

# Achieving Good Health and Wellbeing in Rural Australia:

## Perceptions of Older Men

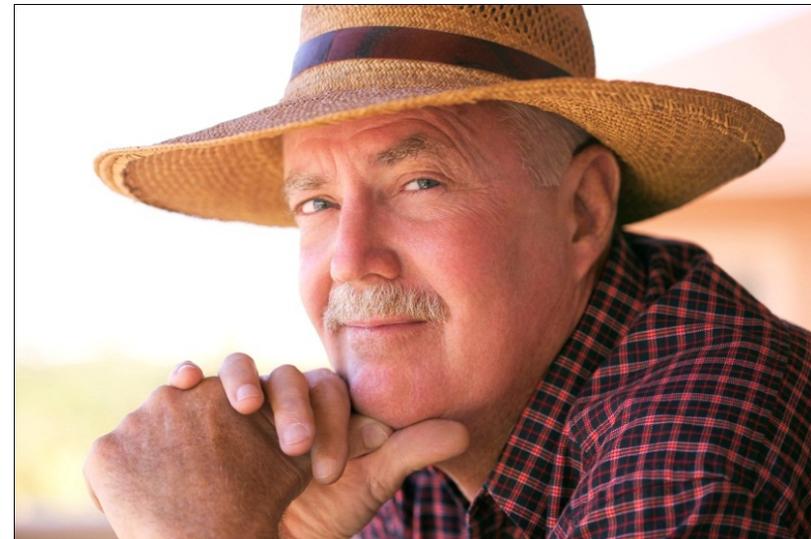


# Older men

- Rapidly growing and diverse population group
- Unique challenges to improving quality of life and overall health for Rural Australian men

## Research Aim:

To explore the perceptions of health and wellbeing needs of older men in rural and regional Queensland.



# Older Rural Men

## Rural men have an increased likelihood of

- Experiencing chronic disease
- Hospitalisation
- Injury
- Psychological distress
- Poorer health functioning and mobility
- And death

Then men living in major cities.



## Social determinants

- Accessing health services
- Higher cost of and difficulties sourcing fresh foods
- Harsh environmental conditions
- Social isolation
- Socio-economic disadvantage



# Methods

## Study Design

- Qualitative study

## Study Sites

- 1 x inner regional LGA,
- 1 x outer regional,
- 1 x outer regional and remote

## Participants

- >50 years (majority 65years+)

## Participant Recruitment

- EOI from wider community survey
- Snowball sampling

## Data collection

- 3 focus group discussion's and 6 in-depth interviews

## Analysis

- Thematic analysis using grounded theory

# Achieving health and wellbeing

## Influences on Health

- How you were brought up
- Environment around you
- Good discipline
- A sense of personal responsibility
- Derived from self respect
- Luck and good genes
- “Being old” an excuse for not caring about health

*I think ... particularly with some of the older guys, they're quite happy to let things roll along themselves ... (they) are just quite happy to just poke along and not worry about anything. They've reached a certain age and are just going to let things happen. Let life go by. I can understand that to a point but hey I don't want to die sick, if I'm going to die, I want to die healthy, you know. (FGD, Town A)*

# Achieving Health and Wellbeing

## Influences on wellbeing

- Wellbeing is an integral part of achieving health
- Wellbeing is influenced by
  - Contentment
  - Work life balance
  - Connection to social surroundings
- Underpinning health and wellbeing achievement was having a sense of purpose.



Photo: Joe Armao SMH

# Sense of Purpose

- Link to work and employment
- Life transitions from work to retirement a significant risk
- Compounded by unique situation in rural areas such as farming

*...you've got a purpose in life and if you lose that purpose in life then things come and go very much pear shaped.*

*A big thing is for most of your life you've been away 8, 9 hours a day 5 days a week and suddenly that's gone. You've got to get... and I keep saying this, you've got to get outside activities away from home and you don't want to sit around. And I've got friends who do exactly that, sitting there looking at four walls with nothing to do. It's not my scene.*

# Maintaining good health and wellbeing in rural areas

- Increased opportunities for feelings of belonging and connectedness in small towns
- Role of mates
  - Positive and negative
- Socialising via drinking at the pub or within clubs often confused for positive social interaction

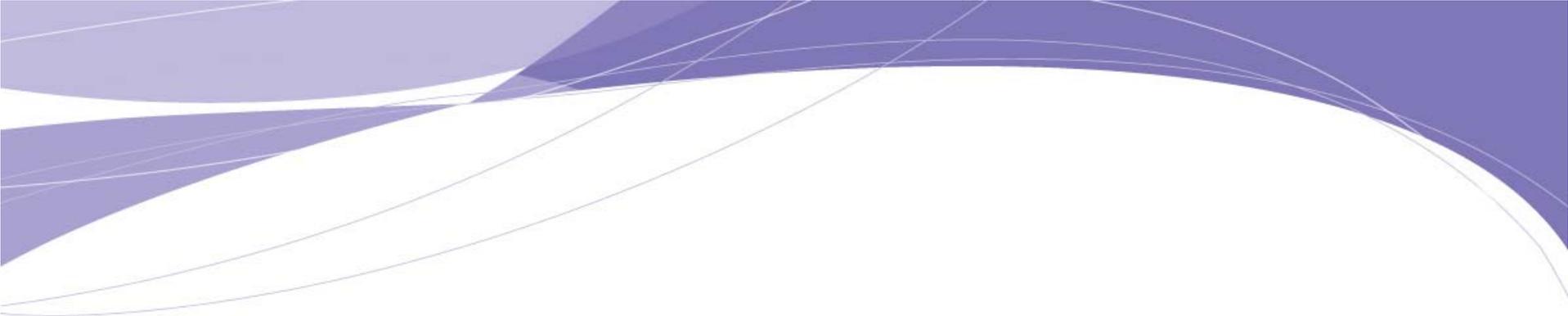
*...and you know you read about their social interaction and it's good to go and talk to your mates but it's not good if all you do is swap bad stories.  
...And drinking way too much and I don't imagine they'd feel very inspired when they get up the next morning.*

# Health and wellbeing seeking behaviour of older rural men

- Influenced by stage of life and experience
- Triggered by Illness
- Role of Wives
- Opinions of mates
- Typically not just obtained from doctor
- Men's only services

# Discussion

- Positive aging plans for rural men with a focus on
  - Active preparation for retirement
  - Succession planning for farmers
  - Social isolation
  - Healthy (social) activities
- Strengthening of existing (positive) social networks in rural and regional areas should be capitalised on.



*Thank You*

## **Acknowledgements**

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