

## **Mental Health and Rural Men**

- Associate Professor Don **Gorman**, University of Southern Queensland, QLD, Australia
- Mr Jim **Weir**, Toowoomba District Mental Health Service, QLD, Australia
- Ms McCullagh **Bronwyn**, Toowoomba District Mental Health Service, QLD, Australia
- Prof Hegney **Desley**, University of Southern Queensland, Australia
- Dr Cath **Rogers-Clark**, University of Southern Queensland, QLD, Australia
- Ms Pearce **Sussane**, University of Southern Queensland, Australia

This paper will report on a research project that looked at rural men's experience of mental health problems and how they coped.

Almost one in five Australians will experience mental health problems within a 12 month period. Rural people, who already have poorer health than metropolitan people are identified as being significantly at risk for poor mental health.

Rural males are noted to be at risk during episodes of mental illness, which may be caused by life events over which they have little control.

This project through the use of narratives aimed to address the following research question:

What are the factors that participants believe are current stressors related to rural living.

What are the factors that participants believe enhance their resilience to mental illness.

An analysis of the stories told by the 10 men revealed a number of factors that the participants considered helpful in coping during difficult times.

These factors can be broadly categorised into two major themes: 1. The individual and inner strength and 2. Support and strategies. The issues discussed by participants in the areas of the individual and inner strength include positive thinking, self awareness, self control, the meaning of life, as well as appreciation and hope. Support and strategies relates to factors with regard to access to information, seeking help, treatment, talking about problems, support from family and friends, being needed, life changes, taking a break and having other interests.