

Residential Mobility as a Community Organizing Concern in Rural Australia

Population and individual residential and social mobility are important when organizing, maintaining, and running communities, services, and land in remote Australia. Providing services in remote locations is difficult without knowing the mobility patterns of residents, that is, when and how people move

or travel from place to place.

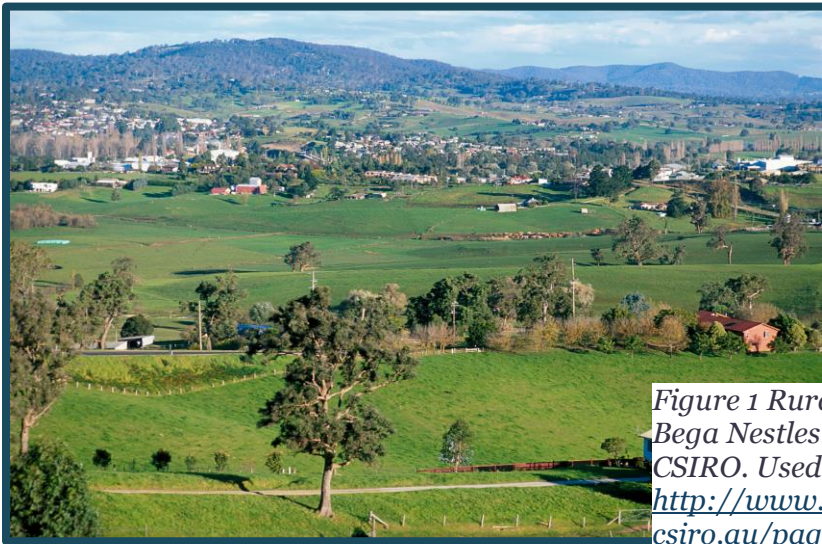


Figure 1 Rural township of Bega Nestles. Photo by CSIRO. Used under CC3.0 <http://www.scienceimage.csiro.au/pages/about/>

Developing wealth and a remote economy also relies on knowing the exact location of people in remote locations and what resources they need. But for ‘evidence-based’ policy, mobility has been defined and measured as just the movement of people within and between communities and larger geographic regions. This strips away all the multiple contexts and complexities for movements by people in remote communities, leading to poor policy decisions.

“the details of social residential mobility, particularly in remote Indigenous communities, are not yet well understood by service providers and policy makers”

Highlights

This is a literature review of research on residential mobility of Indigenous Peoples with implications for social policy.

Lack of attention to the contexts for mobility has led to contradictions in public discourse.

Over-generalization risks losing the necessary complexity to develop appropriate policy.

Guerin and Guerin's *Mobility and the sustainability of remote Australian Indigenous communities: A review and a call for context-based policies* (2018), reviews the research and literature on Indigenous mobility, and presents three points not raised in the literature, based on observations of their own extensive field work in different, rural and remote locations. Indigenous mobility is frequently driven by family and community concerns, and the properties of this mobility are different than labour-driven mobility. They argue that small, low diversity, and dispersed communities require context-based methods and not population-based methods for developing context-based policies.

Results

- Greater clarity is needed when using the term “mobility.” The context and detail are central to its understanding.
- Understanding complex contexts of social visits is crucial to understanding mobility and building policies around mobility, since social visits include family, community and political ‘business’ and discussions.
- More research is needed to explore the complexities of urban-rural-remote mobility.
- Over-generalizing from research can lead to losing the necessary complexity to develop appropriate policy.

What Does This Mean For ..?

Research and Evaluation- This paper suggests that researchers and evaluators critically consider their use of terminology and caution over-generalizing research findings.

Practice - This paper provides ways for practitioners working with Indigenous Australians to think about how they talk about mobility and how they understand mobility when providing services.

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<https://www.psychology.org.au/getmedia/c2c8fc42-d15f-4acc-a67c-986e8d58f6a8/Guerin-Guerin-ACP-Vol-29-2-2018.pdf>

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