

**SOCIAL SPACES, RURAL PLACES:
Ageing-in-Place in Rural South Australia**

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ABSTRACT

Australia has an ageing population and a clear policy focus on ageing-in-place supported by family and community care, and service provision in the home. This thesis therefore argues that place, space and availability of social support are important variables for how older people successfully age-in-place. The dual positioning of people in both physical and social space has important implications for understanding social behaviour and social support, particularly in rural areas where changing rural communities has been the focus of much attention.

This thesis explores place attachment, community connectedness and the social networks of 223 people aged 70 years and over living independently in small rural communities in the Murray Mallee region of South Australia. This is achieved by incorporating social, physical and temporal attributes of older individuals' lives in the data collection and analysis processes. A mixed method approach is adopted, using data from the 2006 Australian Census and face-to-face interviews with older people; with geocoding and GIS technology enabling social networks to be examined spatially.

The findings demonstrate that social networks and potential informal support are impacted upon by the dispersed geography of family ties. However, local community and a strong sense of place attachment provide some compensation for this, with the clear majority of other nominated network ties (groups, activities, friends, neighbours and services) being proximal. This creates a duality in the social networks of older people in rural areas – on the one hand they place emphasis on, and maintain strong links to family despite increasingly dispersed family networks. On the other, a sense of place attachment and local community provides strong bonds for many older people, but may require high levels of localised social support to enable older rural people to successfully age-in-place.

By focusing on social environments through a spatial lens this study contributes to a better understanding of the issues of ageing-in-place in small rural communities for older people, service providers and intergenerational family groups but also for local rural communities.

DECLARATION

This work contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any University or other tertiary institution to Helen Feist and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text. I give consent to this copy of my thesis, when deposited in the University Library, being made available for loan and photocopying, subject to provisions of the Copyright Act 1968. I also give permission for the digital version of my thesis to be made available on the web, via the University's digital research repository, the Library catalogue, the Australian Digital Theses Program (ADTP) and also through web search engines, unless permission has been granted by the University to restrict access for a period of time.

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Helen R Feist

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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
AHURI	Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute
AIHW	Australian Institute of Housing and Welfare
ASD	Adelaide Statistical Division
CACP	Community Aged Care Package
CPN	Community Passenger Network
CWA	Country Women's Association
EACH	Extended Aged Care and Home
HACC	Home and Community Care
GIS	Geographical Information Systems
LGA	Local Government Area
NBN	National Broadband Network
SA	South Australia
SD	Statistical Division
SLA	Statistical Local Area
SSD	Statistical Sub Division