

Putting Resilience into Policy

Insights from a 2-year study of South Australian farmers



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The Broader Project

- Topic:
 - Resilience and the mental health and wellbeing of farm families experiencing climate variation in South Australia
- Funded by the South Australian Dept of Health
 - 1 of 4 projects funded under 'resilience / psychological wellbeing
 - Strategic policy outcomes –
 - Links to South Australian Strategic Plan
 - Health in all policies approach



Putting resilience into policy

- Has depended on conceptualising and operationalising resilience in a particular way
 - Psychometric
 - Outcomes objectively defined (score on particular measure)
 - Process: establishing clear causal patterns
 - Interventions focused on individuals (or groups of individuals eg youth at risk)

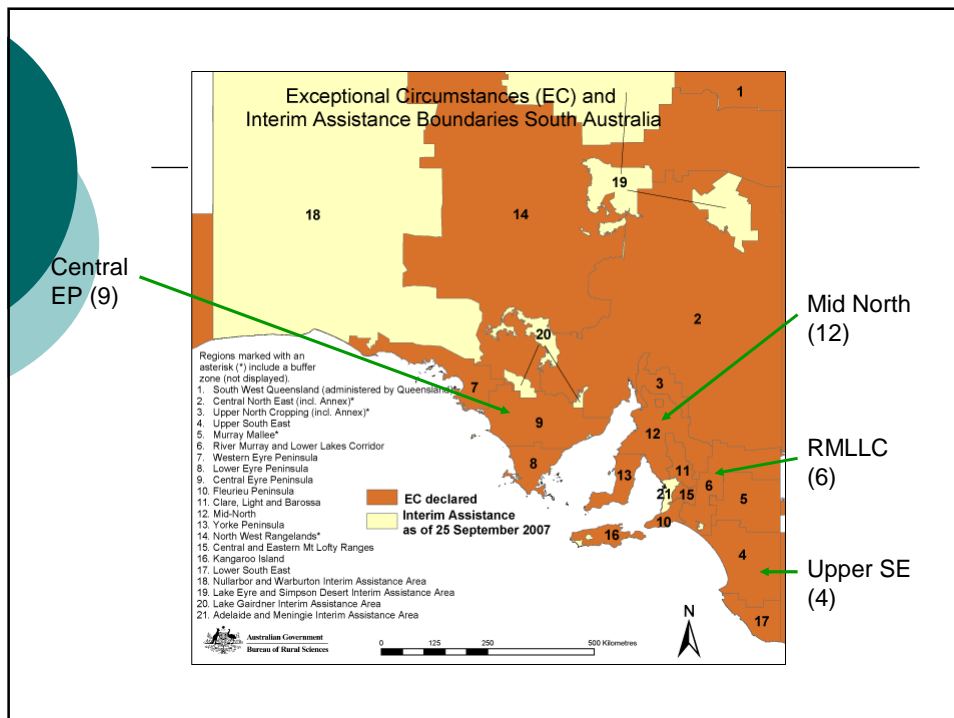


Now for our perspective...

- Sociological, qualitative
- Process focused: complex systems, chaotic patterns
- Outcomes subjectively defined (getting by)
- Need to contextualise resilience
- Interventions likely to go beyond the individual
- CHALLENGE – to produce policy-relevant outcomes from research

Researching resilience in farm families

- 80 farm families,
 - 148 participants in round 1 (77 men, 71 women);
 - 132 participants in round 2 (69 men, 63 women)
- SA, 4 'exceptional circumstance' regions – all properties were drought affected
- Purposive sample:
 - own or earn income from property;
 - be over 18 years of age;
 - 'getting by' despite the drought;
- Interviews plus GHQ12, plus indicators of physical health and financial wellbeing (2 interviews, 12 months apart)





Resilience Concepts

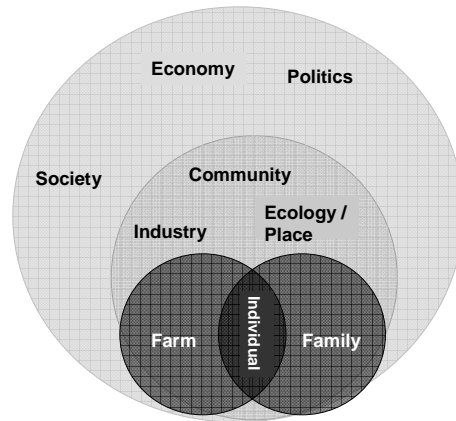
- **Definition** – process of negotiating resources in order to survive, thrive, hope and cope in the face of adversity
- **Adversity** – Drought
- **Outcome** – Getting By (self-defined)
- **Domains:**
 - Mental health and wellbeing
 - Livelihood (work and income)
- **Unit of analysis** – individual
- **Protective processes** – →



Protective processes (examples)

- **Livelihood**
 - Diversified income source
 - Drought preparedness
 - Confidence as business managers **
- **Mental Health and Wellbeing**
 - Social interaction
 - Mental disengagement from farm **
 - Optimism

Protective factors and processes



It's all about
CONTEXT

Spheres of Influence for Farm Men and Women

Protective processes

- Patterns re gender, age and some regional differences
- Strong link between financial viability (livelihood) and mental health and wellbeing
 - Addressing financial viability of farm families would help to address mental health issues
- Resilience changes over time
 - Decreases when options decrease
 - Increases where people realise that they can face anything (been to their perceived limits and survived)



Policy Outcomes: Service Provision

- 'Service' focused change (see e.g. new draft Mental Health Plan)
 - Consultations with service providers
 - Capacity building (among service providers)
 - Service coordination and integration
 - Continuity in service provision (not crisis driven)
 - Innovative services and modes of delivery
 - Client-centred
 - Strengths based
 - Necessary, but not sufficient



Policy Outcomes – Health in all Policies

- 'Health in all policies' approach for resilience in farm families:
 - Conflicts with other imperatives, eg free market, 'safety net' welfare, problem/deficit approach to health
 - Outcomes not directly measurable
 - High level of coordination and political commitment
 - Possible that creating a resilience-oriented environment for farm families might be counter-productive for other industries/individuals
- 'Resilience thinking' initiative may have potential to move towards this kind of approach



Extending resilience – some concluding thoughts

- Creating an environment where resilience is enhanced
 - Skills
 - Resources
 - Services
 - Policy
- Importance to farm families of having 'options'
 - Need to be available
 - Need to be identifiable
 - Need to be accessible
- Addressing resilience in each sphere of influence
 - Recognise interactions (direction of influence)
 - Locate responsibility for change