

Localism and the socio-economic viability of rural and regional Australia

**Anthony Hogan, Jen Cleary, Stewart Lockie,
Michelle Young, Katherine Daniell, and
Mark Hickman**

Defining localism

- The key Australian Government policy response to the rising tide of concern in country Australia has been the development of a policy of localism. Australian localism seeks to diversify rural and regional economies away from agriculture in order to drive 'growth, liveability and sustainability' (Crean 2011:1)

Strengths of localism

- Focus on regional resources rather than just one industry
- Local input into decision-making
- Considerable resources available to support drivers for change
- Partnering with industry to promote growth
- Exploiting a regions economic potential
- Great opportunity if investments are right

Limits to localism

- Not every community has resources which can be further developed
- Development can economically 'by-pass' regional communities
- Canberra retains the final say
- Actually centralizes decision-making keeping actual decision making power out of the hands of local people
- Fails if investments critical to local sustainability are not sufficiently resourced
- Local communities do not in fact share the resources
- Hard decisions still need to be made vis-a-vis who is viable
- Shifts responsibility for social policy outcomes to local communities
 - If you failed it was your fault

Key issues for sustainability

- Strong and sustainable community leadership
- Regional control over available resources and decision-making
- Regional capacity to raise your own tax revenue
- Investments need to
 - stay in regions
 - Generate sustainable local economic flows
- National approach to the governance of RaRA