



# Critical Breaking Point?

**The impact of drought and other pressures on farming families**

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# Aim of study

**To gain a better understanding of the impact of drought and other pressures upon farming families.**

It asked:

- What pressures are farming families experiencing?
- How is the drought affecting them and their communities?
- How are they responding?
- What are their plans for and concerns about the future?
- What do they need?





# Methodology

- 60 & subset of 20 farming families from the Wimmera Southern Mallee randomly selected
- ~2 hour group interviews with each family
- Local trained interviewers
- Interviews fully transcribed and systematically analysed



# Location





# ‘Critical Breaking Point?’

- The 2007 season had a neutral effect on most families’ financial situations
- The coming year (2008) instilled a wide range of emotions in people
- There was growing anger about input costs and farmers’ relationship with agribusiness
- Most farming families were trying to take a more risk-averse approach



# ‘Critical Breaking Point?’

- The question of whether to leave farming was less prominent but of ongoing relevance for some
- Most people were positive but concerned about their communities
- Financial assistance was accepted and welcomed by some but not all



# Recommendations

- That the report is made available to farming families
- That farming families are assisted in managing risk and multiple priorities
- That more support is provided immediately to abate the accumulating effects of drought
- That information and skills training to aid farming families decision making is extended to them



# Recommendations

That effort is redoubled to address the process of rural decline in small towns. For example:

- Identify the main threats for each community
- Support 'keystone' services or organisations
- Encourage collaboration between local communities
- Maximise the positive potential of new entrants

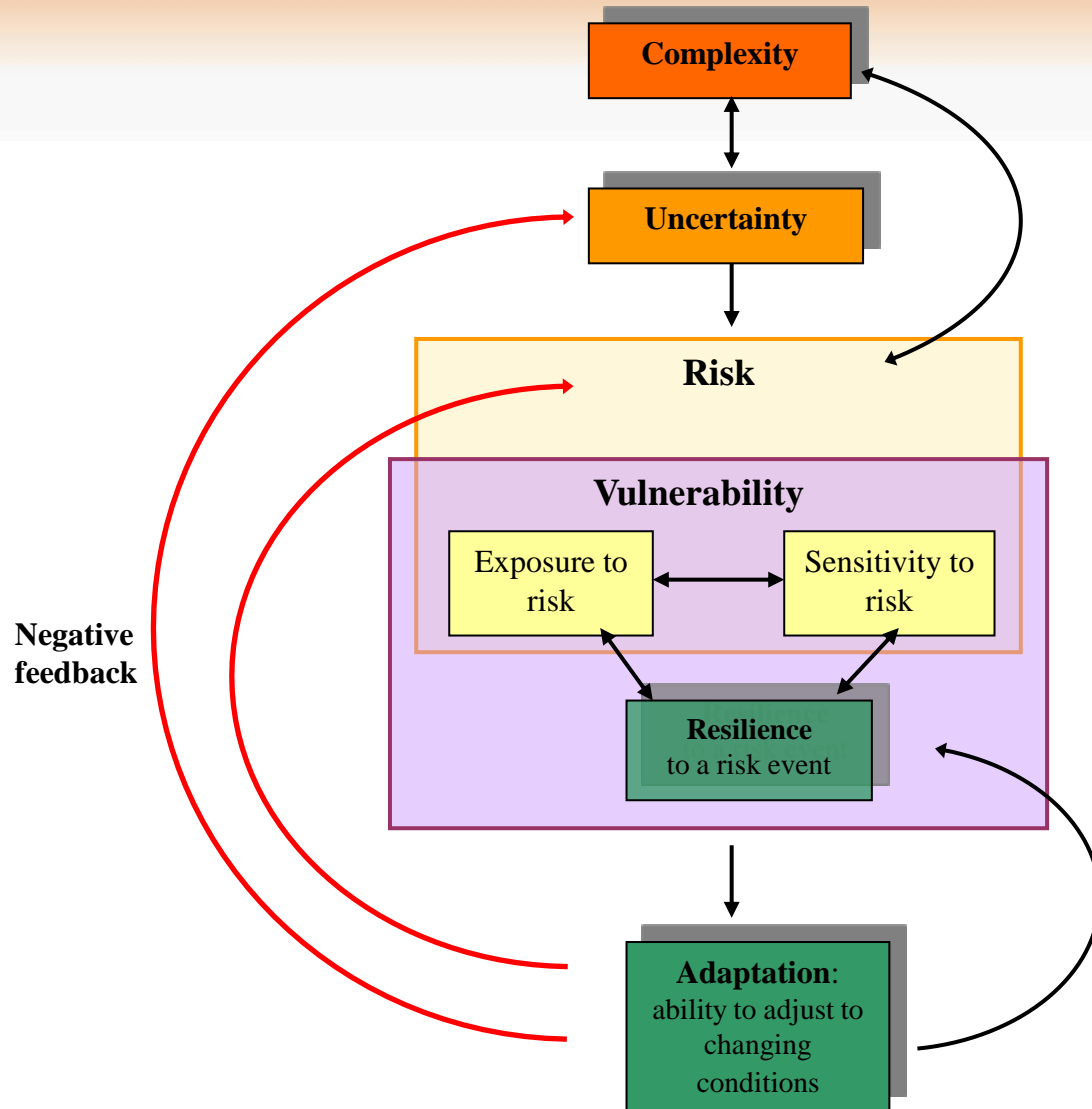


# So what was done about it?

- Communicated findings
- Developed a social & community development program
- Developed new partnerships
- Appointed a 'thinker in residence'
- Implementing projects to address the issues
- Follow up interviews planned 2010 and 2011

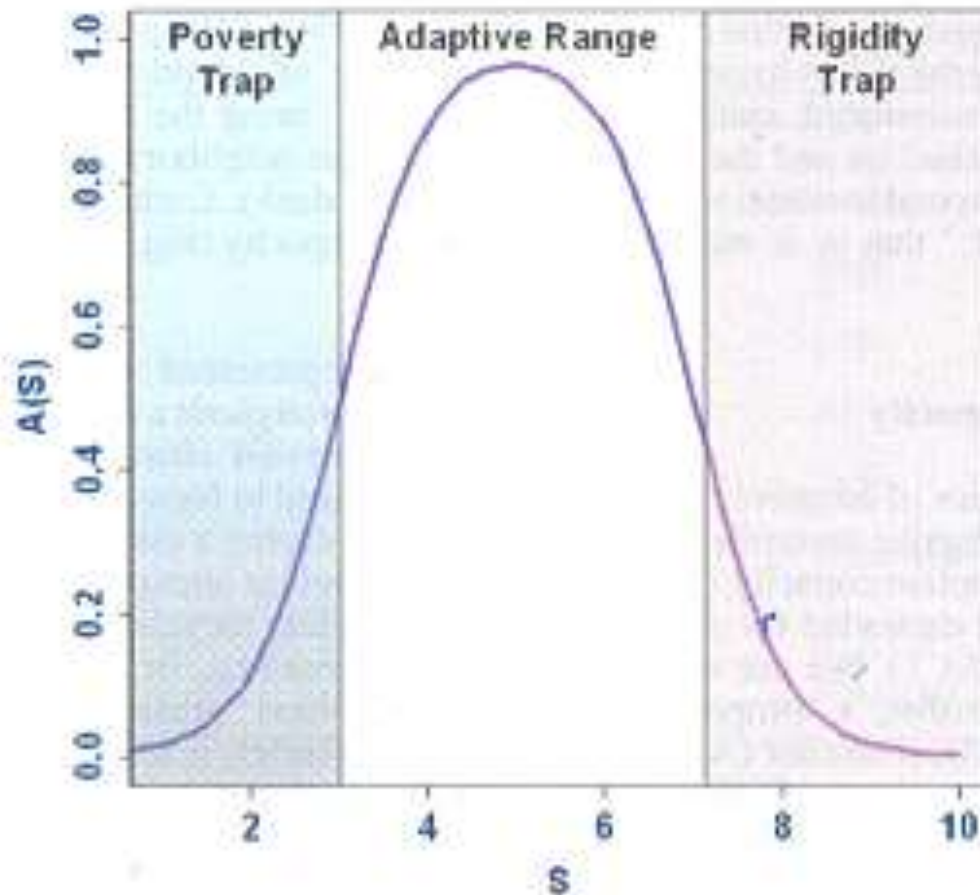


# Decision making





# Adaptive Capacity



# Thank You



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