

JOINT REPORT



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A snapshot of poverty in rural and regional Australia

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Summary

Despite the fact that the rate of poverty in rural and regional areas is slightly higher than in capital cities, it is rarely the focus of national policy attention.

Nearly one in three people live outside our major cities - in rural, regional and remote areas across Australia¹. They live in a variety of circumstances, from farms in remote areas to inner regional towns. They also live in a variety of social and economic conditions, with personal social and economic wellbeing often tied to the overall outcomes of their local area.

Allowing for the costs of housing, poverty is slightly worse in rural, regional and remote areas (13.1 per cent 'outside capital cities') than in capital cities (12.6 per cent). When housing costs (which are higher in capital cities) are not taken into account, that divide becomes starker.

The experience of poverty is closely connected to where people live and the local resources available to them. Poverty in rural and regional Australia has a particular set of characteristics, including:

- generally lower incomes of those living in these regions;
- reduced access to services such as health, education and transport;
- declining employment opportunities; and
- distance and isolation.

A significant proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people live outside the capital cities and for those living on low income the experience is exacerbated by specific cultural, language and life experience issues.

Nearly seven million Australians live outside metropolitan areas, and 18 of the 20 electorates in Australia with the lowest household incomes are outside the capital cities².

What is poverty and how is it measured?

'Poverty' is a relative concept. The term is used to describe the people in a particular society who cannot afford the essentials that most people in that society take for granted. While many Australians juggle payments of bills, people living in poverty have to make difficult choices – such as skipping a meal to pay for a child's textbook.

In Australia and elsewhere, poverty is measured using 'poverty lines' which measure the number of people living below an income level that is deemed to be unacceptably low. Households with less than this specified level are in 'income poverty'.

The OECD poverty line, widely used in international research, is set at 50 per cent of median income. After taking account of housing costs, in 2010 an estimated 2,265,000 people in Australia - or 12.8 per cent of the population - including 575,000 children (17.3 per cent of

¹ Australian Bureau of Statistics, June 2011. "It is estimated that at 30 June 2009, nearly one third (31% or 6,886,600 people) of the Australian population resided outside Major Cities. The population in these areas grew by 11% (705,300 people) between 2001 and 2009 while the population of Major Cities areas grew by 14% (1,836,700 people)".

² ABS Census data 2006.

Australia's children), lived in households below this austere poverty line. This living standard is a disposable income of less than \$358 per week for a single adult or \$752 for a couple with two children.

Another way to measure poverty is to look at what essential items people are missing out on, through having to spend the majority of their income on major and unavoidable costs such as health care or housing. This is known as 'deprivation'. Deprivation measures access to essentials like a substantial meal once a day, a decent and secure home, medications, school books and uniforms, and dental treatment.³

Poverty in rural and regional Australia

Households living in income poverty in rural and regional areas have additional problems which often exacerbate poverty, such as reduced access to health services, transport difficulties, inadequate local infrastructure, and vulnerability to drought and other natural hazards.

Submissions to a Senate inquiry into poverty in 2004 highlighted inequality in the distribution of employment opportunities between rural and regional areas compared with metropolitan areas. Problems included the lower share of employment generated by primary industries compared with industries in metropolitan areas, compounded by declining opportunities for unskilled work.⁴ In addition, communities in regions with single sector industries are vulnerable to changes in policy that can reduce the viability of those industries and hence employment.⁵

Submissions overwhelmingly emphasised the limited opportunities available in rural areas, combined with the centralisation of services, as the main causes of poverty in these areas. Reduced opportunities result in unemployment and underemployment, which then lead to reduced income. Farming families often have a measure of wealth in the land that they own and, theoretically, such wealth is offset against low income in 'bad' years. This is the well-known syndrome of being 'income poor and asset rich' with which policies relating to income security have grappled for years. When the Henderson Commission measured farm income in the 1970s they discovered that a considerable number of farming households had inadequate incomes even in a 'good' year.

Families living in towns and reliant on employment in service industries (for example, the retail sector) rely on the economic boost provided by the expenditure of farm incomes during good seasons; the obverse is that poor seasons and subsequent lack of farm incomes can translate to lower levels of employment and higher levels of underemployment in rural towns.

Nationally, in 2010 the level of poverty (allowing for the costs of housing) was slightly higher in rural, regional and remote areas (13.1 per cent 'outside capital cities') than in capital cities (12.6 per cent). When housing costs are not taken into account, the city-country figures diverge more widely. Also, with the majority of people outside capital cities being in inner regional areas, the rate of poverty in remote and very remote areas is masked. It may be considerably higher than the general 'balance of state' figures suggest.

When housing costs are taken into account, as they are in these data, state poverty rates in 2009-10 varied from 11.8 per cent in Victoria to 14.3 per cent in New South Wales. While Queensland's overall poverty rate was 12.5 per cent, it had the highest rate of poverty outside the capital city (at 15.0 per cent).

³ ACOSS, 'Who is missing out? Material deprivation and income support payments', ACOSS Paper 187, March 2012.

⁴ Senate Inquiry into Poverty and Hardship in Australia, 2004, referencing submissions from Mission Australia and Uniting Care.

⁵ Ibid.

Table 1: Percentage of people living in poverty, 2009/10

	Capital city	Balance of state	All
NSW	15.2	12.7	14.3
Victoria	11.4	12.9	11.8
Queensland	9.5	15.0	12.5
South Australia	11.8	14.1	12.4
Western Australia	12.4	10.6	12.0
Tasmania	13.1	14.2	13.7
Total	12.6	13.1	12.8

Notes: Poverty is defined as having 50 per cent or less of median income after housing costs have been deducted. Source: *Poverty in Australia*, Australian Council of Social Service Paper 194, Strawberry Hills, NSW, 2012.

Measured this way the rate of poverty was generally a little greater outside capital cities (especially in Queensland), in part due to higher unemployment in regional Australia. The exceptions are New South Wales and Western Australia, where very high housing costs in the capital cities have increased the risk of poverty in those cities.

A national report by Tony Vinson, published in 2007, identified the most disadvantaged areas in Australia and reported that they included a number in rural and remote areas, including Bowraville in NSW, Mt Morgan in Queensland, and the Break O'Day and Southern Midlands areas of Tasmania.⁶

In the absence of good comparative data which accurately captures the differences between areas, the following table based on data published by the Public Health Information Development Unit (PHIDU) indirectly illustrates the rural disadvantage around poverty and deprivation.

Table 2: Indirect poverty indicators for rural Australia

	Major Cities	Inner Regional	Outer Regional	Remote	Very Remote
	Percent				
Low income families with children 2009	8.8	10.7	11.1	12.9	23.1
Single parent payment beneficiaries 2009	4.6	6.9	6.8	6.2	6.5
Disability support pensioners 2009	4.6	7.0	6.9	5.6	5.2
Long term unemployment beneficiaries 2009	2.3	3.3	3.4	3.7	5.5
Unskilled and semi skilled workers 2006	14.6	19.6	21.4	22.8	30.4
Jobless families with children under 15 yrs 2011	12.2	15.4	15.6	15.0	25.9
Private health insurance (hospital cover) 2001	48.2	43.8	40.6	33.0	19.6

Source: PHIDU <http://www.publichealth.gov.au/remoteness---australia/remoteness---australia-2012-incl.-2011-census-data.html> viewed 19/09/2013.

⁶ 'Dropping off the edge: the distribution of disadvantage in Australia', Tony Vinson; Jesuit Social Services, February 2007.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander wellbeing

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are especially vulnerable to poverty and comprise a significant proportion of the population in rural and remote areas.

Comparative income data shows that:

- The average Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander person's disposable income is only 70 per cent of the average non-Indigenous Australian. This gap is often wider in rural, regional and remote areas; for example, in Cape York in Queensland the estimated average disposable income for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people was \$394 a week, only 45 per cent of the average disposable income of non-Indigenous Australians (\$869).⁷
- There is no region in Australia – rural, remote, regional or urban – in which Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have a higher average disposable income than non-Indigenous people.⁸
- The average disposable income for a non-Indigenous male who is not employed is 1.4 times as high as the average income for an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander male.⁹
- Although Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people make up 2.5 per cent of the total Australian population, 25 per cent of the homeless population identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander in the 2011 Census.¹⁰

Deprivation in rural and regional Australia

Deprivation research shows that the prevalence of deprivation is highest in large towns and rural areas, and lowest in the inner city.¹¹ Rates of social disengagement of residents from large towns and rural areas are higher than those recorded by residents of the inner city – the main difference being lower rates of participation of children in school activities and outings.¹²

Residents of rural areas reported the highest rates of service exclusion – particularly in relation to medical and dental services, child care and financial services.¹³ People in small country towns and rural areas have higher rates of economic exclusion than residents of the inner city, mainly as a result of greater difficulty in raising \$500 in an emergency or \$2000 within a week.¹⁴

The highest prevalence of deep and persistent exclusion was recorded by people in outer regional areas, followed by those in inner regional areas.¹⁵ The prevalence in remote areas was unassessed, but would in all probability be higher again.¹⁶

⁷ Dr Nicholas Biddle, CAEPR Indigenous Population Project, 2011 Census Papers. Paper 11, Income.ANU, Canberra.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ ABS Census data 2011.

¹¹ McLachlan, R., Gilfillan, G. and Gordon, J. 2013, Deep and Persistent Disadvantage in Australia, rev., Productivity Commission Staff Working Paper, Canberra.

¹² http://www.pc.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0007/124549/deep-persistent-disadvantage.pdf

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.

Issues related to and influencing poverty

While the amount of money (after costs of housing have been paid) available to a household provides an indication of the potential for deprivation, a range of other factors affect the capability of individuals to escape poverty, its duration and impacts, and can magnify its effects.

These factors include:

- education;
- health;
- housing and energy costs;
- the nature of work, employment and income;
- access to and the cost of goods and services; and
- community connectedness.

These are discussed in turn in the following pages.

Education

The lack of education is a recognised cause of poverty.¹⁷ People with higher levels of education generally earn more and are less likely to be unemployed or to stay unemployed. Conversely, people with low levels of education are likely to have less capacity to escape from poverty.

Young people in rural and remote areas are less likely to complete high school and less likely to commence higher education. However, they are more likely to participate in vocational education (see Table 3 below).

Poorer educational outcomes for young people in rural and remote areas appear to be affected by a number of factors:

- The perceived lower relevance of education in rural and remote areas. Fewer opportunities for highly educated workers reduces the motivation of students to strive for better education.
- Lower levels of commencement at university in part reflect the additional barriers to tertiary education for young people from rural areas, particularly the impossibility for most to live at home while at university (because of remoteness from major cities) and therefore the need to be able to afford accommodation in the city. The development of rural universities has reduced but not eliminated this as a problem.
- The lower prevalence in rural and remote areas of jobs requiring higher levels of education or training means that young qualified people find it difficult to return to work in rural areas, and consequently the population of adults living and working in rural areas tends to have lower than average educational attainment.

¹⁷ ACOSS' Poverty Report Update, October 2011, and Poverty in Australia, Australian Council of Social Service Paper 194, Strawberry Hills, NSW, 2012.

Table 3: Education indicators for rural Australia

	Major Cities	Inner Regional	Outer Regional	Remote	Very Remote
	Percent				
Young children developmentally vulnerable 2009	11	12.4	13.8	16.9	32.2
School leaver participation in higher education 2012	35.5	20.4	16.2	12.1	4.5
Full time participation of 16 yr olds in secondary school education 2011	81.3	76.8	73.9	65.4	51.6
Participation in vocational education and training 2010	6.7	9.8	10.6	12.3	11.1

Source: PHIDU <http://www.publichealth.gov.au/remoteness---australia/remoteness---australia-2012-incl.-2011-census-data.html> viewed 19/09/2013.

Health

Personal illness as well as caring for another with illness or disability entails cost, in terms of both foregone income due to reduced ability to work and a greater need to spend money on medicines, health care, and household modification and arrangements.

People living in poverty commonly suffer greater levels of physical and mental illness. As is illustrated in Table 4 below, compared with those in major cities:

- a higher proportion of people in rural and remote areas rate their health as only fair or poor;
- a higher proportion of people living in rural and regional Australia have a profound or severe disability;
- the prevalence of avoidable mortality (i.e. death which could have been avoided either through a healthier lifestyle or through better access to primary care) is higher in rural areas and much higher in remote areas.

The high stress associated with living in poverty can also contribute to behaviour which increases health risks, such as smoking and poor diet.

Health care costs have been rising faster than the Consumer Price Index and this compounds the difficulties for people on low income, particularly if they have a chronic condition needing regular care. In addition, people with disabilities often face higher costs because of the particular need for medication, equipment, aids, appropriate housing, transport and personal care.

According to NATSEM figures, Australians who are most disadvantaged socio-economically are twice as likely to have a long term health condition as those who are least disadvantaged. Not only is health worse for many people in rural and remote Australia, but healthcare is less accessible to them.

Table 4: Selected health indicators for rural Australia

	Major Cities	Inner Regional	Outer Regional	Remote	Very Remote
	Percent				
Self-assessed health as fair or poor 2007/08	13.3	17.6	18		
Disability –profound or severe 2011	4.4	5.4	5.1	3.6	3.2
	Per 100,000 population				
Avoidable mortality 2003-2007	156	176	195	251	415

Source: PHIDU <http://www.publichealth.gov.au/remoteness---australia/remoteness---australia-2012-incl.-2011-census-data.html> viewed 19/09/2013.

Housing and Energy Costs

The high cost of housing exacerbates poverty and leads to housing stress.

The cost of housing is a major and essential component of the household budget, and as such it is often deducted from household income (as in Table 1) to better reflect how much a household has left 'to live on'.

Only a minority of people on low incomes own their homes outright and rent is often unaffordable in Australia's major cities. Access to safe, secure and affordable housing affects a person's ability to find work, education and training. Poor housing is also likely to negatively affect a person's health and wellbeing.

Over the past two decades, house prices have risen by 400 per cent, while incomes have risen 120 per cent. The problem is exacerbated for low income Australians by the undersupply of affordable and appropriate housing, and an increased demand for housing assistance. Regions with strong job markets may have high housing prices and rental rates; for example the median weekly rent for a house from a private landlord in Karratha in August 2011 was \$1300.¹⁸ Between 2008 and 2012, the number of people applying for social housing (which includes public and community housing) increased by 12.4 per cent.¹⁹

Even though rents are likely to be lower outside major cities (with the exception of those areas with strong labour markets for example, mining towns) people in rural and regional Australia are more likely to experience housing stress than those in major cities (see Table 5 below).

The lower cost of housing in rural and remote areas can entice people on lower incomes to move to these areas.²⁰ Unfortunately these areas often provide little opportunity for employment and/or have lower levels of access to services, exacerbating exposure to persistent poverty.

¹⁸ Australian Bureau of Statistics, 'Towns of the Mining Boom', 4102.0 Australian Social Trends, April 2013, accessed at <http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/Lookup/4102.0Main+Features10April+2013#p7> on 30.9.2013.

¹⁹ Steering Committee for the Review of Government Service Provision, 'Report on government services 2013', tables 16A.5, 16A.6 and 16A.7.

²⁰ McLachlan, R., Gilfillan, G. and Gordon, J. 2013, Deep and Persistent Disadvantage in Australia, rev., Productivity Commission Staff Working Paper, Canberra. http://www.pc.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0007/124549/deep-persistent-disadvantage.pdf

Table 5: Selected housing indicators for regional and rural Australia

	Major Cities	Inner Regional	Outer Regional	Remote	Very Remote
	Percent				
Housing stress – renters 2011	25.4	29.4	22.3	11.1	4.9
Housing stress - mortgage holders 2011	10.3	11.1	11.0	9.5	7.7

Source: PHIDU <http://www.publichealth.gov.au/remoteness---australia/remoteness---australia-2012-incl.-2011-census-data.html> viewed 19/09/2013.

Energy

In some states, energy costs are higher in regional than metropolitan areas, with many customers who are financially vulnerable facing serious difficulty coping with their energy bills.

In Table 6 below it is clear that rural and regional residential customers in New South Wales are paying nearly double the Service Availability Charge (SAC) and significantly more per kWh in comparison with urban consumers.

Table 6: NSW Electricity Prices in urban and regional areas

(NSW Regulated Tariff)

YEAR	Energy Australia		Integral		Country Energy	
	SAC* cents per day	Cents per kWh	SAC cents per day	Cents per kWh	SAC cents per day	Cents per kWh
2009	42.9	17.16	52.8	19.52	80.64	21.58
2010	47.3	19.08	57.2	20.82	90.92	24.33
2011	52.8	22.66	65.83	24.03	107.8	28.85
2012	69.08	26.84	76.05	26.67	138.02	34.41

Source: Senate Inquiry into Electricity Prices 2012, EWON submission. Service Availability Charge (fixed component of a bill for the cost of connection).

Work, employment and income

Sufficient, regular and reliable income is necessary for families to have a reasonable lifestyle. The availability of irregular, part-time or seasonal work (as opposed to full-time or regular work and potentially synonymous with underemployment) reduces the opportunity for adequate income.

Despite relatively low official unemployment rates, there are large numbers of people who are out of work or have only a few hours of paid employment per week. They must rely mainly on social security payments for their income.

Areas of high unemployment tend to be areas of high income poverty. Table 7 (below) shows local areas of highest unemployment, along with the unemployment rate in each capital city compared with the rest of each state or territory, in June 2013. It shows that in most states the unemployment rate outside the capital city is higher than in the capital city, especially in Queensland and Tasmania.

Unemployment in rural areas is often higher than in major cities as suggested in Tables 7 and 8, while 18 of the 20 electorates in Australia with the lowest household income are outside the capital cities.²¹

Table 7: Unemployment rates inside and outside cities

	Unemployment rate, capital city	Unemployment rate, rest of state/territory	Area of highest unemployment rate*	Area of 2 nd highest unemployment rate
NSW	4.9	5.9	Central Darling 15.1	Shoalhaven Pt A, 13.8
Victoria	5.6	5.7	Gr. Dandenong – Dandenong 12.8	Brimbank – Sunshine 11.8
Queensland	5.8	6.1	Inala 25.2	Durack 25.2
South Australia	5.8	5.5	Playford – Elizabeth 21.6	Playford – West Central 16.3
Western Australia	4.2	5.1	Kwinana 11.6	Katanning 10.0
Tasmania	6.2	8.1	George Town Pt A 12.6	Central Highlands 12.4
Northern Territory	Total territory: 4.4		Petermann- Simpson 21.1	West Arnhem 17.8
ACT	Total territory: 4.1		Turner 8.3	Braddon 8.3

* excludes areas of very small size labour force

SOURCE: Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations: Small Area Labour Markets, Australia, June Quarter 2013.

People living in rural areas do not have the range of employment and career options that are available in the larger urban centres and cities, levels of job security and future employment prospects are often lower, and there are often poorer employment conditions than in urban areas.²² The need for agricultural workers has also decreased as farms have become larger and more mechanised.²³

²¹ National Council of Churches 2003 <http://www.ncca.org.au/departments/social-justice/from-the-churches/234> viewed 20/09/2013.

²² Bureau of Rural Sciences, Social Atlas of Rural and Regional Australia, 2008.

²³ Ibid.

Table 8: Selected employment indicators for rural Australia

	Major Cities	Inner Regional	Outer Regional	Remote	Very Remote
	Percent				
Young unemployment beneficiaries 2009	4.2	6.8	7.0	7.7	10.2
Long term unemployment beneficiaries 2009	2.3	3.3	3.4	3.7	5.5
Unskilled and semi skilled workers 2006	14.6	19.6	21.4	22.8	30.4

Source: PHIDU <http://www.publichealth.gov.au/remoteness---australia/remoteness---australia-2012-incl.-2011-census-data.html> viewed 19/09/2013

For many rural towns, the dominant industries are agriculture and tourism, both of which can be subject to variable seasonal influences. For example, towns reliant on tourism frequently have a busy season (e.g. summer for beachside communities, winter for alpine communities) which provides employment and income for part of the year, and little for the other part, with obvious implications for poverty.

Climatic variation influences agricultural production, with farm incomes being closely linked to the timing and quality of the seasons (as well as to demand for and price of commodities, fuel, etc). In a good season, healthy farm incomes bolster town incomes through the purchase of machinery, chemicals, fuel, clothing, groceries and so on, resulting in higher levels of employment and income for in-town families. Conversely, poor seasons (e.g. drought) greatly reduce the injection of money into the economies of rural towns, resulting in lower levels of employment, lower incomes and greater numbers of bankruptcies.

One of the consequences of the widening gap between the rich and the poor over the past two decades has been that while the median income (i.e. the income upon which the poverty line is based) has increased, the increase has been driven more by higher incomes of the well-off, and less by the small increases in the income of the poor. For example, the income of the unemployed has fallen, relative to the median income over the past two decades.

Access to and cost of goods and services

The purchasing power of income is affected by geographical variations in the prices of goods and services and travel expenses (as is commonly the case in rural and remote areas).²⁴

In 2005, the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) identified that food cost 10-20 per cent more in rural and remote areas, and that petrol was frequently 10 per cent more costly in these areas. More recent work suggests that higher prices for these goods in rural and regional areas persist.²⁵

While people in major cities can rely on public transport to access work, goods and services, people in rural, regional and remote Australia very rarely have access to public transport services, making it necessary to have access to a car - another essential cost.

Good access to affordable community services can help mitigate the effects of poverty and enable disadvantaged people to participate in social and economic life more fully than would otherwise be the case. However, such services are often under strain.

²⁴ McLachlan, R., Gilfillan, G. and Gordon, J. 2013, Deep and Persistent Disadvantage in Australia, rev., Productivity Commission Staff Working Paper, Canberra.

http://www.pc.gov.au/data/assets/pdf_file/0007/124549/deep-persistent-disadvantage.pdf

²⁵ <http://www.health.qld.gov.au/ph/documents/hpu/33125.pdf>

The prevalence of almost all types of health workers is lower in rural and especially remote areas.

- In 2010, there were 242 medical practitioners employed in remote and very remote areas per 100,000 population, compared with 357 medical practitioners employed in major cities per 100,000 population;²⁶
- The number of allied health workers such as dentists, podiatrists, pharmacists and psychologists declines strongly with remoteness.²⁷

Access to pharmaceuticals is also lower in rural and especially remote areas.²⁸

Access to internet is lower outside major cities, in part due to slower internet speeds.

Table 9: Selected services indicators for rural Australia

	Major Cities	Inner Regional	Outer Regional	Remote	Very Remote
	Percent				
No internet connection 2011	17.3	23.7	26.2	25.7	35.0
Broadband internet connection 2011	72.7	65.2	62.1	61.5	51.5
	Per person				
MBS funded GP services 2009/10	5.7	4.9	4.7	4.0	3.1

Source: PHIDU <http://www.publichealth.gov.au/remoteness---australia/remoteness---australia-2012-incl.-2011-census-data.html> viewed 19/09/2013.

Community connectedness

Aspects of community connectedness can reduce the opportunity for and the impact of poverty. The prevalence of voluntary work for groups or organisations is higher outside major cities.

Table 10: Selected connectedness indicators for rural Australia

	Major Cities	Inner Regional	Outer Regional	Remote	Very Remote
	Percent				
Voluntary work for an organisation or group 2011	16.2	20.8	22.6	23.3	18.6

Source: PHIDU <http://www.publichealth.gov.au/remoteness---australia/remoteness---australia-2012-incl.-2011-census-data.html> viewed 19/09/2013.

People in rural and regional areas score better than their major city counterparts when it comes to indicators of concepts akin to happiness. The Australian Unity Wellbeing Index monitors the subjective wellbeing of the Australian Population. The highest level of personal wellbeing is achieved by people who live in rural towns, being higher than for people in major cities and higher than for those in remote areas.²⁹

²⁶ AIHW, 2012: Medical Workforce 2010, Canberra, pp 23-29.

²⁷ Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2013 <http://www.aihw.gov.au/publication-detail/?id=60129544591> viewed 20/09/2013.

²⁸ National Rural Health Alliance, <http://www.ruralhealth.org.au/sites/default/files/documents/nrha-policy-document/position-pos-full-complementary-report-27-feb-11.pdf>

²⁹ <http://www.deakin.edu.au/research/acqol/auwbi/survey-reports/survey-012-1-report.pdf>

Facing the facts

Poverty and other resource disadvantages are all too often a characteristic of rural and regional Australia. This snapshot from ACOSS and the NRHA provides some of the evidence and is published as a contribution to better understanding. Readers are encouraged to send their views on the issues discussed to ACOSS and/or the NRHA.

In so many respects life in rural and regional areas is the best in the world. But it is time for the nation and its leaders to face the fact that for some people in those areas it cannot be so while ever they have an unfair share of basic resources such as income, work and access to essential services and infrastructure.