

## Rural Careers Advising and Community Sustainability: Building Vital Partnerships

Thursday 5 August 2021 - Parallel Session 5 – 12.45pm to 1.45pm (GMT+1)

**FRASER - Building Enduring Partnerships**

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In a time when many rural communities are facing economic uncertainty and the world of work is rapidly changing, careers advising is becoming increasingly important. In a small community, this role is influential as their advice may affect not only their students' futures, but that of the local workforce and so the community's sustainability. This paper is drawn from a PhD study that utilised a narrative inquiry to explore the experiences of six rural Australian careers advisors. Participants' narratives were analysed through a conceptual framework using Reid et al.'s (2010) rural social space model and Cuervo's (2016) pluralised conceptualisation of social justice in rural schools. Careers advisors require a strong understanding of their communities, developed over time and through extensive interpersonal relationships. Implications of this research include the need for more professional learning opportunities for careers advisors that are grounded in, and tailored for, their community. Participating in professional learning networks consisting of advisors in neighbouring towns, tertiary institutions, and community groups serve as a way to improve advisors' practice and knowledgebase. There is a need for greater communication between careers advisors, families, and their wider local community about the changing nature of work facing their youth. This knowledge and these relationships situate the advisors in a power position in their community, with the ability to advise students about their future prospects – if they stay locally or leave for other opportunities. Building these local partnerships across a wide variety of stakeholders are vital to the sustainability of small communities.