

Sustainable Community Participation in Australia

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Abstract : In this presentation, we will focus on the methods of Remote Services Futures (RSF), an evidence-based method of community participation that was developed in Scotland. Using oral health as the focus, we will discuss the ways that RSF can be used to achieve sustainable engagement with stakeholders from various parts of the community. We will describe our findings of using RSF methods to engage with rural communities, including the steps involved and what happened when we asked people about the oral health services that they thought were needed in their community. We found that most community members started by thinking that a public dental clinic was required in every community, which is not a sustainable health service delivery option. Through a series of facilitated workshops, communities were able to discuss and prioritise their needs and develop a costed plan for their community which will ensure sustainable service delivery into the future. Our study highlights the complexities of decision making in rural communities. It is important to ensure that when communities participate in health care planning that the outcomes are practical, feasible and sustainable.

Keywords : community participation, sustainable health planning, Remote Services Futures, rural communities

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