

RESEARCH IN PROGRESS

The Future of Farming in Rural Amenity Landscapes – the role of planning and governance in a changing landscape

Description:

This study investigates the influence of changing societal values and land use planning on the future of farming, in the context of multifunctional landscapes and rural communities. Using Indigo Shire in North East Victoria as a case study, this study explores the perspectives of farmers and policy makers regarding the future of a shared landscape. It places these discourses in the context of rural and regional governance and the creation and management of sustainable landscapes.

Researcher: Jane Roots, PhD student.
Supervisors: Dr Joanne Millar, Dr Rik Thwaites, Dr Rod Griffiths,

Objectives:

Farming as a land use is constrained by economic, environmental and political issues, some of which are unique to their location, others of which operate at much larger scales. This study will identify the driving forces behind those issues and how they are manifested within the physical landscape (planning) and the social landscape (governance).

The outcomes of this research will contribute to our understanding of rural landscape change, helping to inform decisions about planning, community engagement and decision making. Through analysis of existing governance processes, it is hoped that opportunities for learning can be shared with local and regional agencies currently engaged in landscape management decision making. As a case study, this research will also contribute to a small but growing body of literature on responses to rural land use change in Australia's amenity landscapes.

Research Questions:

1. What are the issues influencing the future of farming in rural amenity landscapes?
2. How does land use planning impact on farming activities in amenity areas?

3. What is the role of governance in planning processes in amenity areas?
4. What land use and planning options are there farming as a viable and sustainable land use in amenity areas?



Research Methodology:

This research involves qualitative methods, consistent with a grounded-theory approach, focussing on the specific topic of farming as a land use. Insights are gained through the development of an interpretive explanation of individual and collective responses to the issues being explored. Participants include agricultural landholders and farmers, local and State government officials, , agri-business representatives and elected Councillors. The research will utilise Indigo Shire in North East Victoria as a case study as the Shire is geographically and economically diverse, undergoing significant transition from an agricultural industry base to that of rural lifestyle and tourism. It is representative of the land use change issues facing amenity landscapes in inland, rural Australia.

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CONTACT:

Jane Roots
CSU Albury-Wodonga
jroots@csu.edu.au

Albury-Wodonga Campus

PO Box 789

Elizabeth Mitchell Drive, Thurgoona

ALBURY NSW 2640

Australia

TEL +61 2 6051 9992

FAX +61 2 6051 9797

EMAIL ilws@csu.edu.au