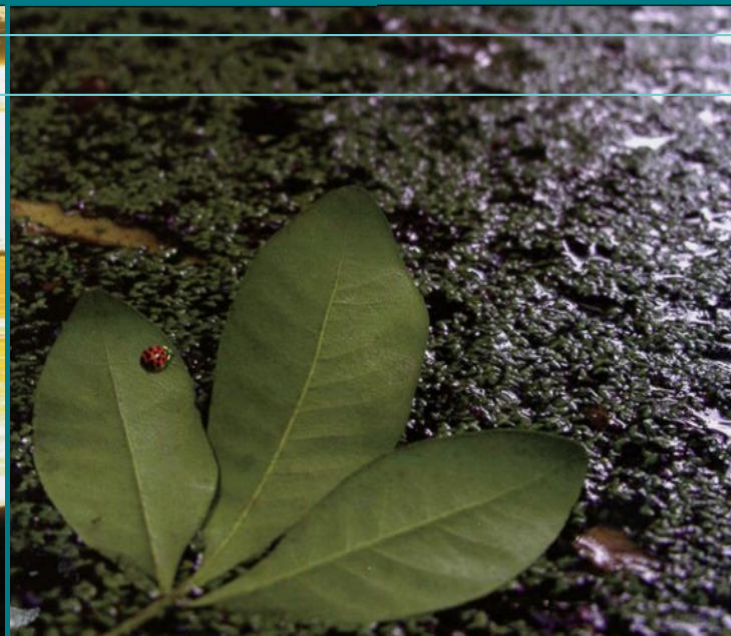


A desirable future

Community Aspirations and Coal Seam Gas Development
– a visual perspective

Williams, R. and Walton, A. 2015



Introduction

Rural communities in areas where coal seam gas (CSG) development is occurring are experiencing a period of rapid and significant change. Management of the impacts of coal seam gas development is likely to be enhanced through having a clear understanding of the values, expectations and aspirations of the residents within these communities.¹ In this document we present the perspectives of a small rural community about how they would like their community to be in a future 10 to 15 years from now.

The research was conducted with residents in and around Chinchilla, a small rural town on the Western Downs in Southern Queensland. Chinchilla is on the edge of the Surat Basin coal seam gas fields, where three multi-national CSG companies are currently finalising construction of infrastructure to deliver gas to Gladstone for export.

This research is the final part of a project called Understanding Community Aspirations. The project was designed to draw out the diverse values, expectations and aspirations of community members and to assist company and government representatives to understand community expectations of how they should operate in the region.

This document is intended as a communication of residents' perspectives, in their own voices.

¹ Maguire B and Cartwright S (2008) Assessing a community's capacity to manage change: a resilience approach to social assessment: Bureau of Rural Sciences, Australian Government

A desirable future

Community Aspirations and Coal Seam Gas Development - a visual perspective

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We would like to thank all the residents of Chinchilla who helped to organise the focus groups and who took part in them for their time and for contributing their perspectives for this research.

Images as a tool for talking



Photographs were used to elicit people's thoughts about what was important to them for the future of their community.

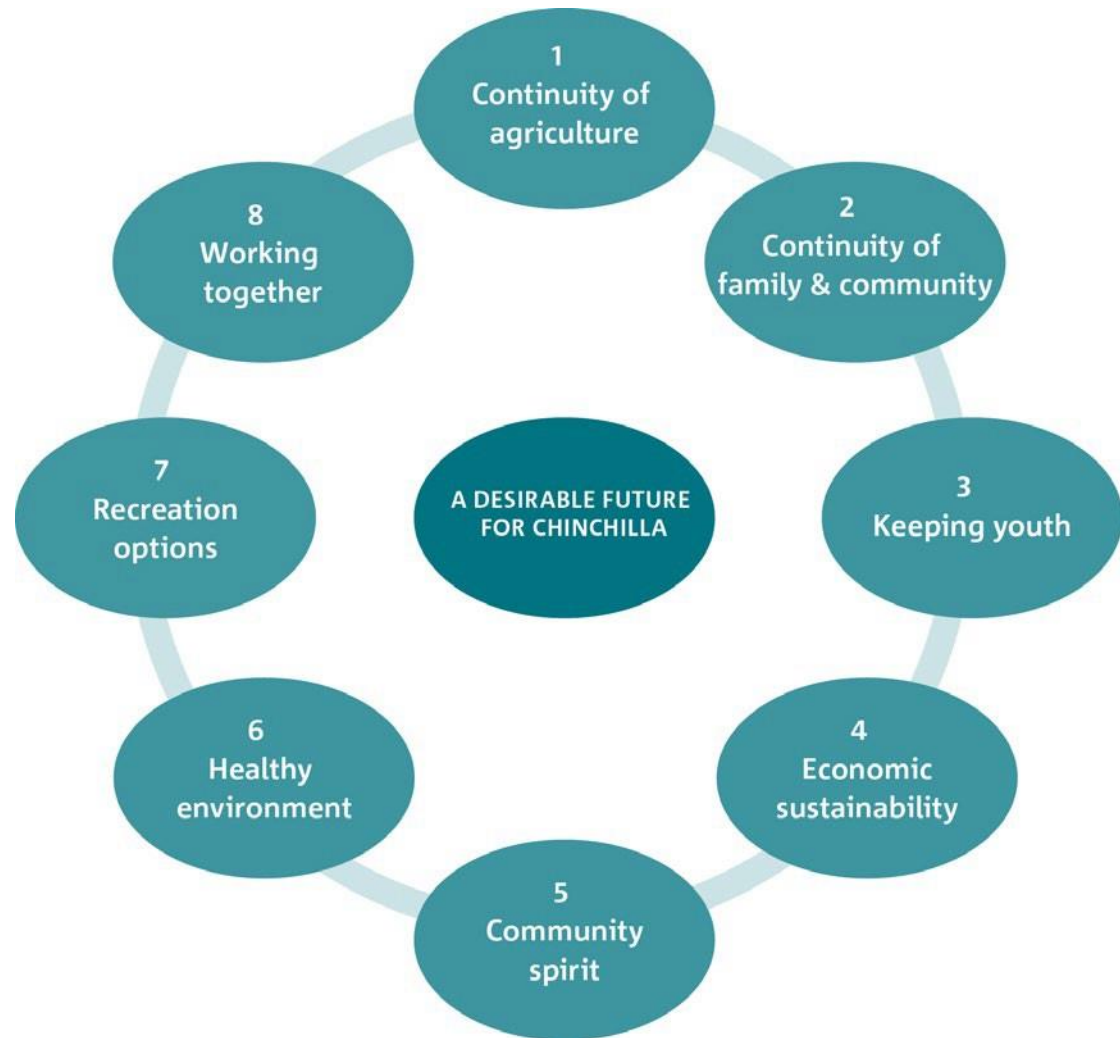
The photographs can also act as metaphors for people to use to explain things that may be difficult to communicate.

This document presents a range of photographs and residents' comments as they talked about particular photos which, for them, reflected aspects they considered important to their "desired future" for their community.

Themes: a desirable future

Aspects of community life that were important to residents were grouped into eight themes.

Images and quotes illustrating each of the themes are presented in the following pages.



1 Continuity of agriculture

Maintaining a close connection to the land and the culture of farming



"... The cattle farm is important for our future because without the cattle we're going to be in big trouble"



"I thought how hard this man would have had to work to cut the hay up, to put it in his shed and now he's trying to sell it. So a lot of hard work in this picture, with these hands that I see here. The people work hard on the land, these people in Chinchilla and they will be doing that for a long time through generation and generation"



"I see this picture as an old farm somewhere in Chinchilla with old rusty fences and my grandfather, an old farmer, would like to keep his farms around Chinchilla"

"Barbed wire is iconic to the grazing industry. ... Barbed wire has enduring qualities. It's obviously quite old, but still reasonably robust"



"Farmers do a lot of their own work ... it's a strong trait that farmers are going to have to have in the future. Some of the original tradespeople are working with the resource companies now so farmers have to do their own repairs"

Perhaps not surprisingly, many of the images selected captured aspects of life that are important to people now, such as a rural way of life where farming persists. Hard work, durability and self-reliance were some of the characteristics attributed to the persistence of agriculture into the future.

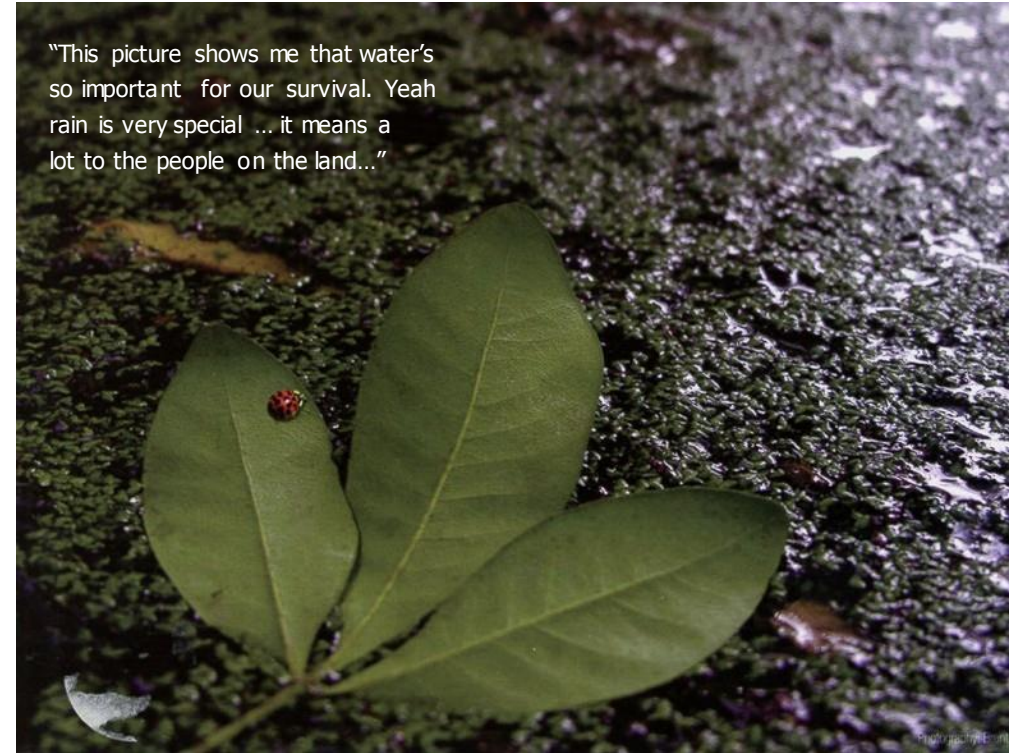
Water is precious and important to the sustainability of our land and our farming



"This picture is of the weir full ... With the farmers downstream. The only way we'll survive is if we have plenty of water"



"Clean water. Clean ecosystem ... the whole of the water system, the underground water table as well"

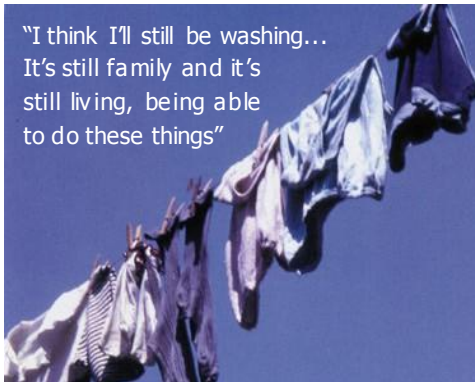


"I just want it to be wet forever. So agriculturally I would hope that we can sustain and have an agricultural industry"

The need for water for the ongoing viability of agriculture and apprehension about future droughts was a recurrent theme through the focus group discussions.

2 Continuity: family and community

Farming and family continuing to sustain each other and community in everyday life



"I think I'll still be washing...
It's still family and it's
still living, being able
to do these things"

"Just getting on with everyday life but
enjoying it. In 10, 15 years I don't want
anything to be like crazy new, I think
I'll still be doing normal everyday
activities"

"I envision myself more of a stay at home
mum, doing daily chores at home, just
spending time with family"



"The jetty in this picture looks like it's
been there for a long time, it's been
consistent, it hasn't changed through
all that time. So I want things to carry
through, not for everything to be changed,
but some things still to be consistent"

"...It looks like it's been through a few
wild storms, but it's still there. It's
got its cracks but that makes it"

"There's a lovely family in this picture
...they worked on the land. They have
two sons so the family will go on and on
through their boys"

"...a farm, it means you're going to
be staying in the area with bringing
the next generation up to be part of
the community"



"I would love to think that we'll still be doing what we're doing in
15 years time - working on the land. I'm fairly realistic. I actually
don't think our kids will follow on in our footsteps, because we're
relatively new to it. It's not been part of their whole life"

Photograph courtesy of Western Downs Regional Council

Individuals from all groups selected
the image of the family standing
in the field. For most, it was a
representation of farming being
synonymous with family continuity,
although one individual reflected
that that may not happen as their
children had not always been
on the farm. Family was seen as
a centrally important aspect of
community and is also referred
to under the themes of Keeping
Youth and Community Spirit.

3 Keeping youth

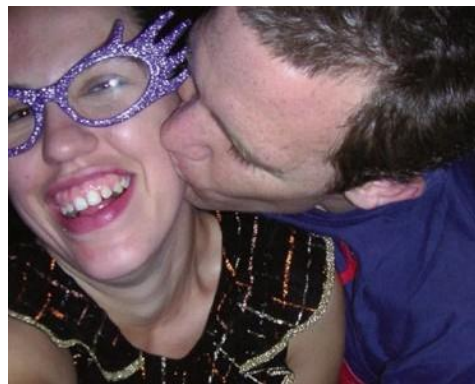
Providing opportunities and lifestyles that are attractive to young people so that they will want to stay



"To me this picture says young people have to leave town to have fun, to get entertainment"



"Having uni here so kids could go to uni here instead of having to go away"



"You'd like to think that there's something left in town for the young ones. Down the track there might not be the big wages. I'd like to hope that the young ones are still going to be here"



"If they were going to leave a legacy, maybe it would be something that's a lasting benefit for youth in the area. It might be something that's going to engineering. It might be a community bus that everyone could use. A way of keeping youth here, even youth counselling, youth education, all that sort of lasting benefit related to youth"

Young people staying or returning to the area are seen as critical to the long term viability of the community. Parents in the groups also simply wanted to have their children nearby. The young people we spoke to were also keen to stay in the area. For them, the sorts of things which would help that included youth education, counselling, opportunities and places for outdoor recreation and jobs.

The influx of new people into the area as a result of the CSG development was seen as a potential legacy here, particularly if it included young families. For example,

You get an area where there's a lot of kids on the school bus and then it dwindles right off and then some of those kids then settle back into an area and that cycle needs to keep happening and this (new arrivals) might maintain that cycle.

Young people with young families - that's the lifeblood of the community.

4 Economic sustainability

Having meaningful jobs, a stable economic environment and sufficient wealth to enjoy all aspects of life



"A future with all these different industries as well as the farming. I think it would be a shame to lose the farming, even the culture of the industry as well. I think that's important"

"Work is more than something you do to get paid. Even in a small business you're doing it because you enjoy interacting with the people who come into your business or that you work with. That there are industries that are not out here just because of the money"

"Having security of jobs with the uncertainty of what's happening in the region and how everything's being tipped upside down. We would love to still be here in 10 years' time if we could afford to"



Photograph courtesy of Western Downs Regional Council



"To be wealthy enough so you have the time to take time out for your mental health and wellbeing, to go and enjoy an awesome healthy environment"

Increased diversity of businesses in the area was seen as a positive thing for the future, with agriculture remaining a key element. Working hard is part of being on the land but with a view to wealth sufficiency, to allow for a balanced life, rather than wealth accumulation. There was a desire for greater economic stability into the future, in contrast with the recent rapid increase and then decline in housing prices and gas industry employment.

The professional capacity building for local businesses and organisations that CSG companies had done was seen to have enduring value for the future and people would like to see more of it.

(Company X) at the moment has got someone of high calibre working in Miles and a few other places, working with the businesses... to try and stop them from all closing... to integrate with other businesses and work out how they can improve their businesses from their own skills. There's been a lot of that.

We were given funds from (Company Y) to pay for training of community services and health services sector. That was all capacity building. When they came out and they had their hundred thousand dollar rounds – it was open for all the not-for-profits and clubs and associations but no one knew how to do their form.

At the same time, there was frustration with companies' unwillingness to fund any salary costs, even for a short term of three years.

If you've got two to three years' worth of a coordinator, that person can build a lot of this stuff into the capacity of agencies. ... everyone's used to these short term projects ... That's what it's all about now.

5 Community spirit

Having a diverse and inclusive community



"This family photo for me represents the levels of social connectedness. You start with your family and then that reaches out to the community"



"In this picture they're at something that's got a computer which they can communicate with which probably is a learning and educational thing for them to keep involved, with information and knowledge in the community"

Social connectedness for everyone, or feeling part of the community and individual commitment to the community were important aspects of a desirable future. Key contributions to this were seen as family, a multi-generational population and people interacting and being able to remain involved.



"Caring for older people in the community is important"

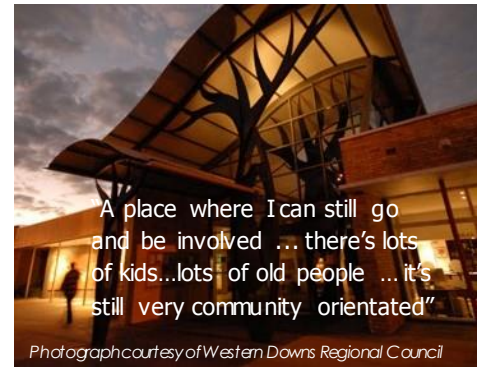
"These pictures show old, middle age and young. They're all communicating because they're all on one level. It's joining a community so that they all interact, which is important"



Photograph courtesy of Western Downs Regional Council



Photograph courtesy of Western Downs Regional Council



"A place where I can still go and be involved ... there's lots of kids...lots of old people ... it's still very community orientated"

Photograph courtesy of Western Downs Regional Council



Photograph courtesy of Western Downs Regional Council



Photograph courtesy of Western Downs Regional Council



Photograph courtesy of Western Downs Regional Council



"This picture represents the influx of people into our community from other cultures and hopefully accepting them and them becoming a part of our community as well"



"Probably because of the mines, they're bringing multicultural people in and so we're becoming a multicultural town which isn't a bad thing. It opens people's minds up"

"The multiculturalism has definitely been a forward momentum for the community"



"It's more about wellbeing. I guess having a good community to live in would create positive wellbeing in people and that sense of hope and productivity, commitment to the community"



"I just hope that the kids will still communicate with one another and still go outside and enjoy the place like we used to"



"He looks like he's probably on a Saturday afternoon just cruising around, relaxed. He's probably happy just to be part of the community"

Having a diverse and inclusive community

New people coming into the community from other cultures was also seen as a positive thing. There also need to be things of interest for the people that live in the community.

The other important aspect identified for building community spirit was having more CSG company workers settle in the area, particularly those with families, and for them to be able to become more involved in the community. Suggestions for fostering this included following the example of one company that subsidises their employees to join clubs.

So then they can integrate their staff into their community and become involved in there. Then – mum might come and visit and might decide, it's a great place to live. It's a great place to raise kids. It is fantastic.

...That's what we saw after Kogan (power station construction). The spouses and kids would visit, then they decided to get out of the camp, because mum was coming more often to visit. Mum could get a part-time job in one of the little shops that we had. Then they bought a house here and they stayed. When that job was finished, dad went away and worked, but we kept mum and the kids.

The shift hours of CSG employees were seen to be a significant barrier to becoming involved in the community, however.

If these guys worked proper hours like most people do, they could join the tennis club, they could join the cricket clubs for the weekend, instead of looking from the outside saying, I'd like to be involved, but it's just difficult for me to do that.

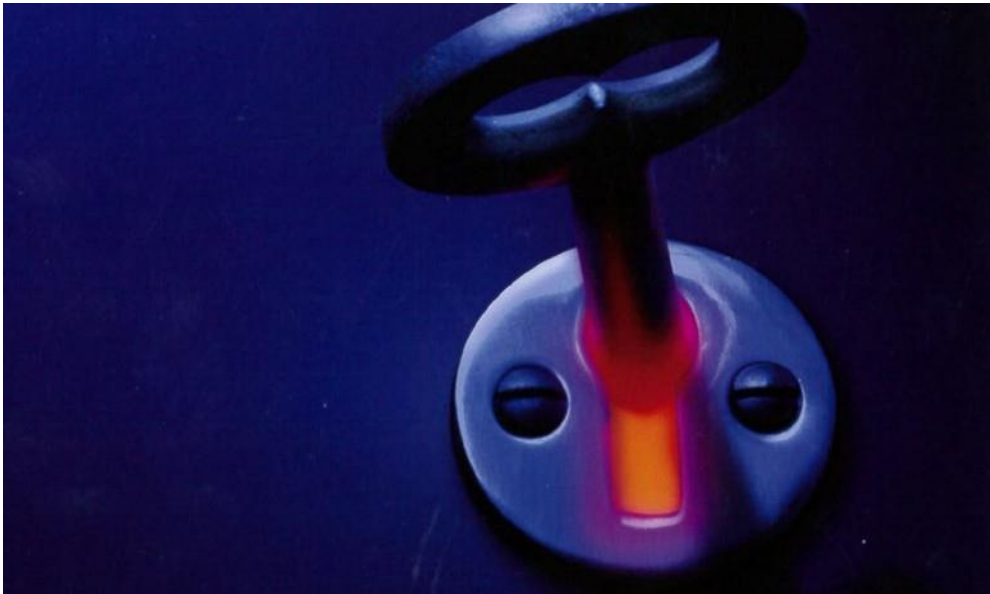
I can't understand why the gas companies have guys working those ridiculous (hours) ...

This last comment also reflects a difference between the perspective on working life from these residents, in a rural agricultural community, and the practice in the CSG industry.

Provision of affordable housing was a further suggestion for encouraging people to stay in the area.

I've often thought, with all these dongas... and they insist on having en suites on every room and they took one lot away because they didn't have en suites on them... brought in another lot. Well if you've got the money to pander to someone's ...why can't something be set up? Why can't 10 of them be donated to the town? Something that's not astronomically expensive, but it is of lasting value, long term.

Caring for people who are disadvantaged and ensuring that there is access to the community for everyone



"I chose this picture because it was to do with mental health. So many people are locked either inside themselves or inside their house at this present time or have been. That's where housing comes into mind too of something they can leave as a legacy. Even respite care. Yes. Respite, you can't get out here hardly"

"When I'm driving around town there are a lot of people walking from the camps sort of into town but there are no actual pathways. They're just walking along grass and dirt. So I think accessibility, even if there were more pathways and things for people to walk, that may help to encourage the workers to get out into the community a bit more, because it's more accessible physically for them, which I guess would benefit people with disabilities too - just that access to things in the community"



"I know that within Chinchilla there is a high percentage of people with disabilities both mentally and physically, as well as dealing with the homes situation too. Making provisions for all people ... so that the community can be accessed by all people. Because I know there is such a challenge out here and it's so limited in its resources to provide for so many people"

There were a range of comments about what might help increase the social inclusion of more disadvantaged people, such as those with mental health issues or with disabilities. Examples included housing, respite care and resources to enable these individuals have greater community access.

6 Healthy environment

Having a healthy environment that contributes to the wellbeing of the community



"This picture is about environment. I look at that as sort of peaceful. I just love it and I think if we continue to keep that which means the environment's good, the community's healthy and everything is as it should be"



"To have a lot of birds ... there's lots of beautiful birds where I live"



"The wildlife and the natural life of flowers and things ... in the area, we've got to keep the vegetation ... the bees are very important for the crops and so many other things that are going"



"To be wealthy enough so you have the time to take time out for your mental health and wellbeing, to go and enjoy an awesome healthy environment"



"In this picture I have a lady beetle living on a leaf. So the environment is healthy, which is important ... we still have these minute little animals"

"Rain is very special ... it means a lot to the people on the land and everybody"

Having a healthy environment into the future was of intrinsic value for people, indicative of things generally being as they should be. It was seen as a source of people's health and wellbeing and also important for the ongoing viability of agriculture.

7 Recreation options

Things to do for all ages, enriching family and community life



"This picture looks like the weir. Everybody's down there, just on sundown, coming out from having some recreation down on the weir. We hope they'll still be able to do it in years to come because it nearly got to a stage where it didn't - was nearly out of water"

"When the rain starts everyone rushes out to see how much water's in the weir. To see the water overflowing the weir. We did that when we came back from holidays the other day. Where did we go? Straight to the weir"



Photograph courtesy of Western Downs Regional Council



Photograph courtesy of Western Downs Regional Council



Photograph courtesy of Western Downs Regional Council

"I want it to be a place where there are multiple things happening but they're all inter-connected. So it's not just a single speed sort of town, but there are lots of different things for anyone who wants to live here to be doing"

"Recreation will be important to anyone who lives in Chinchilla. This photo of a photographer shows a healthy community should have things of interest for people that live there"



"In this picture it looks like she's just been camping and I hope that there are still places where you can go camping in Chinchilla in the future, because I'd like to take my kids one day because I know how much I enjoyed it"

The desire to have recreation options into the future, to suit a range of interests, was strongly linked to keeping a Healthy Environment, Community Spirit and people wanting to live in the area. Having places for outdoor recreation featured strongly as did the importance of water for the future.

8 Working together

CSG companies working together and working with the community



"This picture makes me think a lot of intelligence and money goes into that rocket, so I think perhaps a lot of thought and working together - and together is probably the key word - with the companies, just that combined intelligence and combined effort would be good. Good for the companies and good for the community as well"



"I want the companies to have ways to interact and so I chose this picture. I hope that the companies would be able to set up structures like these umbrellas, structures that instead of just drying out the whole place can actually bring more stability to the town.

Structures to help people get into their industry from the local area and structures that help benefit the whole area, to provide shade for the whole place. There should be ways that they can make the structures to benefit the whole community rather than just going at it little bits here and there. An overarching structure to what they're doing ... things that are a bit longer term and that will bring shade, relief to the area"

Most of the discussion so far has been about how residents would like the community and the region to be in the future. This includes some comments about how CSG companies are assisting now or might contribute in other ways. However, there were also a few ideas that were more about the ways in the companies might interact into the future. These included a desire for companies to work more with each other, so that community-focused initiatives were more integrated and inter-connected, and to work together with the community to make the most of the combined intelligence.

Don't want

Socio-economic disadvantage, loss of jobs and businesses, drought



"This picture could also be a symbol of the coal seam gas industry being high and then low and high and low. It's screaming to me that we don't want the rollercoaster"



"That we might have a drought with the weather being so unpredictable it would be either drought or floods"



"We certainly don't want that ...all the cracked mud, that looks like drought ... that might be the story of it. Won't it? We're going for drier times aren't we?"

"That they just come in, take and then take off. I guess I don't want Chinchilla to be a place where people feel hopeless, whether it's financially, whether it's socially"

"With the gas companies being here and our rent going up a lot it might cause some people to actually be homeless and there are already some jobs losing people and some people can't find jobs from all the gas people coming in. Maybe in 10, 15 years time there might be some problem with some people finding a home in Chinchilla"



"We're not going to be left with a ghost town are we? Or low socioeconomic kind of slum? What we've got now is a town full of houses and is there going to be other industries? I mean they might be occupied now but gas companies could sponsor another industry to come to town in a planned way, give them some sort of incentives to keep the town a functioning town into the future"

Three areas of concern about the future came up in the discussions: 'boom and bust' (the rollercoaster), potential for increased social disadvantage and increased variability in water availability in the future. These are the converse of many of the preferred aspects of the future and also echo challenges for the long term future of many rural communities. Ongoing boom and bust was seen as undesirable in itself but also a potential source of economic disadvantage and unemployment, which might eventually lead to Chinchilla becoming a ghost town.

They're still building houses and there's no more people coming, so does that mean the value of our place is going to be zilch

by the end of a few years' time? ... our economic system is based on assets and infrastructure and things like that and then the mining development has come and turned that on its head and impacted that without us having any real influence.

Concerns about more variability in water availability were mostly in relation to changing climate conditions but a desire for the groundwater to remain clean into the future was also raised, in the Healthy Environment theme.

Not wanting to become dependent on gas companies also came up in one group, with a preference to remain self-sufficient.

A final perspective...



Photograph courtesy of Western Downs Regional Council

"If you look at a picture you're looking back; at the history, from then to where you are now. So I think in the future we can look back to the way things were and see the changes and hopefully they'll be good changes and that - even if we were content with the way things were, things have actually changed for the better"

"If you look after your own place, like we're building a house now; I have all these ideas - we can make gardens here; make it look like this. We can look at Chinchilla like that. This is our place, what can we do here to make it better, look better, run more efficient, whatever and how can we utilise what we've got. Just utilise what changes the coal seam gas is bringing to Chinchilla and make it better"

Summary and implications

Much of the discussion in the focus groups about what a desired future for Chinchilla might be like emphasised aspects of life that are highly valued now. A quote that seemed to capture the essence of this, was

"if your family's humming along, you're healthy, you've got a good environment and you're well connected and you've got a good job, everything else falls into place."

These aspects are similar to some of the factors associated with community wellbeing.²

It was also apparent in the discussions that many of the aspects that were talked about were interdependent. The desire to keep young people in the area was a particularly clear example of this. Keeping young people in the area requires jobs as well as opportunities for the types of recreation that they enjoy. At the same time, retaining youth is central to the ongoing viability of the population and community spirit.

While many of the changes that have been brought by the gas industry have been challenging, and there are some concerns for the future, it was acknowledged that there have been aspects that are contributing to the future longer term viability of the community. These include more availability of jobs for kids; the arrival of new people, particularly young families and from overseas; increased economic diversity; and capacity building of local businesses and organisations that comes partly through targeted programs but also just from having to engage with these large companies.

The values and aspirations articulated here are primarily those of people who have spent most of their lives in and around Chinchilla, a relatively small rural community. Terms such as 'jobs', 'work', 'environment' and 'recreation' have specific meaning for them in this context.

These meanings need to be understood if future development efforts are to be consistent with their values. However, if their aspirations for a viable community in the long term include attracting and retaining new people to live in the area, this may well mean that a wider range of values and aspirations need to be met into the future. Processes such as those used in this research may be useful in exploring community values and aspirations over time and in facilitating conversations about preferred futures for the community.

² Walton A, McCrear R and Leonard R (2014) CSIRO survey of community wellbeing and responding to change: Western Downs region in Queensland. CSIRO Technical report: CSIRO, Australia.

Appendix: methods

The purpose of the research was to find out from residents within the community about;

1. what sort of future they wanted for Chinchilla,
2. what could be a legacy from the CSG industry over time.

We chose to use photographs to explore these questions with groups of local residents. Visual media are increasingly being introduced within research methods in participatory research. They can provide a means for individuals to explore and express complex and intangible ideas that initially they may not be able to easily express verbally. Images can also include multiple aspects that people are thinking about and which they may consider to be interrelated.³ They can also be useful for initiating discussion between individuals about their relative interpretations of the content of the images. Importantly, images are not intended to be a substitute for people's words, but a way to help people express what they mean.

Focus Group Process

We ran four focus groups using image-based activities. These were:

- a land care group – primarily landholders,
- social service providers,
- a local craft group and
- a group of young people.

Thirty-one people participated in total. In each case, we approached a specific individual to identify and bring together participants from that community segment. In most cases, the convener suggested and organised the venue, which was a place the participants already used as a meeting place. For one group, we organised the venue and selected a location convenient to participants.

During the focus groups, the participants were seated around a large table, with the facilitators. The sessions were introduced with the facilitators providing an outline of what they planned to do, emphasising that they wanted to hear everyone's perspectives, that there were

no right or wrong answers and that it was okay to have a different perspective to others. Participants were also asked for their permission for us to record the sessions and take some photographs. Everyone was asked to introduce themselves, including the facilitators.

The facilitators first fed back the findings from some earlier work from the project, about community expectations of how the industry should operate in the region⁴ which some of the focus group members had participated in. The focus groups were invited to discuss and comment on the findings.

The aspirations component of the sessions included two activities. The first was designed to find out about people's preferences for a future Chinchilla and the second to generate ideas for a legacy that could be left by the CSG industry. For the first activity, participants were asked to imagine themselves in a Chinchilla 15 years into the future, a future where they are feeling pretty happy with the way Chinchilla is going and it has turned out a lot better than they had

anticipated. In this future, Chinchilla is a place they want to be living in and they are content. They are glad they stayed.

We then asked participants to select two to three images from a range of photos that had been spread out in front of them on the table. They were asked to select images that captured a sense of that future Chinchilla that they had been imagining. We then asked people, one at a time, to talk about the images they had selected and what the images represented for them. On occasion, the facilitators prompted individuals to expand on what they were saying, to clarify what they meant, for example, or to flesh out the description. Others in the group sometimes commented on the images or the interpretation as well.

The images were from two sources:

- a set of 75 photo cards called Picture This, published by St Luke's Innovative Resources
- some images from the Western Downs 2050 Community Plan.

³ Gauntlett D (2007) Creative Explorations: new approaches to identities and audience. Routledge, Oxon.

⁴ Williams R and Walton A (2014) Community Expectations and Coal Seam Gas Development: A report to the Gas Industry Social and Environmental Research Alliance (GISERA). January 2014. CSIRO, Canberra.

Appendix: methods

The 'Picture This' set of photos reflects a mixture of urban and rural, built and natural environments, and a range of cultures, life stages and human experiences. The images from the Community Plan were included to provide some specifically local content, in case participants were unable to relate to any of the other images.

In the second aspirations activity, participants were again asked to select an image, but this time one that surprised them, perhaps an image that represented a different way of doing things than was usual for them or something they'd never seen or thought about before. They were then asked to revisit the future they'd been exploring in the previous exercise and imagine that the industry had brought some benefit to the local region that had made the community more viable in the long term. Finally, they were asked what came to mind if they looked at the image and imagined what such a legacy might be. The intent

behind asking people to pick an image that surprised them was to encourage them to think beyond the familiar, or 'break the frame' of their usual perspective.⁵

Again, participants were asked to talk about the image they had selected, what it represented and why it was surprising for them.

Towards the end of each focus group session, the facilitators suggested some initial themes that they perceived were apparent in the discussions. Identification of these themes was also informed by the researchers' previous work in the region in the earlier stages of this research.²⁴ The facilitators then asked each group whether the themes sufficiently captured their perspectives and whether they had more comments or suggestions for additional themes.

Data Analysis and Presentation

For the purpose of this communication exercise, the researchers have endeavoured to take a light touch to interpretation of the focus group output material, grouping the images into the themes developed in the focus group sessions on the basis of the comments accompanying the images, and then deciding whether to exclude any images and which comments to include. A few images and associated comments have not been included in the material because they were not specifically about the future of the community.

While the intent of this document is to communicate community perspectives, the content has been shaped by the researchers and will be further interpreted by the viewer. We have checked our interpretations with participants in two ways. Firstly, we checked our suggested themes with the focus groups. Secondly,

since conducting the focus groups, we used the themes as the basis for a presentation to a wider group of community members, many of whom had been focus group participants. They did not raise any concerns with the way in which their input had been represented during the feedback sessions and table group discussions after the presentation. We conclude from this that the themes sufficiently reflect aspects for the future of the region that are important to community members, in a way that is meaningful to them.

⁵ Harper D (2002) Talking about pictures: A case for photo elicitation. *Visual Studies* 17(1) 13–26.

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