationships enabled SMPCP to use existing communication platforms, professional and personal connections, and develop a deeper understanding of the community's perceptions of Buloke and the region's challenges.

## OUTCOMES

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This project has produced visual, tangible outcomes that were created by and for the community. The capacity of individual residents and families to address climatic challenges continues to give heart to observers and encourage service providers to continue their support through challenging times.

This project has seen:

- Community photographers and local authors further developing their photographic and writing skills

- Local story tellers sharing the resilience and the strengths of Buloke communities.
- The book launched across all 10 communities in Buloke Shire
- 300 copies of the book printed, with more requested

It is anticipated that the photos and stories will be used by local communities and agencies well into the future

*“Buloke communities and individuals continue to thrive and adapt to new ‘normals’ thrust upon them by the changing demographic, ecological and economic climate confronting rural Victoria. The Buloke Living project is an observation and reminder of how Buloke people, family and communities rise through adversity and support each other and their community.”*

**Mayor of Buloke Shire**

Link to Buloke Living book

[https://issuu.com/focusoncommunity/docs/buloke\\_living\\_book\\_full\\_final](https://issuu.com/focusoncommunity/docs/buloke_living_book_full_final)