

## Mining town residents creating a place for remote area relocators—the role of community social support groups in facilitating the psychological well-being of new residents

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As part of a study examining the psychological well-being of residents living in a remote mining town located in South Australia, 29 women and 7 men took part in 16 one-to-one interviews and/or three focus groups.

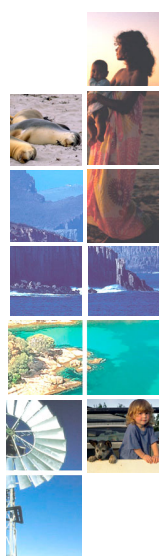
A participatory action research model was used to:

- build a trust relationship with local residents, service and industry providers
- enable different sectors of the community to express their views, in particular provide a “voice” to women not employed as primary income providers
- examine the role of social factors in maintaining the well-being of relocators
- build the community’s sense of ownership of the project by engaging it in all stages of the program
- ensure that interventions designed to enhance the psychological well-being of residents, recommended as an outcome of the study, reflect the ideas presented by participants.

Data collected from interviews and focus groups were audiotaped, transcribed and analysed for themes related to relocation and well-being. Field notes taken during trips to the mining town supplemented the above research material.

The study revealed that local social support groups facilitate the psychological well-being of relocators by enhancing these residents’ sense of belonging to their new location. As a result, the town’s social support groups provide a health promotion service model for other mining towns and non-metropolitan areas seeking to meet the psychosocial needs of new residents.

Ongoing challenges for the mining town taking part in the study revolve around maintaining and extending current services to continue meeting the psycho-social needs of a relatively young, mobile and socially diverse population. Further community participation in research work examining a specific social-support intervention has potential to add to residents’ psychological well-being.



Findings from the study also have an application in the development of mental health policies for rural and remote areas. In particular, it is recommended that resources be allocated to develop and sustain community social support groups as a means of maintaining the psychological well-being of those relocators facing potential geographical and social isolation in non-metropolitan areas.

[This is the paper abstract as published in the Handbook for the 7th National Rural Health Conference – the full paper was not available at the time of publication of the Conference Proceedings.]

