RMIT UNIVERSITY | Centre for **Urban Research**

Rural People; Resilient Futures Pilot Project

Building blocks of rural community resilience

Final Report

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Disclaimer
The views expressed herein do not represent those of the Victorian Government, or any of the organisations that participated in the study. They are the views and interpretations of the report authors.

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Contents

Table of Figures

Executive Summary

- Social vulnerability is largely context specific and difficult to define in a meaningful way without using local knowledge;
- Often those who are 'borderline clients', i.e. client without significant health or well-being issues are those who 'fall through the gaps' of support policies in place to assist vulnerable people;
- The complexity of providing timely planning and responses to reduce social vulnerability will be increased as existing vulnerabilities are exacerbated by climate change;
- Social isolation is an increasing factor exacerbating social vulnerability in the Southern Grampians Shire;
- Climate change is already a reality in rural communities although the perception thereof – and the responses to it are very much event driven;
- Although a lot of work is currently underway within agencies to address extreme weather events, there is little proactive adaptation planning currently occurring that are geared towards preventing disastrous consequences, particularly in the context of increasing extreme weather events, under climate change.
- There is very little coordination or integration between agencies within the community, leading to gaps in service provision and providing adequate support to the most vulnerable in times of crisis. These gaps may have disastrous consequences if extreme climatic events happen more frequently and in concurrence, where existing resources to respond to such events will be extremely constrained.
- Gap needs to be filled to enable agencies to engage in an adaptation planning process with agencies. The model identified through this project could be used to facilitate such engagement.

Tangible outputs from the project include:
- Project on a page;
- A film outlining the project process;
- Case studies from participating agencies;
- An adaptation workbook for agencies;
- Project findings presentation to Council;
- Project results on a page;
- Extensive media engagement;
- Three conference presentations;

Intangible outputs from the project include:
- Unleashing inherent capacity of member agencies
- Validating member agency and client experience
- Building trust with member agencies

The RP;RF pilot project demonstrated its value by not only meeting project objectives, and delivering on the objectives of the VAS Partnership Grant Scheme, but also through realising a number of co-benefits for the SGGPCP and its affiliated member agencies. The pilot was successful because the model for engagement with community service organisations in rural areas proved useful to

commence the adaptation planning process to consider climate risk in the context of changing social vulnerability at the member agency level.

Key success criteria include:
- Using an existing and trusted platform (SGGPCP) to build capacity for adaptation planning
- Add value to the engagement process
- Speak the right language
- Retain flexibility
- Find linkages between

What next?

This pilot project has focused on providing a starting point of the adaptation process. It would be ideal if the momentum generated by the project could be continued while engagement levels are still high. Further investigation into the periphery networks from the PCP and its member agencies, both formally and informally, is required to understand which networks to strengthen to promote community resilience in rural areas of Victoria. The engagement process can continue from this pilot project stage, and SGGPCP is well equipped to share its experience and increased capacity with PCPs across the State, using this valuable platform and drawing on the now well established linkages between climate change and community health and wellbeing to promote community resilience.

The authors of this report recommend the ideal 'Phase 5' of this project to include:

- Engagement with all PCPs in rural areas of Victoria
- Share the model for engagement and pass on resources to support this
- Mentoring from SGGPCP and RMIT researchers collaboratively in situ, over a period of 6 months to test the engagement model with respective PCPs member agencies
- Support from advocacy and State Government departments to promote this approach and to provide resourcing.
- Ongoing networking opportunities with other agencies, researchers and community members
- Scenario workshops to adaptation action brainstorming
- Teaching and engaging methodologies to up skill staff to navigate complex issues and develop actions to build resilience within service delivery
- Bring the emergency management representatives along the journey and incorporate proactive adaptation planning in their service delivery.

1   Why undertake this work

1.1   Purpose of this report

This report tells the story of the Rural People; Resilient Futures (RP;RF moving forward) pilot project, which has developed and tested a model for engaging rural community service organisations in planning for the impacts of climate change and increasing community resilience. The report focuses on the process employed through the RP;RF project, recommendations for similar agencies to adopt, and steps moving forward.

The report does so by describing:
- Understanding social vulnerability in context (Section 2.1);
- A model for community service organisation engagement using the SGGPCP platform (Section 2.5 and Section 3.5);
- Activities and engagement methods employed throughout the pilot project (Section 4);
- Benefits of employing this approach (Section 3); and
- Recommendations to continue the success of this pilot (Section 0).

1.2   Background: The '*Rural People; Resilient Futures*' project

This report is the final output of the pilot project titled 'Rural People; Resilient Futures Project; (called '*RP;RF*' throughout this report), which was funded by the Victorian Department of Environment and Primary Industries (now the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning) through the former Victorian Adaptation and Sustainability (VAS) Partnership Grant Scheme. Hosted by the Southern Grampians Shire Council, the project was implemented from January 2014 to March 2015, using a collaborative approach involving the Southern Grampians Shire Council, the Southern Grampians and Glenelg Primary Care Partnership, and RMIT University's Centre for Urban Research.

This project builds on the success and partnerships established from the '*Implementing Adaptation*' project, funded through the Victorian Centre for Climate Change Adaptation Research (VCCCAR) whereby researchers from RMIT University engaged with the Southern Grampians and Glenelg Primary Care Partnership ('*SGGPCP*' throughout this report) to identify opportunities for planning for the impacts of climate change and variability. Near the completion of this 18-month project, the SGGPCP and RMIT University joined up with Southern Grampians Shire Council, to apply for funding from the Victorian Adaptation and Sustainability Partnership Grant Scheme, to extend the model of engagement developed as part of the VCCCAR project to SGGPCP member agencies and to the communities they support.

> Climate change impacts on human health and well-being.

The Victorian State Government, through the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), funds 30 Primary Care Partnerships (PCPs) across the State to improve access to services and continuity of care for people through improved service coordination, as well as chronic disease prevention, integrated health promotion, and partnership development. The overall aim of a PCP is to improve the health and well-being of the population by better co-ordination of health service planning and service delivery. PCPs are made up of a diverse range of member agencies. All PCPs include a combination of hospitals, community health organisations, divisions of general practice and

local government as core members of the partnerships. Other types of agencies such as area mental health, drug treatment and disability services are also members of PCPs.

SGGPCP works with 20 partner agencies across the Southern Grampians and Glenelg Shires in the West of Victoria, facilitating collaboration to enhance the health and wellbeing of the communities they encapsulate. SGGPCP have recognised the health impacts of climate change on their communities for over a decade now, since their involvement in the publication of landmark "Policy Signpost #3 – Climate Change Adaptation: A Framework for Local Action"[1]. The umbrella organisation has been striving to understand the needs and context of their local communities and to build local capacity to reduce the local climate impacts through the adaptation process.

Community resilience through climate change adaptation is a key focus on the SGGPCP Strategic Plan (2014-2017). Post publication of the 'Framework for Local Action', climate change action at SGGPCP centred around the everyday impacts on community, particularly focussed on energy efficiency and food security. Through linkages with the Victorian Centre for Climate Change Adaptation Research (VCCCAR), SGGPCP were able to develop a more strategic approach to climate change adaptation planning. With this focus, they were able to identify 'understanding local vulnerability' and this relationship with community resilience as the first priority of their new three year strategic plan.

Project design

RP;RF used a collaborative, action-research approach to enable *social learning* by co-development of knowledge and adaptation outcomes with all project participants, including the research team. Social learning signifies both a *process* of social change in which people learn from each other, and an *outcome* where a group creates the ability to change their practices and work together to improve a situation. Creating the conditions to enable social learning requires that awareness of the complexity of social and biophysical systems is raised, different world views are accommodated, and methods for joint inquiry are fostered[2].

The action based research approach enabled the project team to engage with local community service providers through the platform of the primary care partnership, to determine the current context of social vulnerability, and to work with the providers' existing needs and understanding with regard to climate risks. This approach was extended from a previous Victorian Government funded project entitled '*Implementing tools to increase adaptive capacity in the community and natural resource management sectors*[3] *(Implementing Adaptation)*, where SGGPCP was a project participant. From this engagement, SGGPCP extended its existing understanding and consideration of climate impacts to its engagement with members and their operations, and saw an opportunity to further work with its member agencies to undertake an adaptation planning process through the lens of positively influencing social vulnerability. One of the *Implementing Adaptation* project's key

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[1] http://mccaugheycentre.unimelb.edu.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0017/135251/Policy_signpost_3.pdf
[2] See Reed et al. 2010 for a basic attempt at defining social learning, or Ison et al. 2013 for consideration of the meanings generated by different metaphors of social learning, or or Pelling and High (2005) for the role of social learning in climate change adaptation.
[3] http://www.vcccar.org.au/implementing-tools-to-increase-adaptive-capacity-in-community-and-natural-resource-management

recommendations was for government to better engage with community service organisations to facilitate adaptation planning processes. The SGGPCP platform is an ideal catalyst to do so. The final report from the project is available online[3].

The main goal of the RP;RF pilot project was to investigate social vulnerability in the socio-economic, ecological and institutional context of the Southern Grampians Shire , to explore how the vulnerability context may vary under climate change, and to uncover means for supporting planning and preparedness for these expected changes.

More specifically, the project's objectives were to:

- **Understand** the context and nature of social vulnerability in a rural Victorian shire and compare this to the academic and policy definitions;
- **Understand** how vulnerability is likely to change in this context, under the impacts of climate change;
- **Increase** the capacity of community service organisations under the SGGPCP platform to plan for the impacts of climate change on their operations, service delivery and clients; and
- **Develop** a model for engagement to promote throughout the community service sector, to increase the resilience of rural communities across Victoria and potentially Australia.

The RP;RF project was implemented over four phases, each of which built on the previous phase's work, i.e. improved understanding and new data. The phased design also allowed SGGPCP member agencies to 'dip in and out' of the project, without fear of overcommitting to a lengthy project without adequate organisational capacity to do so. Regular project updates allowed all stakeholders to understand where the project was currently at and to catch-up on the previous phases' results. Figure 1 indicates the four phases of the project.

Figure 1: Schematic of RP;RF Phases

2   What we now understand

Knowledge and insights gained through the project process

2.1   Social vulnerability to climate change in rural context

A literature review was undertaken to investigate how social vulnerability is defined in academic and grey literature, and how these definitions and applications of the concept of social vulnerability are currently being considered in the context of climate change, particularly in rural areas. The key findings of this contextual review are outlined below.

> **Vulnerability** occurs at multiple spatial and temporal scales and is not a static state, which makes it complex to manage.
>
> **Social vulnerability** is not a static attribute of an individual or a system but is characterised by a host of complex social and economic factors, often associated with entitlements and access of individuals or groups to resources relative to the geographic and institutional context in which these individuals or groups live.
>
> Social vulnerability is understood as a **dynamic** state experienced by an individual (or group), who through various and interacting individual and broader socio-economic characteristics, is susceptible to stresses that may leave them negatively affected when compared to someone in the same setting who does not experience these same socio-economic characteristics.

Climate change impacts have the potential to alter the make-up of social groups, amplifying existing socio-economic drivers that contribute to social vulnerability.

Climate change increases the **complexity** of social vulnerability and its management.

The Glenelg and Southern Grampians Shires are considered relatively **disadvantaged** in relation to the Victorian Socio-Economic Indexes For Areas (SEIFA) regional average, with higher proportions of low-income households, high disability rates, and an ageing and socially more isolated population. These factors of relative disadvantage are likely to be **exacerbated** by climate change impacts, in particular by an increase in the frequency and/or intensity of extreme weather events, which are of high prevalence in the region, such as flooding, bushfire, heatwaves as well as drought and water scarcity.

Current social and climate change **policies** and initiatives at Federal, State and Local levels require critical examination of existing social vulnerability, how this is likely to evolve under climate change, and what support will be necessary to reduce an aggravation of social disadvantage and vulnerability through locally relevant management mechanisms.

Managing social vulnerability under climate change needs to be highly **contextual** and requires local community engagement to better understand effective ways for individuals and communities to adapt to a changing climate and its socio-economic consequences.

2.2   Vulnerability in the Southern Grampians Shire: Who is doing it tough?

The RP;RF project sought to understand what social vulnerability means in the Southern Grampians Shire. In the first instance, this was undertaken through member agency and community member consultation through Phase 1 (see Section 4), where participants reported on 'who was doing it tough' in their community. Findings were cross-checked with and validated by agency representatives and community members throughout subsequent phases.

Figure 2 outlines the categories of social vulnerability reported, highlighting that project participants identified low income families (12 mentions) and farming families (nine mentions) living in isolated areas as particularly vulnerable. Socially isolated individuals and those with cognitive difficulties and disabilities were also mentioned as socially vulnerable (five mentions each). Families with low educational status, the elderly, the unemployed, youth and individuals with no access to transport were the fourth most frequently reported categories, with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders (ATSI) and homeless groups mentioned only once respectively during the consultation period.

Top four categories of those 'doing it tough'
- Low income families
- Farming families living in isolated areas
- Socially isolated individuals
- Those with cognitive difficulties.

In addition to the focus on socially isolated individuals, one participant specified that single persons aged 35-55 with no dependent family living with them are considered 'doing it tough' in their opinion, due to social isolation.
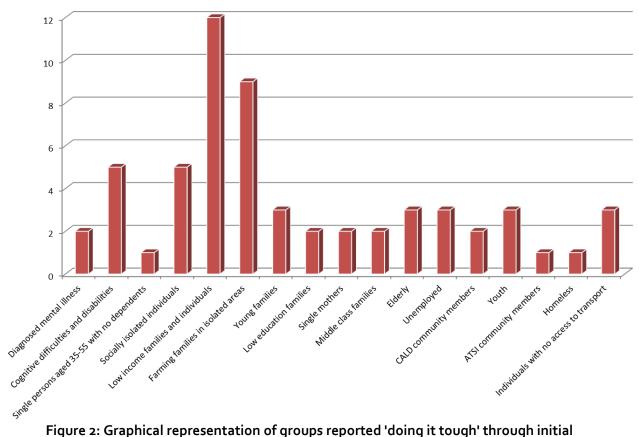
Figure 2: Graphical representation of groups reported 'doing it tough' through initial consultations; number of mentions versus group

Figure 3 outlines word frequency occurrence through an N-Vivo query undertaken on data collected from the same question during the consultation period (through recorded interviews, focus groups and meetings), indicating that the word 'families' arose most frequently in the data, as well as 'isolated', 'farms' and 'income'. This suggests that project participants considered farming families and those socially isolated most vulnerable in their community.

Figure 3: Word cloud generated from word frequency query of Phase 1 consultation question 'who is doing it tough?'

One agency consulted considered "...borderline clients (those suffering 'slight' disabilities, who do not receive government funding)" as a vulnerable group in that they "slip through the gaps", which is reflected in participant reporting on individuals and groups that sit outside ABS categorisation of social vulnerability.

It was clear through the consultations with agencies and community members that individuals who do not fit the criteria for government funding or support can be considered to be 'doing it tough' in the community. Individuals missing out on government support typically include those who are socially

> Who are doing it tough in your community? "…those who slip through the gaps."

isolated and who have no support network, which includes access to community information, services and transport in a rural community. This could be due to these individuals being new to the area, and finding it difficult to connect with the existing formal and informal networks that exist. Some participants also noted that rural communities and farmer/farming families, having a strong history of 'inherent resilience', means that some individuals or families are embarrassed to ask for help in the networks that they are connected to.

Social and geographic isolation can be considered a unique and worsening vulnerability characteristic to rural areas. This can be considered to be due both to the changing social demographics of rural areas (migrants coming into these areas and a high proportion of the young population leaving to find work and be closer to the city), and the geographic characteristics (large portions of land with long distances between towns and services).

2.3   What makes life easier?

During Phase 1 consultations, participants were asked 'what makes life easier' for those they considered vulnerable in their community. Findings from this consultation question are illustrated in Figure 4. Reflective of the high concern over social isolation as a social vulnerability factor in their communities, participants responded that community support and social engagement was one of the best management options (13 mentions). This was reported alongside improved access to services including transport access, support from community service organisations, access to health services and the like (14 mentions).
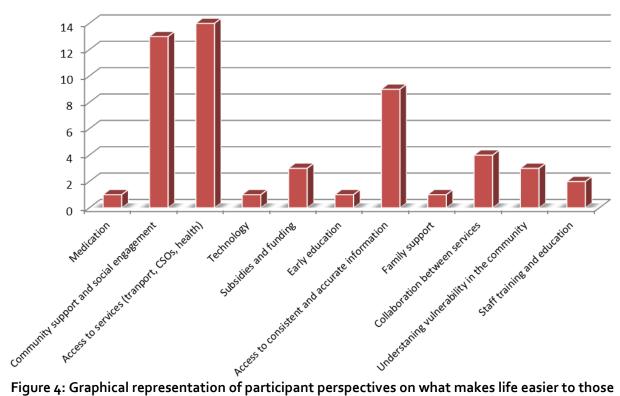
Figure 4: Graphical representation of participant perspectives on what makes life easier to those socially vulnerable in their community

Aligning with the frequency of most suitable management options for social vulnerability is the word frequency analysis illustrated at Figure 5, which highlights that 'support' (for young families, farming families, useful local support information, access to services and training for staff to implement these actions) and 'community' are considered important factors of any management option for social vulnerability perceived by those consulted during Phase 1. A focus on improved service delivery and accurate and consistent information to community members is also recommended to improve support socially vulnerable individuals and groups.

Figure 5: Word cloud representation of 'what makes life easier' for socially vulnerable community members

2.4   Climate change and social vulnerability in context

Acknowledging that both social vulnerability and climate change impacts are context specific, Phase 2 of the project saw participants working through a tailored 'climate impacts workbook'[4] process, whereby they considered the climate impacts they have been sensitive to in the past, and how these sensitivities are likely to change in the future. A blank copy of the agency climate impacts workbook can be found at Appendix 1: Agency climate impacts workbook.

> "The Telstra outage demonstrated that if we lose communications we are vulnerable – where will the CFA alerts come from?"

The key findings from Phase 2 of the project indicated that agencies are already vulnerable to impacts associated with climate and weather. Participants reported that their agencies have largely been impacted by climate change through extreme events such as:

- Extreme heat days
- Heatwave
- Bushfire
- Flood
- Drought
- Storms (extreme wind and rain).

The direct and indirect impacts associated with these events not only affect the organisations themselves, through their operations, service delivery and staff, but also the clients they support. Participants reported that they had been affected in the following ways:

- **Clients impacts & increased vulnerability of clients**: impacts on groups of elderly clients, mental health clients, youth clients, young mothers
- **Staff impacted**: unable to deliver services during extreme events
- **Increased staff exposure**: felt obligated to check of clients during events
- **Increased demand on service centres**: increased demand with centres becoming refuges on extreme heat days
- **Increased service centre exposure due to location**: centres and client houses located in high bushfire risk areas, power outages, no access to fresh water.

Through this phase, project participants were asked to identify what they were currently undertaking to address the risks that the above mentioned climate and weather related impacts present. Current actions identified included:

- Policies and guidelines for extreme weather days, e.g. heatwave policy
- Use of Department of Health resources to support planning and preparedness
- Local knowledge and experience to draw on for planning

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[4] Adapted from the Local Climate Impacts Profile from UKCIP

- Vulnerable persons lists
- Client awareness raising to better manage impacts of extreme weather
- Acting as a hub for community engagement
- Recommending physical retrofitting and household changes to manage client thermal comfort.

Participants also reported areas of improvement and where they required support. These included:

- Lack of consistency between existing policies within organisations
- Lack of consistency between existing policies across different organisations that require collaboration
- Lack of awareness of existing policies
- Staff protection during extreme events not enforced
- Lack of knowledge around specific impacts and where to go for information
- Engagement between agencies needs to be improved.

2.5   Adaptation in Action

Although some actions are already in place, further implementation and proactive strategic planning within and between all agencies is required to facilitate community resilience in a changing climate.

Many of the project participants reported that they were already considering the impacts of climate and weather 'in their own way'. Others were not aware that their current actions to respond to climate and weather related risks could be considered adaptation actions. Examples of such actions include:

- Promoting the physical service location as a refuge during times of extreme heat for those most at risk;
- Facilitating community engagement to 'check-on-your-neighbour', reducing the risk of social isolation for vulnerable individuals or groups;
- Protocol for checking on vulnerable clients during extreme events using the vulnerable persons register held at each service organisation;
- Policies and protocols that consider extreme days – e.g. code red day policy, heatwave policy.

It was clear, however, that project participants are currently first and foremost 'managing weather', i.e. responding to immediate weather-related impacts, when the project team ran a series of six day long scenario exercises during Phase 3 that bought participants to a disaster point during an emergency situation (extreme heat and fire, and an extreme rainfall and flooding scenario).

The **scenario workshop** run during Phase 3 of the project was documented for the RP;RF film[5], and involved engaging with project participants to make climate impacts real in their context, and to aid in the development of adaptation actions to increase community resilience (see Figure 7). During the second half of the workshop, the facilitator ran two six-day long scenarios simultaneously. One included a high intensity rainfall event following a period of prolonged drought, resulting in widespread flooding across the Shire catchment. The second included a heatwave with a bushfire scenario.

Participants were taken through the scenarios using an AO map of the Shire to link impacts to geographical location as illustrated at Figure 6. Participants were allowed to think about the scenario each day for five minutes to contemplate the cumulative impacts of the events outlined before moving onto the next day. They were instructed to think about what is already in place to manage these impacts, who they would involve, what assistance would be available and whether it would be adequate for the extent of the impact. After the six days of flood and heat/bushfire scenarios, participants were taken to a disaster point where loss of life occurred.

At the culmination of the scenarios, the participants were taken 'back in time' to six months prior, two years prior and five years prior to develop actions to avoid the disaster point. The two scenario groups undertook the 'back in time' activity separately and then reported together at the end of the workshop. The actions collated for both groups were not specific to the scenario they were working on, and provided co-benefits for other areas of community engagement, integrated panning and emergency management for all stakeholders involved.

Figure 6: Scenario workshop participants working through six-day scenarios with maps

The exercise highlighted that there is currently not enough planning in place, nor integration between agencies to adequately avoid the increasing frequency of such extreme events. The exercise also

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[5] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AxG1pZ5EuGk

showed that although the above actions are already in place, further implementation and proactive strategic planning with a mid- to long term focus within and between all agencies is required to enhance community resilience in a changing climate.

Post the disaster scenario exercise, facilitators took participants 'back in time' to develop actions aimed at avoiding the disaster point. Interestingly, all actions developed to avoid these disaster points could apply to any organisation and promote resilience to any impact. The following key adaptation actions were discussed and explored for a six month, two year and five year timeframe (Table 1). They represent adaptation actions that agencies thought would be most useful to implement. Table 1 is the direct list of actions developed by project participants and has not been refined by the project team. This is not intended as a complete list of actions for adaptation planning and requires refinement according to agency context.

Table 1: Adaptation actions developed through participant disaster scenarios

Time	Adaptation action	Description
Six months	Improved awareness of existing policies and procedures	E.g. when the situation arises for staff to leave workplace to protect home and protect family. Awareness needs to reach all staff.
	Plan how to keep workforce working	Undertake business continuity planning for all services.
	Involving in critical services in planning	This can be promoted through natural support networks that exist within the community. This includes improving awareness of who and what services are available when, and co-ordinating them. It was proposed that this integrated planning should be tested through further scenarios with all critical services.
	Care plans	Preparing clients for self-reliance when services may be absent for a number of days.
	Education with clients and staff	Building the capacity of the organisation through knowledge on how climate impacts will affect service delivery and operations, and what can be done to manage this.
	Pre-prepared 'emergency packs'	For clients to have in their household and improve use and awareness of these as part of service delivery to clients
	Harnessing staff knowledge and relationships	There is inherent knowledge within agencies from local experience. E.g. SGSC community safety and resilience committee; a group of service providers that meet regularly with the Shire to increase resilience in the community. It was perceived that this could be used more effectively.
	Information interaction and networks	Participants expressed a desire to continue meeting in a workshop setting to improve the strength of networks and they felt that continuing this work facilitates resilience in itself.
Two Years	Understanding co-ordination	Planning together on who can help with what impacts, where do services sit during a disaster, what will happen when and what can help?
	New policies and procedures	Developed at agency level to support adaptation planning. Understand how these are developed and reviewed
	Facilitating community connections	Increasing connectedness within the community to facilitate resilience e.g. neighbours checking on neighbours and social network strengthening. Investigation required into what platforms can be developed and what existing platforms would work most effectively.
	Define roles and responsibilities	All agencies need to know who does what and when, which will improve co-ordination and integrated planning. Currently there are many gaps where it is not clear where responsibilities lie for each agency and emergency services.
	Learning from communities and harnessing local knowledge	Learn from experiences of agencies that are currently undertaking adaptation planning and that are having success. Local knowledge is valuable and should be used in planning.
	Step back (monitor and review)	Regularly review and audit and implement scenario testing to ensure that the actions in place can manage the impacts that will be experienced.
Five Years	Partnerships	Linkages and connections - who needs to be involved and how can a positive partnership be fostered. E.g. PCP model as demonstrated by SGGPCP
	Education and training	Building long term organisational capacity. E.g. training programs for staff across and between al agencies on how to properly plan for climate impacts
	Scenario planning	Make the impacts real and local. Look at the history and see what has already been experienced and see how this will change in the future.
	Infrastructure requirements	Review and test integrity. Consider climate impacts in new projects and plan for retrofit or upgrade in those that are not adequate. Aim to avoid failures
	New policies and procedures	Developed at Shire and State Government level to support adaptation planning. Understand how these are developed and reviewed.

From the actions developed during Phase 3 and outlined in Table 1, it is clear that there are many opportunities for improvement to facilitate greater resilience within rural communities. Key actions highlighted as beneficial across all timescales are:

- Improved service coordination and delivery between all agencies and scales;
- Staff education on the considerations of climate impacts in their roles and awareness of existing policies and procedures;
- Promoting linkages between agencies, Shire, emergency services and State Government;
- Using local knowledge to promote resilience within the wider community;
- Monitoring and reviewing to test the effectiveness of actions already in place – this can be undertaken through scenario testing.

When asked what would support the adaptation planning process to facilitate greater community resilience with their agency during Phases two and three of the project, the key types of support that project participants requested from the project team were:

- Climate related information to feed into their long-term planning;
- Information on entry points into adaptation planning to consider climate change and integration between plans;
- Regionally accurate projections and forecasts;
- Support to access funds for adaptation panning;
- A refined definition of vulnerability that encapsulates the nuances of the local community as funding is associated with this.

2.6   Connect the dots

"You see from the networking perspective how other people are dealing with some things and you think oh well maybe that could work with us, and you see why they are doing things. That's been really good."

Through all phases of the project, it was clear that participants valued the act of getting together as a group in itself, as well as the activities undertaken and the information shared. The nature of the sector dictates that there is very little time to reflect and network across and even within agencies, and therefore staff are often unable to share information, experiences, build connections and innovate together. The many workshops, meetings and focus groups that were implemented as parts of the project justified participation of staff, where they could learn tools, activities and methods to implement at their agency, but they could also network with other service providers and brainstorm co-beneficial actions they could jointly implement.

Through the evaluation phase, when asked to identify what was the most valuable aspect out of the project, 40% of project participants selected 'the opportunity to learn from other agencies' and 20% selected 'the opportunity to take time out of my every practice to reflect and learn'. Many project participants highlighted the value of networking in the final evaluation focus groups, with one project participant reflecting:

"You see from the networking perspective how other people are dealing with some things and you think oh well maybe that could work with us, and you see why they are doing things. That's been really good".

Another participant noted that the networking aspect of the project had kept them engaged and "coming back for more". Many participants outlined that they are so busy "doing what they do" that they are unaware of what other agencies are undertaking and understand there is great opportunity in the potential of collaboration and further strengthening of networks. Participants expressed hope that these networks could be continued through similar formats.

> "Highlighted what we are doing well…and made us aware of areas needing improvement."

3   What was achieved

Through an evaluation period in Phase 4, including two focus groups and an anonymous survey, as well as continuous reflection with participants, the achievements of the RP;RF project have been noted throughout its implementation and are outlined in this section.

The RP;RF project presented many benefits as a result of its implementation, but also through the process of its implementation. By using the SGGPCP platform, member agencies were engaged on a topic that they wouldn't ordinarily engage on and their capacity was built to continue the conversation within their organisation. By supporting participants, the process enabled them to take responsibility and identify themselves actions to integrate into their existing plans, policies and procedures. Simultaneously, SGGPCP's capacity to continue this work was increased through the process of engagement with member agencies on the adaptation planning process.

> "I have looked more closely at or systems, policies and procedures, especially emergency preparedness and code red days etc. I have built up a new network of local people to share information and ideas. Our organization has a better understanding of how important it is to think about adapting the attitude of climate change of those who access our service. I have looked at how any important information is passed onto adults with disabilities in our service, so that any information is clear, easy read and relevant."

Participants commented that the project provided new knowledge and greater understanding on what local vulnerability means, with both existing clients and the wider community. They felt that they learned more about how member agencies can deal with changing aspects of local vulnerability, and that collectively changes can be implemented to increase resilience. Further, participants felt that although some of the knowledge and processes weren't necessarily new, the project built their confidence to "develop and implement preparedness plans", which they felt in turn enabled them to improve vulnerable clients' health and wellbeing during extreme weather events.

Networking, organisational linkages and partnerships were outlined as additional benefits of the project, with recognition between participants of what is currently underway, how improvements can be made and gaps identified for future work.

3.1   Project evaluation: participants

Project evaluation was undertaken through two focus group evaluations, and an optional online anonymous survey (n = 20). The research team also carried out evaluations with project management and the SGGPCP.

As outlined previously, project participants were not 'locked in' to all phases of the project, and were able to engage in the process depending on their resourcing constraints. Throughout the duration of the project eight member agencies of the SGGPCP engaged in the adaptation planning process, but many additional stakeholders and community members engaged in activities associated with the

project. The online evaluation survey asked participants if there were any barriers to their participation, and out of the respondents to this question (n = 15), 60% indicated that competing priorities or lack of time allowed them to engage further in the project. Out of the total project participants that completed the anonymous survey (n = 20), 90% indicated that they spent less than one hour a week on project associated tasks and 10% indicated that they spent between one and five hours a week on the project. All survey

> 85% of participants found the project very valuable or valuable to themselves and their organisation.
> 100% of participants committed to continuing action post the completion of the project.

participants reported that they thought the amount of time required to engage in the project process was reasonable. Project participants were asked to outline what enabled them to engage in the project, and the following key enablers were outlined from the respondents to this question (n = 16):

- Relevance to vulnerability in the community (n = 1)
- Team leader with some capacity for overview (n = 1)
- Involvement of community services staff (n = 1)
- Having the workshops and meetings conducted locally (n = 3)
- Passion for the content and supporting the community (n = 2)
- Phone and email engagement as participants were unable to be physically present (n = 2)
- Having the right people involved and trust in the SGGPCP (n = 3)
- Management and employer support for participation (n = 2)
- An interest to explore agency collaboration (n = 1)

Survey participants were asked how they engaged with the project and were able to select multiple options out of the ten provided. Figure 7 illustrates the response on mode of project engagement from survey participants.
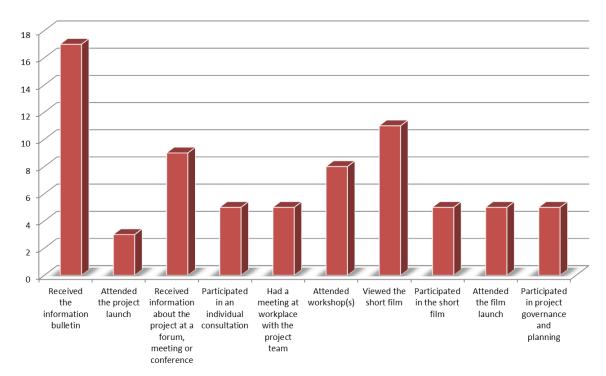
Figure 7: Modes of project participation (n=20)

The most frequent mode of project engagement was through the project bulletin, which was distributed through SGGPCP networks quarterly. The short film that was produced as a result of the project during Phase 3 was also highly ranked for project engagement, as well as formal information dissemination at conferences and forums.

Participants were asked to outline their perceived overall value of the project to their organisation (Figure 9) and to themselves as individuals (Figure 8).
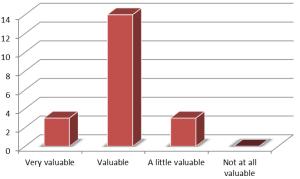
Figure 8: Participant rating of project value for themselves (n = 20)
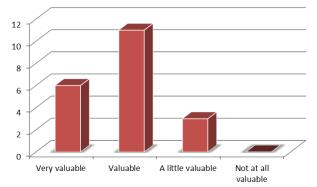
Figure 9: Participant rating of project value for their organisation (n = 20)

Survey results indicated that 85% of participants found the project very valuable or valuable to their organisation, likewise 85% of survey participants reported that the project was very valuable or valuable to themselves as individuals, although there was variation in the proportions of value between individuals and organisation. There were no reports of the project holding no value to either participant organisations or individuals.

Building blocks of rural community resilience

Survey participants were also asked what they considered most valuable aspect of the project to be. Results from this question are illustrated at Figure 10. This question provided multiple choices, with option for multiple selections, out of the following:

- Learning more about vulnerability in the Southern Grampians Shire;
- Learning about how climate change exacerbates vulnerability;
- Learning more about climate change;
- Identifying how climate change impacts on my agency;
- Identifying how climate change impacts on my community;
- Identifying actions that I can integrate into my agency to reduce vulnerability;
- Learning new techniques like participatory approaches, soft systems methodology and facilitation methods;
- Increasing my confidence to make changes;
- Increasing my ability to discuss climate change impacts with my agency and other stakeholders;
- The opportunity to learn from research experts;
- The opportunity to learn from other agencies;
- The opportunity to take time out of my everyday practice to reflect and learn.
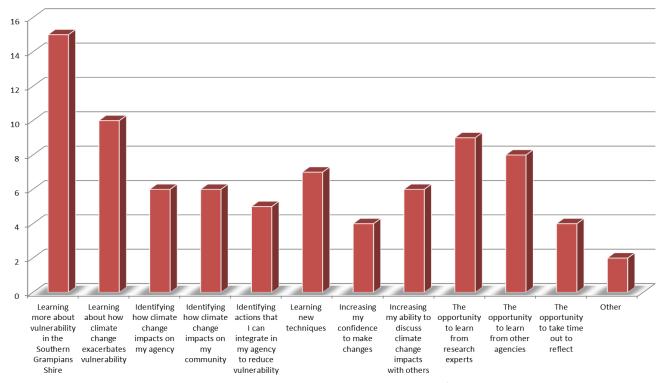
Figure 10: Participant responses to the most valuable aspect of the project (n = 20)

As illustrated in Figure 10, survey participants found the most value in learning more about vulnerability in the Southern Grampians Shire (75%) and learning about how climate change will exacerbate these vulnerabilities (50%). Survey participants also expressed value in learning from other agencies (40%) and from research experts (45%). Using the free text function, two participants listed additional value from the project, including support for funding and collaboration opportunities as well as the value of the project process as a case study for participatory research methods.

Survey participants were asked to outline in free text how the project has benefitted their role or organisation. The following outlines a sample of quotes from participants.

> "It has allowed me confidence and provided me with learnings to take on other roles in policy development and adjustments."
>
> "The project has increased my knowledge and capability to consider a similar project in my region. The tools we were taught were also very useful."
>
> "Awareness of how climate change impacts on our community and how we as an agency have already responded to this. It has also allowed us to share our story with the wider community, providing acknowledgement of this service we provide."
>
> "Climate change is a 'background' issue at the moment that impacts on every other health issue that we are working on. It's important to have a handle on it. Learning about the methods that were employed throughout the project were useful too"
>
> "I have looked more closely at or systems, policies and procedures, especially emergency preparedness and code red days etc. I have built up a new network of local people to share information and ideas. Our organization has a better understanding of how important it is to think about adapting the attitude of climate change of those who access our service. I have looked at how any important information is passed onto adults with disabilities in our service, so that any information is clear, easy read and relevant."
>
> "Growing in knowledge and confidence to implement and develop preparedness plans and how to make a difference to vulnerable clients' health and wellbeing during climate extremes."
>
> "It has provided us with a clear understanding of what people are doing and how they are linking together and also has identified gaps for future work"

Survey participants were asked if they would continue to implement the actions that they learned about or developed through the project, and out of the total respondents to this question (n = 18), 100% of participants said they would continue.

Through focus group participation (n = 8), which involved an external facilitator, participants were asked a series of reflection questions about the project which included:

- What was most important?
- What are you taking away?
- What was challenging?
- How has your perspective changed?
- What have you done as a result of the project that you would not have done otherwise?

The following excerpts from the transcription of the focus groups have been included for evaluation and reporting purposes:

Question	Response
What was most important?	"Taking the time to stop and consider the impacts of climate change and starting the conversation" "Considering the risks on every level; that of the organisation, workers, the community and clients" "Networking opportunities" "Increased ability to support clients"
What are you taking away?	"If we don't manage it (climate impacts) and put some things in place and do some long term panning, we are going to be caught out" "Awareness of vulnerability – I'm thinking about it more than ever" "There's a ripple effect associated with these impacts…it's a whole system thing" "The project has raised the consciousness of our clients and those on the borderline"
What was challenging?	"To challenge normal practice or process and consider the future rather than just what we have to consider today" "To understand what the project was about in the early stages"
How has your perspective changed?	"Changed my family perspective, personal situation. I think about everyone I come into contact with, it's not just work" "Forced me to consider the interacting effect of climate change on clients and brought these things to front of mind" "It (the project) just makes things a bit more real. It makes us think about how it can affect my work, the people I work with, my organisation, myself, my income and where it goes" "It (the project) opened things up more broadly"
What have you done as a result of the project that you would not have done otherwise?	" I wouldn't have considered the mapping activity (scenarios from Phase 2), and I wouldn't have had the understanding of really how this impacts the community health workers and their clients" "We wouldn't have had access to the information and support that we did through the project" "I looked at these issues through other people's eyes" "I reviewed policies and procedures for our agency to consider these impacts" "I now connect these issues to the client services area"

3.2   Project evaluation: funding objectives

As outlined in Section 1.2, the RP;RF project was funded by the Victorian State Government, through the VAS Partnership Grant Scheme, and hosted by the Southern Grampians Shire Council. The delivery framework for the associated funding round (2013-2016) outlined key objectives and promotes reflective learning to ensure accountability and continuous improvement[6]. To determine the value of the RP;RF project in the context of the VAS Partnership objectives, as well as revisiting the project objectives, an evaluation was undertaken with the Project Management Group using

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[6] http://www.depi.vic.gov.au/environment-and-wildlife/sustainability/victorian-local-sustainability-accord

social learning methodologies and an RMIT facilitator (PMG: constituting State and Local government representatives, PCP and RMIT University representatives).

The VAS Partnership objectives were as follows:

Drive local action through strategic resource allocation by delivering funds, tools, information, mentoring and training to enable effective place-based responses.

Enable partnerships, collaboration, learning and knowledge sharing by working together, sharing knowledge and experience to increase the effectiveness and reduce duplication of efforts between the two tiers of government in Victoria.

Build shared understanding between state and local government by providing a conduit between the tiers of government so that: policies and actions are informed by understanding of each other's policies and experience; and priorities align.

Evaluation with the PMG against the VAS Partnership objectives outlined that local action has been driven by training member agencies, through SGGPCP, on how to undertake the adaptation planning process, how their service delivery and operations will be affected by climate change and how to communicate this to clients. Through the project, member agencies within the Shire now have new and complementing resources ready for implementation within their organisation, and to share amongst their networks. These include:

- A tailored adaptation workbook (see Section 6- Appendix);
- Case study examples of participating agencies;
- A film recommending the approach adopted;
- Access to researchers through SGGPCP for further information if required;
- 'Dealing with complexity' training including a detailed workbook;
- Project summaries and access to project findings for organisational use.

Inadvertently, the project provided a mentoring program using the established platform of SGGPCP, with a long-standing, trusted relationship with its member agencies. SGGPCP, in partnership with RMIT University, has now demonstrated being able to provide support for agencies under all community health and wellbeing priorities, in the context of a changing climate. This is essentially the model that is recommended as an outcome of the pilot project, one that has proved successful to facilitate engagement with rural government funded agencies on climate change adaptation planning.

The evaluation outlined that a new partnership has been formed between the State Government Department of Environment and Primary Industries (DEPI, now Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning) and SGGPCP, which had historically never been initiated with any PCPs despite the Department wishing to delve into the community and social resilience space. Engagement with the local Shire has also increased as a result of this project. The PMG stated that DEPI historically had 'lacked expertise in the social area, and felt that PCP lacked expertise in the climate area', so it was a mutually beneficial partnership facilitated through the project. Collaboration between SGGPCP, member agencies and RMIT University has gone from strength to strength with the researcher partner offering 'expertise' to validate action, and SGGPCP being the conduit to the community through member agencies.

Rather than the VAS Partnership funds allocated to this project, and the resultant outputs having a shelf-life; by using the SGGPCP conduit to the community, a legacy has been created. In saying this, however, this project and the activities prior to that can only be the beginning, requiring ongoing effort to facilitate continued support for agencies and to promote the model in other, comparable networks.
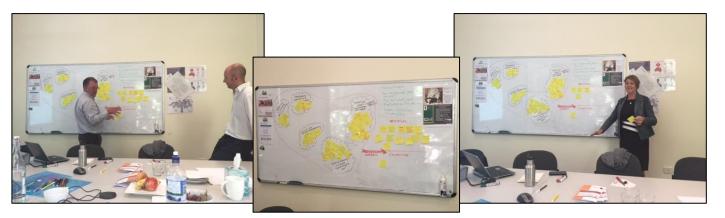

Figure 11: PMG evaluation process using social learning facilitation methodologies

3.3   Project evaluation: project objectives

Through the PMG evaluation and reflecting on participant evaluation, consideration of the original project objectives can be undertaken.

The RP;RF project objectives are as follows:

Understand the context of vulnerability in a rural Victorian shire and compare this to the academic and policy definitions;

Understand how vulnerability will change in this context, under the impacts of climate change;

Increase the capacity of community service organisations under the PCP platform to plan for the impacts of climate change on their operations, service delivery and clients; and

Uncover a model for engagement to promote throughout the community service sector, to increase the resilience of rural communities across Victoria and potentially Australia.

Upon reflection to the original objectives of the project, the PMG outlined the following key areas of achievement:

Understanding vulnerability in context: Through extensive consultation of both the community and member agencies, a more accurate, grounded understanding of social vulnerability in the Southern Grampians Shire has been achieved. As discussed in Section 2.2 and Section 2.4, social vulnerability in context does not necessarily fit into a clearly defined box, and in fact it's often those individuals who are on the borderline of traditional definitions that may 'slip through the gaps'. The project explored how existing social vulnerability will be exacerbated under a changing climate. In doing so it demonstrated just how relevant and important it is to ask the community who they consider 'doing it tough' in order to obtain a representation and understanding of social vulnerability

that is grounded in people's observations and lived experiences rather than academic or bureaucratic definitions of vulnerability.

Influencing and innovating for policy change: The project demonstrated to agencies how to consider changing climate impacts in their existing policies and procedures and how innovative techniques can be used to manage similarly complex tasks. This was demonstrated through running workshops with agencies, taking them through an adaptation planning process, and demonstrating the types of actions that have the greatest potential for building resilience among their clients and within their wider communities.

Conduit for network strengthening: the project demonstrated the value of SGGPCP's platform within the community through its member agencies, and the potential of expanding this platform to strengthen other networks spanning from it. Through the project, it was demonstrated that the SGGPCP can be a conduit for network strengthening, promoting resilience, by building the capacity of its member agencies and their respective networks in communities. The neighbourhood house network or HACC workers network across regions are two examples of such nested networks that can be strengthened through such activities. This is an avenue to pursue, to expand the successful model as demonstrated through the pilot project.

Building capacity in place or "connecting the dots": Rather than taking knowledge away from the region, the collaborative partnership with RMIT University researchers throughout the project built the capacity of SGGPCP to continue the adaptation planning process with its member agencies, and the member agencies to continue adaptation planning within their organisations. Member agencies and other project participants, through workshops, focus groups and other project events, networked with other agencies and groups to 'connect the dots' of who is doing what in the region. A key request from project participants was that the workshop program continues for this purpose, and felt that this helped build resilience in its simplest, yet very effective form.

Innovative outputs and project design communicated with impact: By using outputs such as the short film, through extensive local media engagement, and by using social media, the impact of the project was shared with a larger network, outside the geographic boundaries of the local Shire. A summary of the project's media output can be viewed at Table 2: Media output summary below.

Table 2: Media output summary

Media Type	Date	Host	Description
News interview: TV	27.03.2014	WIN News	Alianne Rance interviewed at Shepparton Health and Climate Change Forum, explaining RP;RF project
Newspaper article	06.2014	Hamilton Spectator	Article celebrating project launch at Sustainable Futures Expo in Hamilton
Newspaper article	12.06.2014	Hamilton Spectator	Article promoting community workshop at Hamilton Neighbourhood House for community consultations
Newspaper article	19.06.2014	Hamilton Spectator	Article reporting on success of community workshop at Hamilton Neighbourhood House for community consultations
Newspaper article	09.2014	Hamilton	Article reporting on the RP;RF film production

		Spectator	involving local member agencies
Newspaper article	10.2014	Hamilton Spectator	Advertisement for public viewing of the RP;RF film at the local cinema in Hamilton
Radio interview	27.10.2014	MIXXFM 88.9 Western Districts	Alianne Rance interviewed on the launch of the RP;RF film and the findings to date from the project.
Film	10.2014	YouTube and Vimeo	RP;RF film publicly accessible YouTube: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AxG1pZ5EuGk Vimeo: https://vimeo.com/107428141
Social media	01.14-03.15	Twitter	'Rural People Resilient Futures' mentioned extensively in tweets throughout the year.

Through development of the 'project on a page' and 'results on a page'[7] , and a quarterly bulletin, all stakeholders were kept abreast of project undertakings.

Excerpts of media coverage can be viewed in Appendix 4: Media .

3.4   Less tangible benefits

Through the evaluation process, it was clear that there were a number of intangible benefits that were achieved as a result of the project on a number of different scales. These include:

Unleashing inherent capacity of member agencies: Demonstrating how easily adaptation can be incorporated into everyday business and how this differs from a reactive approach to climate variability and change.

Validating member agency and client experience: Providing a listening ear and validating member agency experience through a formal process, which acknowledged that the forms of social vulnerability agencies are dealing with is extremely complex and not easily characterised using textbook definitions. Geographic isolation, the nature of rural life in remote areas, and economic transition were key trends that the project implicitly or explicitly acknowledged as compounding factors in trying to understand social vulnerability in context and plan for a more resilient future.

Building trust with member agencies: The project, through its various forms of engagement, helped to increase trust between all parties involved. In particular, it strengthened already supportive and trusting working relationships between SGGPCP and its member agencies. This was largely achieved through a committed project team that was based locally and regular and extended visits to the area, including to remote communities, by the researchers on the project team.

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[7] See Section 8 Appendix 2: Project on a Page and Section 9 Appendix 3: Results on a Page

Reflecting upon the success of the RP;RF project, a number of key success criteria can be identified that are outlined as principles in the following sections.

3.5 Key success criteria

Using an existing platform – SGGPCP

- Use trusted, known faces to engage.
- Social vulnerability is context specific, so it is important to keep the scale local and engage locals.
- Allow local knowledge to lead – this will always be more informed than theory and grey literature.
- Exploit the opportunity of a local organisation that can act as a platform, where people can 'pop in for a coffee' as they are 'just around the corner'.

As a result of these principles, the project gained insights that would never have been accessed if external researchers or consultants undertook the consultations in place of SGGPCP.

Adding value – co benefits

Stakeholders are unlikely to engage on something they feel is going to take them away from their work, so providing a value-add as a result of the engagement is vital.

- Up-skilling workshop: participants were attracted by soft systems methodology, and didn't focus as much on the content they were being engaged on (vulnerability and climate change).
- Contributing information: the project provided access to researchers who could translate relevant climate science information to the participants.
- Publicity: the RP;RF film production allowed exposure for the great work that agencies are already undertaking and drew attention to the region.
- Case study development: participants have little resources to report on engagement, let alone to publish them. The project team developed these additional outputs for the project participants.

Speak the right language

Being cross-cutting and context specific in nature, adaptation requires harnessing existing processes and goals and reconsidering them in the context of climate change. This is only possible if climate change adaptation can connect, in language and approach, to existing organisational framings.. This principle was illustrated throughout the project.

- If the organisation is not comfortable talking about climate change, then don't talk about climate change.
- Emergency management is relatable, and it is easy to start there, but adaptation is more about prevention, proactivity and strategic planning over longer time frames, so the discussion needs to move beyond emergency management.
- Relate climate change impacts to a lived experience: for example the recent heatwaves or bushfires and extend the analysis to how these impacts may increase or change in the future.
- Use scenarios to illustrate: one workshop employed disaster scenarios as a way of exploring avenues for adaptation planning.

- Employ metaphors and illustrations to demystify concepts that have been overcomplicated historically. E.g. Weather vs Climate video used to engage participants in Phase 3 workshops[8].

Retaining flexibility

- Availability varies, as does capacity to engage.
- The same approach won't work for everyone.
- All participants bring different values and experience to the table that need to be acknowledged and harnessed.

> *The design of the pilot project allowed participants to dip in and out according to their availability and resources. Building in this flexibility resulted in a more engaged participant group and a wider stakeholder group.*

Finding linkages

> *Finding connections within and between the community and the organisations that provide support services fosters resilience.*

- Highlight existing actions as a starting point, even if they have little to do with climate change adaptation.
- Find integration options for new adaptation actions to sit: a separate strategy won't work for resource constrained organisations starting this process. Placement within existing policies, procedures and strategies will be more useful.
- Find relevance for the organisation you are working with and link this to proactive adaptation action.
- Link people to create added value: sharing adaptation actions between participant organisations proved a great success.

Southern Grampians and Glenelg Primary Care Partnership (SGGPCP) Perspective

"SGGPCP partner agencies work with vulnerable communities in their everyday roles, and very often extending the relationship with their community beyond traditional health care. These networks and local knowledge are pivotal factors in promoting community wellbeing.

Embedding climate change adaptation to not only reduce the vulnerability of their clients and community, but also impacts of service delivery has been challenging for agencies in the past. Agencies have historically had limited confidence, capacity and knowledge to undertake action, even though they

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[8] Weather Versus Climate (National Geographic) May 28, 2014:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cBdxDFpDp_k

are well placed to promote community resilience. As demonstrated through this project, PCPs can provide a platform to build capacity, knowledge and confidence of their member agencies. They can also act as the key link to various tiers of government and the research sector.

The RP;RF project exposed this platform and model of engagement as successful and enabled linkages with Local and State Government as well as the research sector. By exploiting the existing relationship PCP has with its member agencies, it could be used as a conduit; assisting agencies to commence the adaptation planning process, and embedding adaptation actions within their operations and service delivery. Hopefully this process has provided a springboard to continue the adaptation journey."

- Jo Brown; Manager Projects and Programs SGGPCP

Figure 12: Project team with VAS Partnership Ministerial Advisory Committee member at RP;RF film launch. From left: Alianne Rance, Jill Parker, Jo Brown and Melanie Russell.

3.6   Project participant case studies[9]

The following case studies illustrate what was achieved by the participating agencies through the Rural People; Resilient Futures Project.

Mulleraterong Centre Incorporated

Mulleraterong Centre Incorporated ('Mulleraterong' in the following) holds a vision to be a progressive, quality and sustainable organisation, with a purpose to support individual choice, empowerment, opportunity and inclusion. Mulleraterong is a not for profit organisation providing services to adults with intellectual and physical disabilities. They are the leading Disability Service Provider in the Hamilton region of Western Victoria and have a proud history of providing quality, progressive and individualised programs and activities since 1956.

Mulleraterong currently provides over 55 group programs, activities and tailored support programs for clients with a range of needs and individual requirements.

Mulleraterong become involved in the RP;RF project as a member agency of SGGPCP, and originally engaged with the project to increase local networking opportunities to support vulnerable people in their community. The organisation was also interested in how they can plan and educate their clients and the wider community on extreme weather and climate change, and how to best support those who access the services they provide. Before engaging with the project, the organisation had actions in place to increase the resilience of their clients through an emergency preparedness frame, and thought that they could share their experience with other agencies involved.

Figure 13: Mulleraterong Centre Incorporated, Hamilton Victoria

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[9] Full case studies for each participating organisation have been produced as an additional set of outputs from the project.

What they learnt

- How to use past weather experiences as a way to plan for the future;
- Networking opportunities are a powerful tool within small communities. Listening from fellow agencies was an extremely valuable experience;
- The adaptation process is already underway in Mulleraterong, but that further refinement and clarification of policies and procedures were required.

The most important aspects

- Connecting and establishing networks across the communities which provided opportunities for information exchange and future partnership possibilities;
- Fellow staff and clients were able to be updated on the project, which kept the conversation going and improved relevance for organisational operations and service delivery.

As a direct result of the project

- Mulleraterong now considers climate impacts in all centre planning;
- More opportunities are available for staff and client discussion on service improvement;
- Engagement with other agencies within the region and researchers to gather and share information.

Organisation representatives reflect that the project supported them to look at better ways that staff can directly support their clients in planning for extreme and variable weather in the future. They reviewed and updated their systems and Occupational Health and Safety (OH&S) policies to reflect preparedness for emergencies, extreme weather conditions and other climate related considerations that interact with their client support and service delivery.

> Mulleraterong staff now consider climate impacts in all centre planning and actively promote knowledge sharing on associated impacts with clients and families.

Mulleraterong have now committed to support and liaise with other organisations to share relevant information on considering climate impacts in their operations and service delivery. They have committed to review relevant policies and procedures and to ensure that they are up to date, with staff continuing to educate clients and families to adapt at their household level.

Hamilton Community House

Hamilton Community House Incorporated ('Community House' in the following) is a not for profit organisation providing a broad range of social support services to community members within the Shire of Southern Grampians. There are over 350 neighbourhood houses across Victoria funded by the Victorian Government through the 'Neighbourhood House Coordination Program'. Supporting this program reflects the Government's commitment to supporting communities outlined in its A Fairer Victoria policy

The Hamilton Community House aims to provide the following:
A safe, friendly environment for community members to meet within
A range of adult educational opportunities
A range of recreational and leisure activities

Community House became involved in the RP;RF project by expressing an interest in learning more about planning, educating their clients, volunteers and the wider community about extreme events and climate change, and how to better support those accessing their services. Through their engagement as members of SGGPCP and their projects historically, Community House representatives had begun to build an understanding on changing weather patterns and how to manage thermal comfort of their premises.

Figure 14: Hamilton Community House Incorporated.

What they learnt

- Understanding on how other stakeholders are dealing with adaptation issues and how lessons can be shared for application to the Community House;
- That adaptation planning is required for most organisations and businesses;
- That the organisation is already undertaking some adaptation actions in the workplace, and that these need to be documented and included in policies and procedures;
- That the Neighbourhood House Network can play a vital education and recovery role for communities during extreme weather and events.

The most important aspects

- That adaptation actions tie in with compliance for risk management;
- Understanding that staff, as well as clients are vulnerable to climate risks;
- Discussing project findings with the Regional Network of Neighbourhood Houses helped identify issues on a greater level;
- Networking with to

As a direct result of the project

As a result of the project, the Community House now understand the ripple effect that climate impacts have on their organisation, their clients, the wider community and ultimately the entire Neighbourhood House Network. Actions are now underway to develop collaborative means to minimise climate risk to clients and staff. Community awareness raising actions are currently

underway via Community House newsletters, articles, flyers and posters and the organisation is now taking an active advocacy role to State and Federal Departments to consider the impacts of a changing climate on Neighbourhood Houses.

Community House is now committed to support and liaise with local and state services to share relevant

> "Climate change impacts affect a broad range of cross sections within the Neighbourhood House Network and we are committed to raise these topics at every opportunity to increase awareness and plan the seeds of though for adaptation planning at higher levels"

information on adaptation planning, as well as review relevant policies and procedures to ensure that they adequately consider long term climate impacts. The organisation acknowledges that "climate change impacts affect a broad range of cross sections within the Neighbourhood House Network" and they are committed to raise these effects at every opportunity to "increase awareness and plan the seeds of though for adaptation planning at higher levels".

4   How it was done

As outlined previously, the RP;RF project was undertaken in a series of four phases from January 2014 to March 2015. The project was undertaken in collaboration between the Southern Grampians Shire Council, the Southern Grampians Primary Care Partnership and researchers from the Centre for Urban Research at RMIT University. SGGPCP was the project lead, facilitating interaction with member agencies and their clients, and the research team provided key input for activities that were undertaken with agencies and provided research support.

Phase 1: Baseline understanding of social vulnerability in context

Phase 1 of the project occurred from January to April of 2014, and purposed to understand the current status and scope of social vulnerability in the Southern Grampians Shire Council. A series of consultations with SGGPCP member agencies, workshops and focus groups enabled data to be gathered on who is considered vulnerable in the community and what the current management mechanisms are. All consultations took a semi-formal interview structure and all participants met ethics requirements through RMIT University protocol. Consultations were undertaken with SGGPCP representatives as lead, asking the following questions:

- Who do you work with?
- What makes life difficult?
- What makes life easier?
- Who is doing it tough in your community?

> "I thought I was coming to another dreaded climate change workshop. But I realised this is relevant to my work and easy to include"

Participants were also asked to participate in a rich picture activity[10] where they were instructed to consider how the recent heatwave affected them and the people that they work with. Closing questions to the consultation surrounded how SGGPCP (and the project) could make life easier. Consultation responses were recorded by SGGPCP staff and data was analysed by the RMIT research team. During the first phase of the project 25 consultations were undertaken with member agencies and community members.

Two additional workshops were run with member agencies and their clients whereby the same questions were asked and data collected accordingly.

SGGPCP representatives collected data from all member agencies on what is currently being done to manage existing social vulnerability. The RMIT research team undertook qualitative data analysis using N-Vivo qualitative software analysis to understand what the consultation data was demonstrating.

A literature review was undertaken by the RMIT research team to determine what social vulnerability means from an academic and policy perspective, and how this varies from the data collected through the consultations. Outcomes from this Phase are outlined in Section 2.1 of this report.

Phase 2: Climate and social vulnerability interactions

Phase 2 of the project saw researchers from RMIT compile climate projections and locally relevant data to share with project participants. Through responses from Phase 1 it was deemed appropriate to develop a workbook to support participating agencies to consider how climate change will impact their operations and service delivery by undertaking a Local Climate Impacts Profile (LCIP). The full workbook is included in this report at Appendix 1: Agency climate impacts workbook. The workbook was implemented with member agencies through secondary consultations led by SGGPCP and through a workshop run with stakeholders of the project and lead by RMIT researchers.

RMIT researchers and SGGPCP representatives investigated how the existing social vulnerability of the Shire will interact with climate impacts and engaged project participants to share this information. A series of workshops were run to inform and engage project participants on how this interaction will affect staff and clients, and project participants were invited to engage on this topic through a series of disaster scenarios. Reporting on community vulnerability and climate change was undertaken through presentations to council, and forums to other stakeholders.

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[10] Soft Systems Methodology approach. Additional information can be found in Armson, R. (2011) *Growing Wings on the Way: Systems Thinking for Messy Situations.*

Phase 3: Integrated adaptation development

Phase 3 saw the rollout of a series of focus groups and workshops with project participants to investigate means to manage the interaction of climate change and existing social vulnerability. During one workshop, filming was undertaken to develop a video[11] to promote the project findings and approach. This workshop saw participants develop actions that could avoid a disaster scenario and can be considered adaptation actions across a six month, two and five year timeframe.

Post this workshop, PCP representatives met with member agencies to investigate means to include additional actions in policies and procedures that are already in place with their agencies. A final workshop was undertaken with the research team and participating agencies to make commitments to include adaptation actions within their organisation.

An evaluation of the project's value was undertaken with project participants at the close of Phase 3. This entailed an online anonymous survey via survey monkey that was open for two months for all participants to complete. Focus groups with member agency participants were also undertaken with the guidance of an external facilitator to avoid bias. All results were recorded and transcribed using N-Vivo qualitative software analysis.

Phase 4: Information sharing and dissemination

Phase 4 entailed sharing information with all stakeholders of the project and ensuring that member agencies have adequate information to continue the work that they committed to during the project.

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[11] RP;RF video can be viewed at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AxG1pZ5EuGk

Building blocks of rural community resilience

5   Next steps

It is clear upon reflection of the RP;RF pilot project, that its value is demonstrated by not only meeting its objectives, but also through the co-benefits of engagement for SGGPCP and for its affiliated member agencies. The pilot can be deemed successful, with the model for engagement with community service organisations in rural areas proving useful to commence the adaptation planning process to consider climate risk in the context of changing social vulnerability.

> SGGPCP is well equipped to share its experience and increased capacity across its networks.

The project team recommends that other PCPs adopt a similar model for engagement with their member agencies, and utilise the outputs already prepared. Similarly, community service organisations can commence their internal adaptation planning process by simulating the process undertaken in the pilot, and by engaging similarly supportive stakeholders. In a resource-constrained sector, linkages between climate change impacts and service delivery need to be demonstrated, and additional funding support will be required to address these linkages in a context specific manner with different types of organisations.

The authors of this report recommend Phase 5 (next phase post project completion) of this project to include:

- Engagement with all PCPs in rural areas of Victoria
- Share the model for engagement and pass on resources to support this
- Mentoring from SGGPCP and RMIT researchers collaboratively in situ, over a period of 6 months to test the engagement model with respective PCPs member agencies
- Support from advocacy and State Government departments to promote this approach and to provide resourcing.
- Ongoing networking opportunities with other agencies, researchers and community members
- Scenario workshops to adaptation action brainstorming
- Teaching and engaging methodologies to up skill staff to navigate complex issues and develop actions to build resilience within service delivery
- Bringing emergency management representatives along on the journey and incorporating proactive adaptation planning in their service delivery.

> It would be ideal if the momentum of the project could be continued in the region while the engagement is still high.

This pilot project has highlighted starting points for adaptation processes. It would be ideal if the momentum of this project could be continued in the region while engagement is still high. Further investigation into the periphery networks from the PCP and its member agencies, both formally and informally, is required to understand which to strengthen in order to promote community resilience in rural areas of Victoria. The engagement process can continue from this pilot project stage, and SGGPCP is well equipped to share its experience and increased capacity with PCPs across the State, using this valuable platform and the linkages between climate change and community health and wellbeing to promote community resilience.

6   Appendix 1: Agency climate impacts workbook

What does climate change mean for your community service organisation?

Activity Book

Rural People; Resilient Futures Project
Southern Grampians and Glenelg Primary Care Partnership
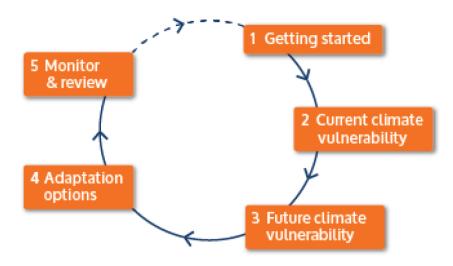Southern Grampians Shire Council
RMIT University

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Purpose: to determine the impacts of climate change on your service delivery and clients' vulnerability, and what can be done to manage this.[1]

The Adaptation Process[2]

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[1] Workbook adapted from:
NHS – 'Adaptation to Climate Change for Health and Social Care Organisation
UKCIP - Local Climate Impacts Profile: how to do an LCIP
UKCIP – Adaptation Wizard Notepad

[2] UKCIP Adaptation Wizard, http://www.ukcip.org.uk/wizard/

The following Steps consider Stages 1 & 2 of the adaptation process as indicated on the previous page.

Step 1: Identify key information to help with climate adaptation and resilience planning

Summary of Climate Impacts (Regional)
Glenelg Hopkins Region (Victorian Government, 2008) refer to projections.

What have we already experienced?
e.g. Hamilton 2-6 days over 40^0C projected for 2070 under high emissions

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So therefore, are you vulnerable to the current climate?

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How has your organisation been affected by recent weather events?

Heatwave

Bushfire

Floods

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How well did you organisation cope with the recent weather events?

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What additional information would help?

Impacts on infrastructure?

Links with climate change and health?

Demographic data?

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Step 2: What impacts will have the biggest ramifications on your organisation and service delivery?

Prioritise climate impacts

Does one impact have more ramifications than others?

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Step 3: Identify the key people to involve

Consider the following table as a checklist and make notes on your relevant representative:

Stakeholder Checklist	Relevant Representative
Council - HACC - Community Care - Youth Services - Disability Services	
Coordinating Bodies - PCP - Health and Wellbeing boards - RASNET - Sustainability forums - Climate forum	
Utilities - Water company - Electricity company - Gas company - Telecommunications	
Community and Voluntary Sector - Neighbourhood House - Soup Kitchen - Carer's advisory groups - Older people's forum - 'Other' user-led groups - Red Cross - Salvation Army	
Private Care Providers - Private care companies - Care homes - Care in the community schemes	

Building blocks of rural community resilience

Social Housing - Housing commission	
State Bodies - Department of Human Services - Department of Health - Department of Environment and Primary Industries	
Federal Bodies - Department of Health - Department of Human Services	
Hospitals	
Emergency Services - Fire - Police - Ambulance	

Step 4: Decide on the focus of work and the priorities for your area

e.g.

Service delivery – the whole supply chain of service delivery

Organisational level – staff, facilities

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Now that you understand your vulnerability to current climate, work through how this will change in the future by using locally relevant climate projections. This commences Stage 3 and 4 of the adaptation process.

The following table can support you in working through this process.

(a) Climate variable	(b) Specific event (if applicable)	(c) Timescale and emission level being considered	(d) Projected change in event in future	(e) Receptor (ie. the 'thing' being affected)	(f) Consequence	(g) Threats (negative impacts)	(h) Opportunities (positive impacts)
Increased temperatures	Heatwave Feb 2014	2070 (higher emissions)	6 days over 40 degrees expected 26 days over 35 degrees expected 60 days over 30 degrees expected				
	Bushfire	2050 (conservative)	70% increase in fire weather Increase from 18 up to 30 days of extreme fire weather				

Extreme low temperatures	Frosts	2070 (higher emissions)	Less frosts – 2 days expected				
Rainfall	Drought	2070 (higher emissions)	Reduction up to 54% of rainy days				
	High intensity rainfall	2070 (higher emissions)	Increase of up to 50% rain intensity				

Building blocks of rural community resilience

Check Point – 'Good' Adaptation

The following principles have evolved through experience and will help you to develop a good adaptation strategy:

- Work in partnership – identify and engage your community and keep them well informed.
- Understand the risks and thresholds you have identified, including any associated uncertainties.
- Before you begin, decide on and communicate SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, results-oriented, and time-bound) objectives.
- Use a balanced approach to manage climate and non-climate risks – your adaptation measures should be implemented within the overall sustainability and development objectives of your organisation/project.
- Identify key climate risks and opportunities, and focus on actions to manage priority risks
- Address risks associated with today's climate variability and extremes as a starting point
- Use information on your current climate vulnerability to help you address risks and opportunities associated with longer-term climate change.
- Adaptive management – or "learning by doing and adapting based on what's learned" – will help you cope with uncertainty and improve your decision-making.
- The precautionary approach, where you suspect there is a problem but are unable to prove it, is an appropriate way to manage adaptation.
- Recognise the cost effectiveness and multiple benefits of no/low regrets and win-win adaptation options.
- Avoid actions that limit future adaptations or restrict adaptive actions of others.
- Monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of your adaptation decisions as well as any changes in risk.

Checklist of good adaptation for community and health organisations

- Embedded in Board approval and endorsement
- Links and cross reference to Emergency Preparedness Plans, Business Continuity Plans and vice versa
- Developed in partnership with local shire council and other stakeholders, including PCP
- Mechanisms within for review and updating
- Consideration of the following at a minimum:
  - Infrastructure including buildings, travel, supplies and supply chains
  - Resource use, scarcity and continuity including energy, food and water

7   Appendix 2: Project on a Page

Project Overview: Rural People: Resilient Futures

What?

Southern Grampians Shire Council (SGSC) has received funding through the State Government Department of Environment and Primary Industries (DEPI) through the Victorian Adaptation and Sustainability (VAS) Partnership to facilitate an action research pilot project entitled Rural People: Resilient Futures. The project aims to understand vulnerability across the Southern Grampians Shire. A particular focus is on defining **who** is vulnerable, **what** they are vulnerable to, **how** this will vary in the future and what can be done to **manage** this varying vulnerability. Rural People: Resilient Futures is funded until May 2015.

How?

Southern Grampians and Glenelg Primary Care Partnership (SGGPCP) will lead the research project in partnership with RMIT University providing research direction, and SGSC as funds recipient providing valuable community links.

Phase 1: entails RMIT University reviewing the existing academic and grey literature to determine current understanding of vulnerability in this context, while SGGPCP will commence conversations with local stakeholders and community. This consultation will enable understanding of the local context and needs associated with vulnerability within the community.
Key community consultation questions are:

1. Who or what groups would you classify as vulnerable in your community?
2. What makes day to day life difficult within your community?
3.   What issues are concerning your community at the moment? Do any of these concerns relate to extreme events, emergencies or weather?
4. Who do you think are most impacted by these concerns? Who are you looking out for/concerned about? How? Can you describe an experience?
5. Has your community or anyone you know of, done anything to cope with these impacts? What have they done?

Phase 2: aims to work more closely with stakeholders and the community to investigate the development of strategies to reduce existing and future vulnerability. By working with SGGPCP partners in the first instance, the most appropriate strategy for the community can be developed. This phase also aims to increase the ability of SGGPCP partners to deal with existing community vulnerability and how this will change in the future.
Phase 3: investigates opportunities for integration of vulnerability reduction strategies into existing and new mechanisms between SGSC, SGGPCP, its partners and the community. Extensive community and stakeholder consultation in this phase will ensure that the more effective means of integration is achieved.
Phase 4: endeavours to provide ongoing feedback about findings and learnings of the project to stakeholders, the community, other councils, research institutions and government. Although this will be ongoing throughout the project, a dedicated phase ensures extensive information sharing.

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8   Appendix 3: Results on a Page

Rural People; Resilient Futures
Learnings, Results and Legacy

The Rural People; Resilient Futures (RPRF) pilot project sought to understand the context of vulnerability in the Southern Grampians Shire, how this will change under climate change and means to manage this.

RPRF was undertaken over four phases across 12 months, and using the Southern Grampians and Glenelg Primary Care Partnership (SGGPCP) as the platform, in collaboration with researchers from RMIT University to engage with community service organisations and community members with a hope to understand and facilitate community resilience.

A successful model for engagement was uncovered, with significant co-benefits through the process itself.

THE NUMBERS
85% of participants surveyed rated the project as valuable or highly valuable
8 SGGPCP member agencies from across the SGSC participated in the adaptation planning process
>30 consultations were undertaken
>8 workshops and focus groups were undertaken
100% of participants have committed to continue the action implemented through the project

WHAT AGENCIES WANT:
- Improved service coordination and delivery between agencies at all scales;
- Staff education to consider climate impacts in respective roles and means to enable resilience
- Increased linkages between agencies, Shire, emergency services and State Government;
- Using local knowledge to promote resilience within the wider community;
- Monitor and review to test effectiveness of actions already in place

KEY FINDINGS
Social vulnerability is context specific, and for the SGSC, those considered most vulnerable are:
- Low income families
- Farming families living in isolated areas
- Socially isolated individuals
- Those with cognitive difficulties

These groups are made more vulnerable by 'falling through the gaps' or not fulfilling typical funding or support criteria.

Extreme events (heatwave, drought, fire, storms, extreme rainfall and flooding) are already affecting community service organisations and their clients. These events will become more prevalent in this region due to climate change. These impacts will make life more difficult for those already socially vulnerable.

THE PROCESS

Phase 1: Baseline Understanding
- Consultations – community & agencies Who is doing it tough in your community? What do they do to get by?
- Literature, policy & context review
- Workshops
- Focus groups

Phase 2: Vulnerability Interactions
- Determine local climate impacts
- Screen vulnerability interactions
- Compile vulnerability interactions
- Consult agencies & community

Phase 3: Integrating Adaptation
- Scope adaptation options
- Integrate into existing policies & platforms Shire & PCP + agencies
- Establish M&E

Phase 4: Information Dissemination
- Community information workshops
- Stakeholder workshops
- Regional information sharing
- What did agencies learn?
- What did the community learn?
- Program design

Current actions being undertaken by community service organisations surround managing weather and emergency management. This is not adequate to manage increasing extreme events and proactive preparedness is required for community resilience and to avoid disastrous consequences.
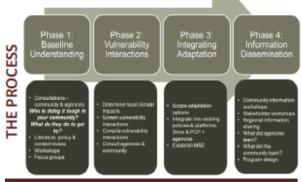
THE LEGACY
RPRF film: available on YouTube
Work book developed to assist agencies
Model for engagement uncovered for enhancing community resilience
Case studies for each participating organisation
This is not a once off process...it must continue to be effective

Continue the conversation

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9   Appendix 4: Media Excerpts

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Urban Research

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