

The Quality of Rural and Metropolitan Life.

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award of the degree of Bachelor of Arts (Honours)**

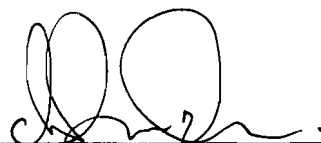
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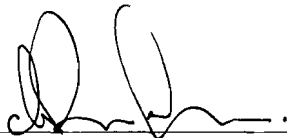
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We the undersigned declare that the above named research project has been completed as described in the Application for Ethics Approval and in accordance with the ethics guidelines of Deakin University.

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Abstract

The recent downturn in the rural economy has implications for the quality of rural life. In the present study, quality of life was measured in terms of both the circumstances of peoples lives and their perceptions of those circumstances. Three factors which were expected to influence perceptions of life quality were also measured, these being: perceived social support, spiritual well-being, and the use of services in the rural community. Life quality comparisons made between farmers, ex-farmers, and metropolitan residents revealed that metropolitan residents reported more frequent contact with family and close friends, while farmers reported more involvement in the community and more productive behaviours. No such differences were found between ex-farmers and the other groups. Perceptions of spiritual well-being were found to contribute a relatively large amount of unique variance to the prediction of overall subjective life quality. This result suggested that spirituality may warrant assessment as a factor which influences perceptions of life quality, contrary to its treatment in the literature. No consistent benefit to the life quality of service users was observed in the rural sample. Suggestions for future research on quality of life include the possible application of a new theory to the field.

Part One - From Prosperity to Subsistence

The nature and magnitude of hardship currently confronting the rural communities of Australia are unlike any previously experienced in the post war era (Cook, Edwards and Ronan, 1994). Natural factors such as drought, flooding and salinity, as well as economic factors, including the world-wide downturn in commodity prices and the recession, have caused the face of farming in Australia to be changed from one of traditional prosperity to one of dogged subsistence.

In the decade 1980-81 to 1990-91 Australia's national farming income decreased by 23 percent and family farms began disappearing at an increased rate (Bureau of Industry Economics, 1993). Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics (ABARE) figures show that around 10,000 family farms across Australia ceased to exist in the period between 1990-91 and 1993-94 (Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics, 1993; 1995). According to some estimates, up to 20 percent of Australian farmers are expected to leave agriculture in the next few years (Stevens, 1994) and this unfortunate trend appears set to continue well into the near future (Love, 1993).

Neither the once prosperous "Squatocracy" nor the smaller scale primary producers have escaped the effects of these hardships, which have seen many properties that had been passed down from Father to Son since the early 1800's shrink in size, or vanish altogether under the weight of financial pressures (Buchanan, 1996). The often forced nature of this abandonment of family history is evidenced by the fact that in the 1990-91

financial year, average Victorian farm income fell by \$30,000, or 60 percent compared with the previous year (McGowan, 1992).

In his introduction to *The Rural Book* (Australian Government, 1993), then Federal Minister for Primary Industries and Energy, Simon Crean pointed out that more than five million Australians lived outside of this country's major cities. It is an important and distressing fact that the fortunes of many of these rural Australians are effected directly by the fortunes (and misfortunes) of the farming families who encircle their rural communities (Fisher, Katter & Brownhill, 1987).

In 1984, the Sunraysia Growers Advisory Group was formed in response to a crisis in the dried fruit industry in Mildura. That small community response has grown into what is now a major community and government program, known as Rural Counselling (McGowan, 1992). That original organisation, and those that grew from it, represented the first Australian effort to help troubled farmers, both in terms of their economic circumstances and the personal difficulties associated with those circumstances. The development of such organisations can be seen to represent the Australian community's nascent realisation of the importance of maintaining and improving the quality of rural life.

Part Two - Quality of Life

Quality of life is a construct which has, in the recent past, been the focus of much study spanning the disciplines of medicine, sociology, philosophy and psychology. However, despite the fecundity of this topic with regards to research, no definition of life quality

presented thus far has become widely accepted as a standard (Cummins, McCabe & Gullone, 1994). Instead, it has been left to researchers to define what they mean by quality of life with reference to their particular topic and with consideration for their particular method of measurement.

Cummins (1995) identified over 100 models and definitions of quality of life in the literature, including some relating to specific groups of people (e.g. those who are disabled) and some to the general population. At the first and broadest level, the quality of life construct has been divided by researchers into the areas of objective and subjective quality of life, with the latter often being termed subjective well-being (Brim, 1974; Andrews & Withey, 1974; Campbell, Converse & Rogers, 1976; Campbell, 1976; Atkinson, 1982; Abbey & Andrews, 1985). Objective and subjective quality of life are seen as consisting of people's living circumstances and their evaluations of those circumstances respectively.

Objective Quality of Life

Early research into life quality was dominated by the social indicators movement, which was an attempt to model quality of life in terms of objectively defined social or demographic variables. Dale (1980) describes objective quality of life indicators as "counts of various phenomena, such as level of income and education, residential densities and unemployment figures" (p.504). These data were readily available, however it was soon recognised that objective measures revealed little about people's experience of life. Rather, researchers needed subjective measures of happiness or satisfaction in order to deal directly with the individual's sense of well-being (Campbell,

1976). During the 1970's the pioneering research of Campbell, Converse and Rogers (1976), Andrews and Withey (1976) and others brought the significance of subjective indicators into focus, and objective indicators became less widely employed as gauges of life quality in their own right.

Subjective Quality of Life

Subjective indicators of well-being are based on direct reports from individuals about their own perceptions and feelings (Dale, 1980). It is these subjective evaluations which many researchers claim capture an individual's sense of life quality better than the data which comprise measures of objective life quality (Abrams, 1973; Campbell, 1976; Atkinson, 1982; Abbey & Andrews, 1985).

Costa & McCrae (1989) lament that "one of the most difficult lessons for students of well-being to learn has been the relative independence of objective and subjective well-being" (p.141), despite the folk wisdom expressed in such sayings as 'money can't buy happiness'. This comment reflects perhaps the most striking and counter-intuitive feature of the quality of life literature. The correlation between objective and subjective life quality has consistently been shown to be modest, indicating that an individual's perceptions of happiness and satisfaction are only weakly related to the actual circumstances of their life at any given time (Campbell, 1976; Abbey & Andrews, 1985).

Given the independence of the two types of measure, it was argued by Andrews and Withey (1974) that both objective and subjective indicators are important to the assessment of life quality. According to these authors, a clear understanding of the

relationship between people's living conditions and sense of life quality could only emerge when objective and subjective indicators were measured concurrently.

Similarly, Dale (1980) asserted that the majority of researchers of social well-being viewed the 'softer' subjective measures as a useful and necessary supplement to the 'harder' objective measures. These arguments have gained support from the developers of the Comprehensive Quality of Life Scale (Cummins, 1993), as will be discussed later.

Subjective quality of life measures had the advantage of dealing directly with individual's judgements about their life (Campbell, 1976). However, with this came the disadvantage of dealing with the unfamiliar processes by which individual's formed these judgements.

Many models have been proposed to account for how individuals arrive at their subjective judgements. These models differ according to whether they view the major determinants of life quality judgements to be (1) relatively stable and enduring traits, (2) relatively transitory states or (3) an interaction of stable traits and transitory states.

Trait Models

Trait models of subjective well-being primarily focus on the stable contribution of psychological and personality factors to judgements about life quality. This literature is perhaps best typified by the work of Costa and McCrae (1980a; 1980b; 1989; McCrae & Costa, 1983). However, these researchers were preceded by Bortner and Hultsch (1970), who posited that personality measures and psychological constructs like IQ could possibly account for portions of variance in life satisfaction scores.

Costa and McCrae (1989) studied the relationship between the scales of their NEO personality inventory (Costa & McCrae, 1980b; McCrae & Costa, 1983) and measures of well-being including the Bradburn Affect Balance Scales (Bradburn, 1969), a satisfaction index divided into 14 life domains, and the Delighted-Terrible scale of Andrews and Withey (1976). They found that personality variables accounted for no more than 25 percent of the variance in measures of subjective well-being. Thus, even allowing for measurement error, it was concluded that a substantial portion of variance in subjective well-being was accounted for by variables other than stable personality traits.

However, interpretation of Costa and McCrae's (1989) results is made difficult due to possible confounds between the psychological constructs involved. It is highly likely that correlations between the NEO-PI factors and measures of well-being would be artificially inflated, due to a degree of overlap in the nature of the constructs measured. For example, the NEO-PI 'positive emotion' subscale (used by Costa & McCrae as a personality measure) is surely, in part, a measure of the same psychological entity as the Bradburn positive affect scale (PAS; used by Costa & McCrae as a well-being measure), as opposed to the situation in which the two scales measure distinct yet related constructs. It is likely that such construct overlap would be endemic to models within the trait approach to subjective well-being.

State Models

The state models of subjective well-being primarily focus on the contribution of situational change processes and intra-individual comparisons to judgements about life

quality. Helson's (1964) Adaptation Level Theory and Michalos' (1985) Multiple Discrepancy Theory (MDT) represent important contributions to this literature.

The generality of Adaptation Level Theory has been demonstrated by its application to psychological fields as diverse as psychophysics, learning, motivation, social psychology and personality (Appley, 1971). This theory predicts that processes of contrast and habituation will operate on perceptions, influencing judgements regarding stimuli.

In 1978, Brickman, Coates and Janoff-Bulman applied the adaptation level approach to the study of subjective well-being. In one of the most widely cited articles in the quality of life literature, these researchers compared the reported happiness of lottery winners and people who had recently become paraplegic due to a serious accident, with a control group. Findings were consistent with the predictions of adaptation level theory in the case of lottery winners, however, not so in the case of accident victims. For lottery winners, it was found that ordinary daily activities provided less pleasure than for controls. This result was interpreted as being due to the theory's contrast component; that is, the pleasure derived from ordinary events was low in contrast to the high amount of pleasure derived from winning the lottery. Also, it was found that lottery winners did not differ significantly from the control group with regards to how happy they were in the present, perceived themselves to have been in the past, or expected to be in the future. This result was interpreted as being due to the theory's habituation component, by which winners supposedly became habituated to their new found wealth and gradually ceased to perceive the rise in happiness which followed the win.

However, the interpretation of this result in terms of habituation is disputable, since the study was cross-sectional. A longitudinal design would be far more adequate for detecting habituation effects within individuals across time. As suggested by the authors, even a cross-sectional design including winners at both the period immediately following the win and the period many years after would be more efficacious for this purpose than the one actually employed; a small sample ($n=22$) which contained only one winner who had known of their fortune for under one month and none who had known for over one year (Brickman et al, 1978). Heady and Wearing (1989) provide further criticism of this study by pointing out that the response rate for lottery winners was just 52 percent. At such a low rate it is possible that self selection processes acted to bias results obtained from this sample.

Michalos' (1985) Multiple Discrepancy Theory provides a different account of how subjective well-being judgements may come about through comparison processes. The multiple discrepancy approach involves an examination of the hypothesised 'gap' between what one has and (1) what one wants, (2) what relevant others have, (3) the best one has had in the past, (4) what one aspires to have in the future, and (5) what one feels that one needs and deserves (Michalos, 1985). The assumption behind this model is that people's life quality will vary in a predictable relationship to the linear combination of discrepancy scores produced by the comparisons described above. According to MDT, those for whom this combined distance is small will experience a higher sense of well-being, while those for whom the distance is large will experience a lower sense of well-being.

MDT also predicts that change in subjective well-being comes about when action is

taken to lessen the 'gap' through adjustments to either the circumstances being compared (e.g. an individual's own income and the income of a relevant other) or to the perception of need or want attached to that particular comparison (e.g. how important the individual feels it is that he/she earns as much as that relevant other).

Although these two theoretical approaches contrast on a number of issues, it is possible that they can both contribute to an approximation of the true nature of subjective well-being judgements. For example, an integration of the two may help to understand results such as those obtained by Brickman et al (1978) in regards to accident victims, which are not readily explicable in terms of adaptation level theory alone. In adopting the MDT perspective, the accident victims, whose reported happiness in the present was lower than that of the control group ($F=7.16$, $p<0.01$) would be expected to also show large 'gaps' in the five MDT comparisons specified above. Partial evidence supporting this prediction is provided by the large differences observed on a scale of 1 to 5 for accident victims, between present happiness and currently perceived past happiness (mean=2.96 versus mean=4.41), and present happiness and expected future happiness (mean=2.96 versus mean=4.32). Unfortunately, significance values for these comparisons are not available.

Interactive Models

Interactive models of subjective well-being posit both stable, trait-like influences and transient state-like influences on judgements of life quality. The work of Headey and Wearing (1989) on their Dynamic Equilibrium Model represents such an interactive approach.

Within this model, all life events are classified as either favourable or adverse. The model stipulates that each person has a normative or equilibrium pattern of life events and accordingly, a normative or equilibrium level of subjective well-being. It is claimed that this equilibrium pattern of favourable and adverse life events is linked to stable personality traits, with neuroticism being positively associated with adverse events, but not favourable events, and extroversion being positively associated with favourable events, but not adverse events.

According to this model, highly neurotic individuals will be subject to a continuing pattern of life events wherein adverse events dominate. Conversely, highly extroverted individuals will enjoy a continuing pattern of life events wherein favourable events are most prevalent. The equilibrium level of subjective well-being is responsive to change when deviations from the equilibrium pattern of events occurs. In this way it is claimed that transient changes in the pattern of life events and their effects on subjective well-being interact with stable personality characteristics to produce feelings of life quality.

However, some of the results reported by Headey and Wearing (1989) shed doubt upon the ability of their model to link personality traits and patterns of life events.

Simultaneous multiple regression analyses by which favourable and adverse life events (dependent variables) were related to neuroticism, extroversion, and openness to experience (independent variables) give reason to question the efficacy of the model. Analysis indicated that these independent variables, entered simultaneously, accounted for just 21 percent of the variance in reports of favourable events and a mere 6 percent of that in reports of adverse events. These results would suggest that levels of neuroticism,

extroversion and openness to experience are only moderate to weak predisposing factors for ongoing patterns of favourable or adverse life events.

Heady and Wearing (1989) also give no account of the pattern of life events which would be experienced by a person scoring high on both neuroticism and extroversion. Given that these two dimensions of personality are apparently independent, this represents a significant oversight.

Another account of subjective well-being which displays characteristics of both trait and state models is Headey and Wearing's (1986) conception of the 'sense of relative superiority'. From their 1985 survey of Australian quality of life, these authors found that between 85.9 percent and 49.8 percent of individuals rated themselves above average in comparison with the rest of the population, dependent upon the particular life role in question (e.g. main job, spare time activities). The median respondent in this study rated himself/herself above average in five of the seven life roles, and there was little difference between men and women, old and young, or people of higher and lower socio-economic status. It was concluded that almost all humans explicitly believed that their own performance in major life roles was well above average.

The universality of this relatively stable aspect of subjective well-being was further elucidated by Cummins (1995) who demonstrated that across the data from 16 separate general population studies, the 'standard' for life satisfaction could be expressed as 75 ± 2.5 percent of the measurement scale maximum score. The sense of relative superiority, which purportedly came about through processes of social comparison appeared to be a highly stable and common psychological trait.

The Seven Domain Model of Life Quality

As well as being described in terms of its objective and subjective components, the quality of life construct has often been investigated in terms of distinct areas or domains of life. Campbell et al's (1976) pioneering study represented such an approach. With their many and varied measures, these authors attempted to explore the nature of well-being by "throw[ing] as broad a net as possible over the lives of [their] respondents" (p.62). Among the numerous results recounted by these authors, one of the most salient was the intuitively pleasing finding that reports of well-being could be meaningfully seen as "a composite of feelings of satisfaction or dissatisfaction with a variety of more specific domains of life" (p.95).

The idea that quality of life could be conceptualised as a composite of more specific domain measures has been pursued by many researchers (e.g. Headey, 1988; Brown, Brown & Bayer, 1993; Cummins et al, 1994; Cummins, 1995; Cummins, in press b). Cummins and his colleagues (Cummins et al, 1994; Cummins, in press a & b) argued the case for seven life domains, with each being comprised of objective and subjective axes. These seven domains were: material well-being, health, productivity, intimacy, safety, place in the community and emotional well being.

Quality of Life Definition

Cummins (in press b) presented evidence in support of the importance of these domains by reviewing 27 definitions which attempted to identify the important domains of life quality. He reported that 85 percent of these included a domain related to emotional

well-being, 70 percent included health, 70 percent intimacy, 59 percent material well-being, 56 percent productivity, 30 percent place in the community and 22 percent safety. In an attempt to incorporate the important life domains listed above, as well as both the objective and subjective axes of the life quality construct, Cummins (in press a) proposed a comprehensive definition of quality of life. According to this author:

“quality of life is both objective and subjective, each axis being the aggregate of seven domains: material well-being, health, productivity, intimacy, safety, community and emotional well-being. Objective domains comprise culturally relevant measures of objective well being. Subjective domains comprise domain satisfaction weighted by their importance to the individual” (p.20).

Additional evidence supporting the inclusion of these domains was presented in studies for which respondents were asked to rate the importance of various aspects of life. Abrams (1973), Campbell et al (1976), Flanagan (1978), and Krupinski (1980) all report high importance for health, intimacy, material well-being, and productivity, while Flanagan (1978) and Krupinski (1980) also report high importance for emotional well-being. Justification for the inclusion of the safety domain came in part from studies relating life quality to variables like personal safety, justice, autonomy, independence, and stability (Vitello, 1984; Schallock, Keith, Hoffman & Karan, 1989; Borthwick-Duffy, 1990).

This seven domain definition will be adopted for the purposes of the present study. The utility of the definition extends beyond its theoretical worth, since it is also the definition which underpins the operationalisation of quality of life used for the Comprehensive

Quality Of Life Scale (ComQol) (Cummins, 1993). The ComQol will be employed herein to measure the life quality of respondents along both the objective and subjective axes of the seven quality of life domains described above.

Part Three - Rural and Metropolitan Life Quality

The literature contains conflicting findings in the comparison between rural and metropolitan quality of life. While Mookherjee (1992) found no difference in life quality between metropolitan and rural respondents in the United States, evidence presented by other researchers appears to indicate a lower level of life quality in rural areas (Haavio-Mannila, 1971; Dale, 1980; Oppong, Ironside & Kennedy, 1988; Wyatt, Barr & Weston, unpublished). However, interpretation of the literature is complicated by the fact that not all authors address both of the relatively independent objective and subjective aspects of life quality.

Haavio-Mannila (1971) reported the results of a study which was primarily concerned with gender differences in life satisfaction in Finland. Secondary to her main focus, this author compared the life satisfaction of those living in the country's capital, Helsinki, with the life satisfaction of those living in five rural Finnish fishing communities. Satisfaction was recorded for three life domains (family, work, and leisure) and a global measure of life in general. Haavio-Mannila found that the satisfaction of both men and women in all three life domains was better in Helsinki than in the rural area's. Around 40 percent of urban and 25 percent of rural people were very satisfied with work and family, while around 30 percent of urban and 15 percent of rural people were very satisfied with leisure and life in general.

Dale (1980) recounted results from Norwegian surveys conducted between 1972 and 1975 which also indicated lower life quality in rural areas, however this time in objective terms. Analyses involving a large number of social indicators were reported, with the majority of variables being selected from census data and a “level of living” (p.506) study. Results were reported for eight domains of life, these being: income, working conditions, housing conditions, physical environment, social environment, education, health and accessible public and private services. The author claimed to have revealed a pattern of compensation, with geographical areas scoring high in some domains also scoring low on others. Further, he claimed to have revealed an “urban advantage” (p.508) on the indicators of income, education, working opportunities, working conditions, housing facilities and access to service institutions. Dale reported that the distributional pattern of social indicators along nine degrees of the rural-urban continuum led her to “the impression that the large, urban regions are generally the better off, while the fishery communes have a disproportional share of worse values” (p.509). However, nowhere in this study were the results of any standard statistical procedures (i.e. those based on the general linear model) reported. Instead, the author cites results published in another, non-English language article, and despite sometimes referring to “values” (p.509), the results of this study pertain only to objective quality of life measures.

Oppong et al (1988) studied perceived quality of life in Alberta, Canada on the basis of a “centre-periphery” (p.605) framework, with the city of Edmonton being classified as the centre and the less developed High Prairie region of Alberta being classified as the periphery. In addition, a centre-periphery relationship was explored within the periphery, with the city of High Prairie comprising the centre and the rural villages of Grouard and

Gift Lake forming the periphery. These authors found that perceived quality of life was lowest for those on the periphery of the periphery (i.e. farmers and rural townspeople), moderate for those in the centre (i.e. metropolitan dwellers) and highest for those in the centre of the periphery, that is, a regional town of medium size and population density.

Support for the generalisability of these findings to an Australian setting was provided in an unpublished study of the Tragowel Plains area of Victoria (Wyatt et al, unpublished). Wyatt et al discovered a similar pattern of lower life satisfaction in farmer's than in mostly urban Australian samples. Using subjective evaluations of life satisfaction to measure perceived life quality, these authors found that although the distribution of farmers life satisfaction scores exhibited the expected negative skew, this group appeared less satisfied than Heady and Wearing's (1981) national sample of Australians in general (which included just 15 farmers).

While average satisfaction ratings of Tragowel Plains farmers and the national sample were similar for some life domains (e.g. marriage, communication with children, and sense of purpose), where discrepancies occurred, farmers indicated lower satisfaction than the national group (especially in regards to income, standard of living, housing, pressures and worries, and sense of success). The domains with which farmers were least satisfied were family income, worries or pressures and productivity.

A number of factors could operate to produce lower life quality in rural samples. Three possible factors, in the form of perceived social support, religion/spirituality and the performance of relevant service agencies will be investigated in the present thesis.

Part Four - Perceived Social Support and Quality of Life

Social support has been named by many researchers as a major determinant of perceived life quality (Brim, 1974; Schaeffer, Coyne & Lazarus, 1981; Abbey & Andrews, 1985; Coyne & DeLongis, 1986). Schaeffer et al (1981) differentiated between social network and perceived social support, with the former of these concepts referring to the objective size and type of the individual's list of social contacts and the latter referring to the individual's subjective experience of their social contacts, regardless of the size or type of the network.

The majority of life quality definitions reviewed by Cummins (in press b) included a life domain related to social relationships, activities, or functioning (intimacy and community). While some researchers discount the ability of objective variables such as size of social network, or frequency of contact, to contribute significantly to subjective well-being in its own right (e.g. Bloom & Spiegel, 1984), a substantial amount of research has implicated perceived social support as an important component of overall subjective well-being (e.g. Campbell, 1976; Abbey & Andrews, 1985; Schultz & Decker, 1985; Cooper, Okamura & Gurka, 1992).

As an example of these conclusions, Brim (1974) found significant correlations between women's avowed happiness and perceived assistance ($r = 0.43$), perceived value similarity ($r = 0.34$) and concern ($r = 0.4$) of their social contacts, but not size of social network or frequency of contact with social network members. Also, Cooper et al (1992) found that satisfaction with social activities was the strongest predictor of

subjective well-being, correlating significantly and positively with life satisfaction ($r = 0.38$) and positive affect ($r = 0.2$) and negatively with negative affect ($r = -0.26$).

Though much still remains to be learned about the effects of perceived social support on subjective well-being, it has been widely agreed for some time that these constructs are strongly related (Diener, 1984; Abbey & Andrews, 1985; Cooper et al, 1992). Coyne and DeLongis (1986) reported that the hypothesised abilities of perceived social support to protect people from the harmful effects of stress and to act as an effective means of promoting psychological welfare were approaching the status of truisms, even a decade ago.

Part Five - Spiritual Well-Being and Quality of Life

The practice of religion and belief in the existence of a nonmaterial God, are important aspects of many people's lives. In 1879, William James, philosopher and founder of modern psychology, noted that the issue of the existence of God was a live, momentous and forced issue (James, 1897/1979). By this, he meant that issues involving God were (1) being continually reassessed by people, (2) highly important to peoples lives and (3) such that people must resolve them in order to live happily.

However, a survey of the literature on quality of life reveals that the impact of religion on people's experience of a happy life has mainly been overlooked. Poloma and Pendleton (1990) observed that most large national and panel studies have neglected the possibility of a religious or spiritual component of subjective well-being, or treated these domains of life in a cursory fashion.

The research of Moberg (1971), defied this dearth of inquiry. Moberg (1971) conceptualised spiritual well-being as two dimensional - the vertical dimension represented the sense of well-being in relation to God, while the horizontal dimension related to a sense of life purpose and life satisfaction, with no reference to anything specifically religious. The vertical dimension was termed religious and the horizontal dimension was termed existential. Ellison and his colleagues (Paloutzian & Ellison, 1982; Ellison, 1983; Bufford, Paloutzian & Ellison, 1991) maintained this conceptualisation and developed a scale to measure spiritual well-being along these two dimensions. While the links between spiritual well-being and subjective well-being are not often investigated, findings of moderate positive relationships between religious devotion or spiritual well-being and life quality are common amongst studies on the subject (Jones, 1994).

Religious Dimension

In a study of Black Americans, Ellison and Gay (1990) claimed that religion may contribute to subjective well-being by acting as a source of ideational coherence and as a force for social cohesion. These authors found that participation in ceremonial worship was positively related to subjective assessments of overall life quality. However, they report that the contribution of other religious variables, such as subjective religiosity and frequency of prayer was “far more modest” (p133). Poloma and Pendleton (1990) detected highly significant correlations between overall life satisfaction and church involvement ($r = 0.24$) and life satisfaction and frequency of church attendance ($r = 0.21$). However, the highly significant nature of these correlations is secondary to the

fact that the amount of shared variance is quite small (around 6 percent and 4.5 percent respectively). More recently in a review of the literature, Myers and Diener (1995) revived the link between socially related religious factors and subjective well-being by reporting that happiness and life satisfaction appeared to rise with strength of religious affiliation and frequency of worship attendance.

Existential Dimension

The existential dimension of Moberg's (1971) spiritual well-being concerns the search for a sense of purpose or meaning in life. This concept has its roots in the work of Abraham Maslow, who claimed that the tendency to self actualise was the major driving force in human development (Maslow, 1970). Headey (1981) found that a sense of purpose or meaning was highly related to a single item measure of perceived life quality. He found that a 'self fulfilment' index consisting of six items asking respondents about "the sense of purpose and meaning in your life" (p.165) accounted for just over 53 percent of the variance in scores on Andrews and Withey's (1976) Life-as-a-Whole index of subjective well-being ($r = 0.73$). Spiritual factors appear to be related to quality of life, despite being largely neglected in the literature.

Part Six - Service Provision and Quality of Life

The idea that services for special populations (e.g. those suffering from a terminal or chronic illness) may be evaluated in terms of improvements to life quality is well supported (e.g. Wylie, 1970; Filipp, Klauer, Freudenberg, & Ferring, 1990; Baker & Intagliata, 1982; Brown et al, 1993). In 1981, Headey introduced the idea that services

in the general community could also be evaluated in terms of improvements to the life quality of their consumers. He reported the progress of a longitudinal quality of life study in Australia, incorporating the long term aim of proposing policy programs designed to enhance perceptions of life quality in the general population.

There are many services and programs available to farmers in rural Australia through both government and private organisations. These services can be comprehensively grouped under several categories, relating to; finance, health, productivity, personal and emotional well-being, safety and community involvement.

Financial/Material Services and Resources

Finance for primary producers is usually provided by established commercial institutions such as banks and finance companies (Australian Government, 1993). However, the commonwealth government also provides financial assistance, most often through the Rural Adjustment Scheme (RAS).

In 1993 the RAS established a focus on “farmers who [were] planning productivity improvements and who [had] long term prospects of profitability” (Australian Government, 1993 p.51). Thus, the scheme currently aims to sustain farmers who are viable in the long term and to assist farmers whose farms are not viable to leave primary industry.

Health Related Services and Resources

Medical doctors in private practice, local clinics, and country hospitals are focal points for the delivery of health related services in the rural community. Most health related programs which are active throughout the rest of Australia are available to farmers, as well as programs aimed specifically at rural areas, including the royal flying doctor service and grants for isolated country doctors (Australian Government, 1993).

Productivity Related Services and Resources

The commonwealth government provides financial assistance for graziers participating in livestock disease eradication campaigns, while assistance for the marketing of primary produce is provided by statutory marketing authorities as well as specific industry bodies (e.g. the Australian Dried Fruit Association). These authorities provide assistance with market research and product promotion, as well as administering regulations regarding export licensing and quality assurance.

Research and development organisations such as the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO) and the Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics (ABARE) provide assistance to farmers by making available regular publications which contain information of potential assistance to farmers in the ongoing planning and development of their farms (e.g. Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics, 1995; Farm Advance, 1995; Agriculture Victoria, 1996).

Personal and Emotional Services and Resources

Farming families have access to free and confidential advice on financial and related personal matters from counsellors employed under the Rural Counselling Scheme. These counsellors provide help in areas such as assessment of the farm's current financial position, budgeting, information on government assistance schemes and social security benefits, assistance with family decision making and personal or family counselling.

McGowan (1992) estimated that between 1984 and 1992, rural counselling groups had made contact with over 3,000 farming families in Victoria.

Safety Services and Resources

Services and agencies exist which aim to enhance personal safety, control, security, knowledge of rights, competence or stability in life. Such agencies include legal advisors and other legal professionals, as well as many farm skills training courses. Some of the various functions performed by rural counsellors also address issues relevant to this life domain.

Community Related Services and Resources

Community support and development is provided in rural areas through organisations such as APEX, Rotary, the Country Women's Association, Junior Farmers groups, Church groups, school and sporting groups among others. As well as these private

organisations, commonwealth support for the arts, heritage and media, and local government development programs, promote the welfare of rural communities.

To the degree that the services and programs included in these categories are successful in the rural community, they should provide a means for achieving improvements to consumers life quality, in both objective and subjective terms.

Part Seven - Hypotheses

Rural and Metropolitan Life Quality

Given the financial and environmental hardships discussed previously, and the weight of evidence regarding the subjective life quality of rural populations, it appears that lower levels of both objective and subjective life quality should be expected in farmers than in metropolitan dwellers. However, Oppong et al (1988) found that while perceived life quality was low for farmers and moderate for city dwellers, it was highest of all for those in a medium sized community such as a large country town or a provincial city. Since anecdotal evidence suggests that when farmers leave the land they often sell-up (which sometimes enables them to clear debts and liquidate assets) and move into just such a community, it should be expected that farmers who have left the land will display higher levels of both objective and subjective well-being than those currently farming and those in metropolitan areas.

Hypotheses One and Two

Therefore, it is hypothesised that in the present case, farmers will display both lower objective and subjective life quality than a metropolitan sample (hypothesis one).

However, it is also hypothesised that those who have left the land will show higher levels of both objective and subjective well-being than those currently still farming and those in metropolitan areas (hypothesis two).

Spiritual Well-Being and Perceived Social Support

Spiritual well-being and perceived social support are two predictors of subjective well-being whose merits have been judged quite differently. While perceived social support has been included in many widely cited quality of life studies, spiritual well-being has been largely ignored in the literature. Several authors who have studied spiritual well-being acknowledge that there is a social, participatory or affiliative aspect to the construct, with many of the highly significant correlations between spirituality and quality of life coming from socially related factors, both objective (e.g. such as church attendance, frequency of worship and participation) and subjective (e.g. strength of religious affiliation) in nature. Therefore, it may be the case that the contribution of spirituality to overall quality of life has been detected in studies which have neglected spirituality, through measures of purely social aspects of well-being. For example, the ComQol includes life domains such as Place in the Community, Intimacy and Safety which could quite possibly share a great deal of variance with the aforementioned spiritual indices.

Hypotheses Three and Four

It is therefore hypothesised that the perceived social support variables measured herein will significantly predict spiritual well-being in all sub-samples (hypothesis three). It is also hypothesised that a new subjective spiritual well-being ComQol domain will not contribute independent variance to the prediction of subjective well-being, over and above the effect of the original seven subjective ComQol domains (hypothesis four).

Service Provision and Quality of Life

On the basis of past findings, it is expected that farmers will display lower levels of life quality than people living in urban or metropolitan areas. Given that the quality of rural life has been found to be lower than that of metropolitan life, the extent to which services aimed at providing aid to the rural community are successful can be gauged by the extent to which these services help to raise the quality of rural life, both in objective and subjective terms. Services exist which address needs relevant to each of the comprehensive quality of life domains, and it could be expected that successful services in a particular domain would achieve a rise in consumers life quality for that particular domain.

Hypothesis Five

Therefore, it will be hypothesised that those who have used services grouped in any particular ComQol domain will report higher life quality, both in objective and subjective terms, for that particular domain, than those who have not.

Method

Subjects

Three samples were required for the purposes of this study. The first consisted of individuals who at the time of data collection, operated a farm in Victoria. This sample was collected with the assistance of the Victorian Farmers Federation (VFF), and comprised a random sample from the VFF membership database. The sample consisted of 81 farm owners (70 percent male) with a mean age of 51.2 years (range 27 to 76). 6.3 percent of the sample reported that they grew grain only, 1.3 percent wool only, 20 percent livestock only, 15 percent dairy cattle only, and 52.5 percent reported that they farmed a mixture of some of the above. 4.9 percent of the sample farmed products other than those listed above, including vegetables, citrus and emus.

The second sample consisted of individuals who had been farmers in the past, but who had sold their farm prior to the time of data collection. This sample was compiled with the assistance of the rural counsellors of Victoria, whose clients include farmers who are considering leaving, or have left primary industry. This sample of 34 ex-farmers included 64.7 percent male and 35.3 percent female respondents. The mean age of the sample was 49.1 years, with the youngest aged 29 and the oldest aged 78 years. 3 percent of the sample reported that whilst involved in farming, they grew only wool, 3 percent livestock only, 9.1 percent dairy cattle only, and 57.6 percent reported that they farmed a mixture of some of the above. 27.3 percent of this sample had farmed products other than those listed above, including vegetables, grape vines, and dried fruit. The mean number of years that had elapsed since respondents left primary industry was 4.8 years, this number

ranged from under one year to 27 years. 91.7 percent of ex-farmers had moved away from their old farm, with 10 percent moving to another farm, 40 percent relocating into country towns, 33.3 percent provincial cities, and 16.7 percent Melbourne and the surrounding suburbs. The 10 percent of ex-farmers who had moved to another farm were included in the ex-farmers sample, since they had undergone the loss of their own farm.

The third sample was made up of 89 individuals living in metropolitan Melbourne and its suburbs, including 43.8 percent male and 56.2 percent female respondents. The mean age was 49.7 years with a range from 21 to 84 years. A sub-group of 25 respondents (28.1 percent of the entire metropolitan sample) reported having lived outside of metropolitan areas at some time in their lives. Of this sub-group 60 percent reported that they had once lived in a country town, and 28 percent reported that they had once lived in a provincial city. Six individuals sampled as metropolitan respondents reported that they had lived on a farm at some time in the past. Three of these respondents were added to the ex-farmer sample, however the remaining three, who had been off-farm for over 30 years, were kept as part of the metropolitan sample, due to the length of time elapsed since they had left farming..

Materials

A questionnaire booklet titled the Rural and Urban Life Questionnaire (Rul-Q) was constructed which comprised several separate scales. Two forms of the Rul-Q were produced, the rural form for distribution to farmers and ex-farmers, and the metropolitan form for distribution to those in the metropolitan sample. Sections one, two, three, four,

and five of the Rul-Q were identical between the two forms. However, they differed in the nature of the demographic items included with each (Appendices A and B) and also in that the rural form included a sixth section involving the utilisation of available services (Appendix H).

The Comprehensive Quality of Life Scale

Sections one, two and three of the Rul-Q (Appendices C, D, and E respectively) consisted of the complete objective and subjective sections from Cummins' (1993) Comprehensive Quality of Life Scale (ComQol). According to Cummins (in press a), well over 100 instruments exist in the literature which claim to measure life quality in some form, however the applications of many are restricted by their focus upon measurement in highly selective groups. Items included in the ComQol were written in widely applicable terms, which makes possible the comparison of life quality between rural and metropolitan settings in the present study. However, there remains the possibility that people's construction of life quality may differ between these two settings. The ComQol uses importance ratings for each domain, which addresses this possible problem and represents another advantage of the scale over most other quality of life instruments. The score for each life domain on the subjective axis of the ComQol is made up of domain satisfaction scores weighted by domain importance. This allows inter-individual differences in domain importance to mediate the effect that domain satisfaction levels have on overall subjective life quality.

A further advantage of this scale is that it addresses both the objective and subjective dimensions of life quality. Scales such as those used by Andrews and Withey (1976),

Dale (1980), Baker and Intagliata (1982), and Heady, Holstrom, and Wearing (1984) have utilised just one of these relatively independent dimensions. However the ComQol comprises both, allowing a more complete analysis of life quality than can be obtained from examination of any one dimension alone.

Using the ComQol, the objective dimension of each life domain was measured by the sum of three indices of objective well-being, scoring from one to five each, yielding domain scores ranging from three to 15, with 15 indicating a high domain score. The subjective dimension of each domain was measured as domain satisfaction multiplied by domain importance, where satisfaction was scored using Andrews and Withey's (1976) seven point Delighted-Terrible scale, and importance was scored from one to five, where one represents "not important at all", two "slightly important", three "somewhat important", four "very important", and five "could not be more important".

The psychometric merit of the ComQol has been established in a number of ways. Measurement of internal consistency (Chronbach's alpha) has shown that the objective, importance and satisfaction sub-scales possess satisfactory reliability at $\alpha=0.39$, $\alpha=0.65$, and $\alpha=0.73$ respectively. Also, test-retest correlation coefficients have been recorded at a five month interval for the importance and satisfaction scales at $r=0.6$ and $r=0.36$ respectively, demonstrating good to very good stability (Cummins, 1993).

The Spiritual Well-Being Scale

Section four of the RUL-Q (Appendix F) consisted of all 20 items from the Spiritual Well-Being Scale (SWBS) developed by Paloutzian and Ellison (1982; Ellison, 1983).

This scale has been one of the most widely used research tools in the field of spiritual well-being during the past decade (e.g. Kaczorowski, 1989; Kirschling & Pittman, 1989; Bufford et al, 1991; Ellis & Smith, 1991; Ledbetter, Smith, Vosler-Hunter, & Fischer, 1991; Rasmussen & Johnson, 1994). Ten items comprise the religious well-being dimension of the scale (RWB) and 10 the Existential well-being dimension (EWB). An item was added to this section which allowed non-religious respondents to indicate that the RWB questions did not apply to them. All respondents were required to complete the existential well-being items.

Items on the SWBS take the form of short sentences, such as “I feel good about my future”. Respondents were asked to indicate their agreement or disagreement with each item on a seven point scale, where one = strongly disagree, two = moderately disagree, three = disagree, four = undecided, five = agree, six = moderately agree, and seven = strongly agree. Five items were worded negatively on the existential scale, for example “I don’t enjoy much about life” and four on the religious scale, such as “I don’t get much personal strength and support from my God”. These items were reverse scored so that the scale yielded existential and religious well-being scores between 10 and 70, where a high score indicates high well-being on that particular dimension.

Ellison (1983) reports quite favourable psychometric data for this scale. The reliability of the scale is evidenced by internal consistency measures of $\alpha=0.87$, $\alpha=0.86$, and $\alpha=0.89$ for the religious well-being scale, the existential well-being scale and the resulting combined spiritual well-being scale respectively. While Boyle (1991) argued that high values for alpha could indicate item redundancy in a scale, this is not likely to be detrimental the psychometric goodness of the SWBS. Rather, it would indicate that

there was a degree of item overlap and that the scale could possibly be just as psychometrically sound with fewer items. Testimony of the scale's stability is provided by test-retest correlation coefficients of 0.96 for RWB, 0.86 for EWB, and 0.93 for overall spiritual well-being, however the time between these administrations was not reported (Ellison, 1983). In addition to this evidence, validation studies appear to show that the scale has good convergent validity (Ellison, 1983; Ellis & Smith, 1991) and divergent validity (Kaczorowski, 1989) with scores correlating in appropriate ways with measures of purpose in life, religious orientation, and both state and trait anxiety. There is some evidence of ceiling effects in the SWBS, which have implications for highly religious samples (Ledbetter et al, 1991), however, the scale remains useful in situations where individuals can be expected to show moderate or low scores (Ledbetter et al, 1991; Bufford et al, 1991), as in the present case.

Perceived Social Support Scale

Section five of the Rul-Q (Appendix G) was made up of a perceived social support scale, comprising items selected from an instrument developed by Schaeffer et al (1981).

These authors highlighted an important distinction between the constructs of social network and perceived social support, with the former referring to the number and type of relationships a person has and the latter referring to the person's perceptions of the supportive value of their social interactions, regardless of their objective character.

When measures relating to the objective nature of the individual's social network are used to indicate the benefits that a person experiences from these relationships, two questionable assumptions are made. Firstly, it is assumed that benefits to the person are

directly proportional to the size and makeup of the network, and secondly that simply having a relationship is equivalent to receiving support (Schaeffer et al, 1981). Scales such as the Lubben Social Network Scale (Lubben, 1988) and Berkman and Symes' (1979) Social Network Index have these uncertainties at their heart and as such were judged inappropriate for use in the present study.

However, direct measures of perceived social support clearly avoid these problems. Barrera, Sandler, and Ramsay's (1981) Inventory of Socially Supportive Behaviour addresses the subjective aspect of the construct, however it was judged to be inferior to Schaeffer et al's (1981) scale. Barrera et al's (1981) instrument consisted of 40 items and yielded scores on emotional and tangible social support. Schaeffer et al (1981) incorporated both of these dimensions of social support into their scale, but also included the added dimension of informational social support. Schaeffer et al's (1981) scale is at once more concise, and a closer approximation of the factor structure of social support discovered by Barrera et al (1981).

The components of Schaeffer et al's (1981) scale that were used in the Rul-Q formed two sections of differently constructed items. Section one consisted of the question "How easy would it be for you to ..." and three situations in which assistance could be sought, ranging from the trivial (asking advice about the weather) to the more important (ask for assistance following illness or injury). These items were rated on a seven point scale where one = very hard, two = moderately hard, three = hard, four = unsure, five = easy, six = moderately easy, and seven = very easy. Section two included five items inquiring into the degree to which a nominated person had provided support of certain types and in certain situations.

Schaeffer et al (1981) asked their respondents to answer the items in section two, on five separate occasions, each time in reference to a different person. Since the social network variables that this method could generate are not of central importance, the added information which might be available through assessing a number of relationships probably does not justify the much longer scale administration time required for that method. Therefore, respondents involved in the present study were asked only to answer these questions in reference to "the person who has provided the most support to you over the past month".

The original scale (Schaeffer et al, 1981) was tallied to yield scores on three separate types of perceived social support, these being emotional support, informational support, and tangible support. Items from each of these subscales were included in the Rul-Q social support scale, with section one containing three tangible social support items and section two containing an item relating to informational support and four items relating to emotional support. Test-retest correlation coefficients at a nine month interval for the original perceived social support scales have been shown to be satisfactory, at emotional=0.66, tangible=0.56, and informational=0.58. While the reliability statistics of the original scales were reported at $\alpha=0.95$, $\alpha=0.81$, and $\alpha=0.31$ for emotional, informational and tangible support respectively.

Utilisation and Satisfaction with Services Schedule

Section six (Appendix H), which was only included in the Rul-Q rural form, was a schedule for reporting the use of, and satisfaction with, services in the rural community.

Such services can be comprehensively grouped under the ComQol life domain headings listed above. A description of the types of services which address issues relating to each domain was provided to respondents and some examples were given. Service institutions falling into the material category included banks, the Department of Social Security and the Rural Finance Corporation. The health category included hospitals, local physicians and community clinics, while productivity services were represented by industry marketing bodies and rural research and development programs among others. The categories of intimacy and emotional well-being were merged, with services relating to these life domains being provided by psychologists, rural counsellors, social workers, marriage counsellors and the like. Safety related service organisations included legal advisors, farm skills training programs and bookkeeping programs, while community institutions included such well known organisations as the Young Men's Christian Association, the Red Cross, Apex, and the Country Women's Association.

Respondents were asked whether they had made use of a service or services in each category. If an organisation was not listed as a category example, respondents were instructed to use their judgement in determining appropriate classification. If they had utilised the services of one or more institutions in a category, respondents were asked to rate their satisfaction with the performance of the service agency or agencies along Andrews and Withey's (1976) Delighted-Terrible scale and to give the name of the agency or agencies who provided these services to them.

Procedure

Following approval from the Deakin University Ethics Committee (see Appendix I), the co-operation of the Victorian Farmers Federation (VFF) was sought for the collection of data from current farmers. The policy director of the VFF, Mr. Clay Manners, was contacted and he agreed to present the project to the board of directors for approval. Following the presentation of an outline of the project to the board, approval was granted. A random sample of names and addresses (n=400) from the VFF membership database was provided and a direct mail out of survey materials to potential respondents was undertaken.

Assistance was also sought from the rural counsellors of Victoria, for the purpose of data collection from ex-farmers. Contact was made with the rural counsellor based in Bendigo, Mr. Ted Gretgrix, who agreed to present the project to colleagues following an introduction to the study's aims and proposed methods. Mr. Gretgrix provided a list of rural counsellors from around Victoria who had agreed to peruse an outline of the project and possibly to help with data collection. Following direct contact, seven rural counsellors agreed to participate in data collection. Survey materials were distributed to these counsellors, who subsequently issued materials to their clients.

Arrangements were made with Dr. Cummins of Deakin University, for a sample of metropolitan respondents to be taken from a large sample gathered during a previous study involving quality of life and related constructs. The large sample was made up of adults who had completed a 12 month quality of life study by researchers at Deakin University during 1995, and who had expressed their willingness to continue

participation in the psychology department research program. Names and addresses were sampled and a direct mail out was undertaken. A reply paid envelope was enclosed with every questionnaire mailed out, and returns were addressed to the researcher at the school of psychology, Deakin University. Upon return, the consent form was separated from each questionnaire and data were coded for analysis.

Results

Part One - Data Screening and Cleaning

Prior to hypothesis testing, an examination of issues relating to the appropriateness of the data set for analyses based on the general linear model was undertaken. These issues included (1) the accuracy and completeness of the data, (2) the normality of variable distributions, and (3) the number and nature of outlying values. Analysis proceeded upon resolution of these issues, on the condition that assumptions specific to the techniques being used were not violated.

Accuracy and Completeness of Data

Examination of descriptive statistics revealed variable means and standard deviations which were judged to be plausible and showed that no out of range data were present in the data set. Dummy variables were set up in order to determine whether any pattern of missing data existed. No such patterns were found, however it was apparent that for the most part, missing data were confined to the objective ComQol items.

Upon calculation of ComQol domain scores, the full effect of these missing objective quality of life (OQOL) data became apparent. Since each OQOL domain was made up of three items, a missing value on any one of these meant that neither an objective score for that domain, nor an OQOL total could be calculated for that case.

In order to circumvent this problem, each missing value was replaced with the overall sample mean for that item. Making use of such a replacement scheme has the disadvantage of reducing variance, since the mean is closer to itself than the real data would have been. However it is a conservative strategy, which in the present case may allow the other data points in the domain to exert maximum influence, whilst keeping the influence of the replaced value at a minimum (Tabachnick & Fidell, 1989). 1.05 percent of the OQOL item data were replaced in this way (45 missing values from 4,284 responses).

Normality of Distribution and Outliers

Univariate

A check for normality of distribution was performed on all variables involved in hypothesis testing, except quality of life variables (e.g. domain scores, OQOL and SQOL totals), which have typically been found to be negatively skewed, regardless of the particular instrument used or the makeup of the sample involved in analyses (Cummins, 1995).

Given that a check for acquiescent and critical response sets (e.g. a subject who agrees or disagrees with every item, regardless of the appropriate response; Murphy & Davidshoffer, 1994) revealed no respondents who appeared to have answered in this fashion, it is likely that the data consisted of valid responses to these scales. Therefore, the value of transforming these variables is doubtful, since this would involve changing the natural shape of distributions which contain only valid responses (Tabachnick &

Fidell, 1989). Outliers on these variables were most probably due to the natural shape of the distribution and thus were also allowed to remain at their original value.

Other variables which did not conform to normality were transformed. This involved applying transformations to tangible social support (reflect and square root), emotional social support (reflect and logarithm), and spiritual well-being (reflect and square root). Transformation in this manner brought these variables into satisfactory normality and freed the data of univariate outliers.

Multivariate

Multivariate normality cannot be assured in the present data set, since not all variables were forced to conform to univariate normality and univariate outliers remained on quality of life variables. Unfortunately at present, there is no way of directly testing the assumption of multivariate normality and the effect of its violation on multivariate analyses is unknown (Tabachnick & Fidell, 1989).

Inspection of the data for multivariate outliers involved regression of an arbitrarily selected variable (age) on the variables involved in hypothesis testing, using SPSS REGRESSION. Given the previously stated reasons for not forcing the quality of life variables into normality and leaving outliers in the distributions of those variables, inspection of the data for multivariate outliers did not involve quality of life variables. Following the regression analysis, the Mahalanobis distances of each case was compared with a critical value from the χ^2 distribution, with degrees of freedom equal to the number of variables in the analysis (emotional support, informational support, tangible

support, and spiritual well-being). The maximum Mahalanobis distance of the data set was 17.6, which was less than the conservative critical value of $\chi^2(4) = 18.47$ ($p < 0.001$), indicating that the data were free from multivariate outliers.

Part Two - Descriptive Statistics

The response rate was 23 percent for the farmer sample, 52 percent in the metropolitan sample, and around 44 percent for the ex-farmer sample. An exact rate cannot be calculated for the ex-farmer sample because sampling was undertaken via a third party. Descriptive statistics for the three sample groups (farmers, ex-farmers, metropolitan) on the variables from the ComQol (Tables 1, 2, & 3), and spiritual well-being, emotional, tangible and informational social support (Table 4), are presented in the following tables.

Table 1: Domain and total importance and satisfaction SQOL components.

Domain	Farmer (n = 81)		Ex-Farmer (n = 34)				Metropolitan (n = 89)					
	Importance		Satisfaction		Importance		Satisfaction		Importance		Satisfaction	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Material	3.6(±)0.87		5.6(±)0.85		3.6(±)0.66		5.4(±)1.07		3.4(±)0.73		5.5(±)0.74	
Health	4.3(±)0.67		5.5(±)1.03		4.1(±)0.66		5.1(±)1.20		4.2(±)0.63		5.3(±)1.00	
Productivity	3.9(±)0.69		5.5(±)0.84		3.9(±)0.66		4.9(±)1.18		3.6(±)0.85		5.4(±)0.87	
Intimacy	4.4(±)0.60		5.9(±)0.84		4.4(±)0.65		5.9(±)0.79		4.4(±)0.60		5.9(±)0.85	
Safety	3.8(±)0.98		5.9(±)0.71		3.8(±)1.02		5.6(±)0.69		3.9(±)0.84		5.7(±)0.70	
Community	3.3(±)0.84		5.5(±)0.93		3.1(±)0.93		5.1(±)1.02		3.3(±)0.90		5.3(±)0.88	
Emotion	4.0(±)0.70		5.4(±)0.96		3.8(±)0.80		5.3(±)1.10		3.9(±)0.71		5.6(±)0.90	
Spiritual	2.8(±)1.28		5.2(±)1.06		3.4(±)1.35		5.4(±)0.97		2.7(±)1.35		5.2(±)0.94	
Total	27.3(±)3.2		39.2(±)4.4		26.7(±)3.3		37.6(±)5.1		26.7(±)3.2		38.7(±)4.1	

Note: Totals do not include new spiritual domain. Maximum possible domain importance score is 5
Maximum possible domain satisfaction score is 7

A consistent pattern across these data was that the intimacy domain (domain 4) was rated as the single most important and satisfactory domain (except for a tie between intimacy and safety on Farmers satisfaction; mean = 5.9 ± 0.84 vs. 5.9 ± 0.71 respectively). The rank order of domains between importance and satisfaction scales was relatively stable. As evidence of this, Spearman's rank order correlation coefficient between the importance and satisfaction scales revealed that much of the time, respondents rated the domains that they were most satisfied with as the most important, and those that they were least satisfied with as the least important (Farmers $r = 0.29$, Ex-farmers $r = 0.29$, Metropolitan $r = 0.61$, across all samples $r = 0.52$). The importance, satisfaction, and SQOL data are presented in the form of percentages of scale maximum scores, in Table 2. It can be seen that most scores fell close to Cummins' (1995) 'gold standard' of 75 ± 2.5 percent.

Table 2: Satisfaction (Sat), Importance (Imp) and SQOL (importance x satisfaction) domain and total group means expressed as a percentage of scale maximum.

Domain	Farmer (n = 81)			Ex-Farmer (n = 34)			Metropolitan (n = 89)		
	Imp	Sat	I x S	Imp	Sat	I x S	Imp	Sat	I x S
Material	64.93	76.41	71.87	64.39	74.75	70.89	60.06	75.10	70.15
Health	81.49	75.32	75.26	78.79	67.17	68.50	79.89	71.46	72.35
Productivity	72.40	74.89	73.38	71.97	66.67	67.15	65.52	74.33	70.93
Intimacy	83.77	80.92	80.65	84.10	82.32	81.97	85.34	81.80	81.85
Safety	70.78	81.39	76.14	70.45	77.27	73.92	71.84	78.93	75.53
Community	57.14	75.11	69.92	53.03	69.70	66.35	57.18	71.84	68.03
Emotion	75.97	73.59	73.31	69.70	71.72	69.14	73.28	76.82	74.65
Spiritual	59.26	71.91	69.20	71.30	72.84	73.10	62.04	70.37	69.30
Total	77.23	79.71	75.40	75.58	76.20	72.42	75.66	78.78	74.42

Note: All figures expressed as percentage of scale maximum score = $(\text{score}-1) \times 100 / (\text{number of scale points} - 1)$

Experimental eighth domain not included in total calculation

Table 3: OQOL and SQOL domain and total means for farmer, ex-farmer, and metropolitan samples.

Domain	Farmer (n = 81)		Ex-Farmer (n = 34)				Metropolitan (n = 89)					
	OQOL		SQOL		OQOL		SQOL		OQOL		SQOL	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Material	9.9(±)1.7		9.3(±)3.9		9.9(±)1.6		8.3(±)6.1		10.3(±)1.8		8.4(±)3.9	
Health	13.1(±)1.9		10.5(±)6.2		12.6(±)5.0		8.0(±)6.9		12.5(±)2.3		9.3(±)5.7	
Productivity	11.8(±)2.3		9.9(±)4.1		11.2(±)2.8		6.9(±)6.4		11.0(±)2.7		8.8(±)4.8	
Intimacy	10.7(±)2.6		12.7(±)4.6		11.4(±)2.0		13.2(±)4.9		11.8(±)2.2		13.0(±)4.9	
Safety	12.7(±)1.7		10.9(±)4.4		12.4(±)1.9		10.1(±)4.0		12.5(±)1.7		10.7(±)4.0	
Community	8.9(±)2.3		8.5(±)4.7		8.2(±)3.1		6.9(±)4.7		7.6(±)2.3		7.7(±)4.4	
Emotion	11.1(±)2.1		9.9(±)5.2		10.6(±)3.0		8.1(±)6.4		11.4(±)1.6		10.2(±)4.9	
Spiritual			7.6(±)5.8				9.6(±)5.4				8.0(±)5.0	
Total	78.3(±)7.4		71.6(±)22.9		76.3(±)9.1		62.5(±)28.5		77.0(±)7.6		68.4(±)28.5	

Note: Totals do not include new spiritual domain

Spiritual domain responded to by 57 farmers, 27 ex-farmers, and 55 metro

Maximum possible score for domains is 20

Maximum possible for totals is 140

Though differences between sampling groups were not consistently large on OQOL or SQOL domains, where they did exist, Table 3 shows that it was typically ex-farmers that scored lower than metropolitan respondents and farmers. This was reflected by the differences in mean OQOL and SQOL totals between groups (ex-farmers lowest on both counts at 76.3 ± 9.1 and 62.5 ± 28.5 for OQOL and SQOL respectively). No such clear pattern existed between sample groups on spiritual and social support scales, as is evidenced by Table 4.

Table 4: Spiritual well-being, Emotional, Tangible, and Informational social support means and percentages of scale maximum (%SM) for the three sample groups.

Variable	Farmer (n = 81)		Ex-Farmer (n = 34)		Metropolitan (n = 89)	
	Mean ± SD	%SM	Mean ± SD	%SM	Mean ± SD	%SM
Spiritual W.B.	55.24(±)10.37	78.61	55.68(±)10.53	78.70	53.87(±)9.64	76.72
Emotional Supp.	17.75 (±) 2.58	88.65	18.32(±) 1.79	91.23	17.88(±)2.90	91.23
Tangible Supp.	17.78 (±) 3.34	84.94	17.09(±) 3.16	80.45	16.99(±)3.30	81.18
Informational Supp.	4.08 (±) 1.09	77.60	4.18(±) 0.72	78.79	4.11(±)0.97	78.24

Note: Maximum possible score for spiritual well-being is 70

Maximum possible score for emotional support is 20

Maximum possible score for tangible support is 21

Maximum possible score for informational support is 5

The position of these means in the top end of the scales is a symptom of the negative skew of the variables from the spiritual well-being scale (SWBS) and the social support scale. Informational support is the only variable of this group which did not require transformation in order to be appropriate for analysis. This variable was not transformed because it consisted of a single item Likert scale whose category splits were not judged to be extreme.

Part Three - Data Analysis

Hypotheses One and Two

To test the hypotheses that farmers would display lower levels of life quality than metropolitan respondents, in terms of objective and subjective ComQol domains, (hypothesis one), and that ex-farmers would show higher levels of life quality than both

current farmers and metropolitan respondents (hypothesis two), a pair of multivariate analyses of variance (MANOVA) were performed. Due to the independence of the two types of life quality measure, one MANOVA used the seven original objective quality of life domains as dependent variables, and one the seven original subjective quality of life domains (not including the experimental spiritual domain). The design of these analyses was specified using SPSS control language, to assess the two hypotheses mentioned above (farmers vs. metropolitan and ex-farmers vs. farmers and metropolitan combined) through planned comparisons.

Assumptions specific to MANOVA were assessed prior to the analysis, and most were found to be upheld in the current data set. Box's M statistic failed to reach significance ($p > 0.05$), indicating acceptable multivariate homogeneity of variance-covariance matrices. Within group matrix plots revealed no non-linear relationships between pairs of dependent variables and no evidence of multicollinearity or singularity was observed. Differential cell sizes in the design present possible problems, with the ratio of smallest to largest being greater than 1.5:1, however all cells sizes remain above 30 cases for this analysis.

Using the Pillais criterion, a significant multivariate effect was detected among the tests for OQOL (comparison 1: $F_{7,195} = 5.02$, $p < 0.001$), but none was found among those for SQOL. Univariate F-tests revealed differences on objective intimacy ($F_{1,201} = 8.57$, $p < 0.01$), objective community ($F_{1,201} = 12.95$, $p < 0.001$), and objective productivity ($F_{1,201} = 3.87$, $P = 0.05$) between farmers and metropolitan respondents. The nature of these differences was such that metropolitan respondents scored higher than farmers on objective intimacy, while this order was reversed on objective community and objective

productivity (see Table 3). No statistically reliable differences were detected in tests for comparison two, between ex-farmers and the other two groups. Only these planned comparisons were tested, with no omnibus test of the data performed. Keppel (1991) asserts that if the number of planned comparisons used in this way is no more than the degrees of freedom for the grouping variable (in the present case d.f. = number of comparisons = 2) it is appropriate not to adjust the per comparison error rate in order to maintain a particular familywise error rate. In accordance with this guideline no such adjustment was made. Since no pervasive group effects in favour of metropolitan respondents or ex-farmers were observed, neither hypothesis one, nor hypothesis two were supported by the data.

Hypothesis Three

The hypothesis that spiritual well-being could be predicted by social support was tested by standard multiple regression analysis (MRA), with spiritual well-being entered as the dependent variable and the three perceived social support variables (perceived emotional, informational and tangible social support) entered simultaneously as independent variables.

The ratio of cases to independent variables (IVs) in the analysis exceeded the requirement of 20 cases per independent variable (3 IVs and 204 cases). Analysis of scatterplots between residuals and predicted values revealed that, consistent with assumptions of normality, linearity and homoscedasticity of residuals, the points were randomly scattered around the zero line, spread across an even range, with the greater concentration of points close to the zero line. Multicollinearity and singularity were

assessed by SPSS during the analysis, through calculation of squared multiple correlation coefficients for each independent variable. No multicollinear or singular variable was allowed to enter the analysis.

This analysis yielded a regression equation which predicted around 20% of the variance in spiritual well-being on the basis of perceived social support variables ($R^2 = 0.22$, R^2 -adjusted = 0.21). The most influential perceived social support variables were emotional support and tangible support ($\beta = 0.285$ and 0.215 respectively), which contributed significantly to the prediction of spiritual well-being (both $p < 0.01$), while informational social support did not ($\beta = -0.128$, $p > 0.05$). The highest squared semi-partial correlation coefficient was obtained by perceived emotional social support ($sr^2 = 0.06$).

Table 5: Simultaneous MRA of spiritual well-being on social support variables.

Variables	SPIRIT (DV)	Tangible	Emotion	Inform	B	β	sr^2 (unique)
Inform	-0.36	-0.25	-0.59		-0.164	-0.128	0.01
Emotion	0.40	0.23			0.470**	0.285	0.06
Tangible	0.32				0.353*	0.215	0.04
					Intercept = 3.417		
Means	3.81	2.02	0.83	4.11			$R^2 = 0.22$
SD's	1.25	0.78	0.77	0.98		Adjusted	$R^2 = 0.21$ $R = 0.47^{**}$

* $p < 0.01$

** $p < 0.001$

Hypothesis three was moderately supported by the data, however, around 80 percent of the variance in spiritual well-being was not accounted for by perceived social support variables.

Hypothesis Four

It was hypothesised that the addition of a spiritual domain to the subjective axis of the ComQol would not add variance to the prediction of subjective life quality, independent of the other ComQol domains. The relative importance of each of the ComQol domains (including the experimental spiritual domain) in the prediction of total SQOL score was assessed using hierarchical and stepwise multiple regression analyses.

The cases to independent variables ratio for these analyses did not exceed the ideal requirement of 20 cases per independent variable (eight IVs and 136 cases), since only the cases from whom responses to the spiritual domain were received, could be included. As was the case in testing hypothesis three, an analysis of residuals scatterplots revealed no violations of the assumptions of normality, linearity, or homoscedasticity of residuals.

Hierarchical Multiple Regression Analysis

At step one of the hierarchical analysis, the original seven subjective ComQol domains were entered, and thus were allowed to compete for variance in the dependent variable, prior to the entry of the spiritual domain.

Contrary to claims made by the author of the ComQol (Cummins, 1993), the variables entered as block one (the original seven ComQol domains) did not account for all of the variance in SQOL ($R^2 = 0.96$, $R^2\text{-adj} = 0.96$, $p < 0.01$). At step two, the spiritual domain was entered, adding 0.037 to R^2 . This indicated that the spiritual the domain contributed 3.7 percent unique variance to the prediction of SQOL. However, since the variables in the regression equation were singular with the dependent variable at this step, leading to zero mean square error, the significance of the change in F-value associated with this addition cannot be calculated ($R = R^2 = R^2\text{-adj} = 1.00$).

At the conclusion of step two, all variables had been entered into the regression equation and the spiritual domain assumed the second highest standardised regression weight (β) and squared semi-partial correlation coefficient, at $\beta = 0.222$ and $sr^2 = 0.037$. This result (summarised in Table 6) indicates that the spiritual domain contributed just under 4 percent of the variance in SQOL total, independently of the other domains.

Table 6: Statistics at the conclusion of hierarchical multiple regression analysis of SQOL total on eight SQOL domains.

Var.'s (DV)	SQOL	SPIRI	MAT	HEAL	PRO	INTI	SAFE	COM	EMO	β	sr^2 (unique)
EMO	0.78	0.18	0.44	0.35	0.66	0.48	0.43	0.43		0.22	0.02
COM	0.64	0.24	0.30	0.27	0.45	0.31	0.29			0.19	0.03
SAFE	0.57	0.07	0.37	0.30	0.36	0.39				0.16	0.02
INTI	0.69	0.36	0.32	0.27	0.38					0.19	0.02
PROD	0.78	0.15	0.53	0.45						0.20	0.02
HEAL	0.63	0.02	0.42							0.24	0.04
MAT	0.58	-0.11								0.16	0.02
SPIRI	0.39									0.22	0.04
Means	77.24	8.19	8.75	9.55	8.89	12.91	10.68	7.92	9.74		$R^2 = 1.000$
SD's	24.69	5.43	4.36	6.16	4.93	4.77	4.15	4.58	5.34		$R^2\text{-adj} = 1.000$ $R = 1.000$

Note: **Abbreviations** - SQOL - subjective ComQol total; SPIRI - spiritual well-being domain; MAT - material well-being domain; HEAL - health domain; PRO - productivity domain; INTI - intimacy domain; SAFE - safety domain; COM - community domain; EMO - emotional well-being domain.
All raw regression weights = 1.000

Stepwise Multiple Regression Analysis

To further elucidate the relative importance of the spiritual domain, stepwise multiple regression analysis was undertaken, using the eight ComQol domains (including the experimental spiritual domain) as independent variables and SQOL total as the dependent variable. The spiritual domain entered the regression equation at step six of this analysis, contributing a significant improvement in R^2 (change in $F = 71.83$, $p < 0.001$). The spiritual domain was entered ahead of two original ComQol domains, these being material well-being and safety. While the spiritual domain contributed quite a large amount of unique variance to the prediction of SQOL total ($sr^2 = 0.04$; see Table 6), it

entered the equation at a late stage, due to its relative lack of overlap with the other domains.

Table 7: Stepwise multiple regression analysis of SQOL total on eight SQOL domains

Var.'s (DV)	SQOL	MAT	SAFE	SPIRI	COM	EMO	HEAL	INTI	PROD	β	R ² CHANGE
PROD	0.78	0.53	0.36	0.15	0.45	0.66	0.45	0.38		0.20	0.61
INTI	0.69	0.32	0.39	0.36	0.31	0.48	0.27			0.19	0.17
HEAL	0.63	0.42	0.30	0.02	0.27	0.35				0.24	0.06
EMO	0.78	0.44	0.43	0.18	0.43					0.22	0.06
COM	0.64	0.30	0.29	0.24						0.19	0.04
SPIRI	0.39	-0.11	0.07							0.22	0.02
SAFE	0.57	0.37								0.16	0.02
MAT	0.58									0.16	0.02
Means	77.24	8.75	10.68	8.19	7.92	9.74	9.55	12.91	8.89		R ² = 1.000
SD's	24.69	4.36	4.15	5.43	4.58	5.34	6.16	4.77	4.93		R ² -adj = 1.000 R = 1.000

Note: **Abbreviations** - SQOL - subjective ComQol total; SPIRI - spiritual well-being domain;

MAT - material well-being domain; HEAL - health domain; PROD - productivity

domain; INTI - intimacy domain; SAFE - safety domain; COM - community

domain; EMO - emotional well-being domain.

All raw regression weights = 1.000

Further evidence for the individual contribution of the spiritual domain is provided by an examination of the relative differences between the zero order and semi-partial correlation coefficients of each of the independent variables. This difference was smallest for the spiritual domain ($r = 0.39$, $sr = 0.19$), providing another indication that a large proportion of that variable's contribution to the prediction of SQOL total was independent of the other domains. Finally, minimal change was observed in Chronbach's alpha for the scale, if the spiritual domain was removed (α including spiritual domain = 0.78, α if removed = 0.80), indicating that the scale's internal consistency was not substantially threatened by the inclusion of the new domain. These converging strings of evidence provide support for the inclusion of a spiritual life quality domain, contrary to hypothesis four.

Hypothesis Five

It was hypothesised that rural respondents who had used services categorised in a particular ComQol domain would display higher levels of OQOL and SQOL for that domain than those who had not used such services. This hypothesis was addressed by employing a MANOVA for each domain, with objective and subjective domain scores as dependent variables. One factor with two levels was used in each of these analyses, being use versus non-use of services in each domain.

Similar to the testing of hypotheses one and two, no evidence of violations of the assumptions of MANOVA were observed, with the exception of those regarding cell sizes. In the tests for hypothesis five the ratio of smallest to largest of 1.5:1 was violated in four of the six tests. Also, the size of one cell in each of two tests was below the standard 30 cases (only 19 respondents used community services, and only 27 respondents did not use health services).

Hypothesis five was not supported by the present data. No pervasive life quality advantage for service users observed, with only one significant effect found in this entire series of tests. In the MANOVA involving productivity related services, Pillais criterion revealed a significant multivariate difference between service users and non-users ($F_{2,103} = 7.31, p = 0.001$). Univariate F-tests revealed that this difference existed between service users and non-users on objective productivity ($F_{1,104} = 12.57, p = 0.001$). The nature of the difference was such that service users showed higher scores on the

objective axis of this domain (mean = 12.43) than non-users (mean = 10.92). Results from these analyses are summarised in Table 8.

Table 8: Univariate F-tests from analysis of differences between domain service users and non-users.

Domain	Domain SQOL		Domain OQOL	
	F	Sig of F	F	Sig of F
Material	0.05	0.819	0.00	0.973
Health	0.60	0.439	2.27	0.135
Productivity	2.05	0.156	12.57*	0.001
Intimacy	0.32	0.575	0.13	0.722
Safety	0.09	0.620	0.77	0.432
Community	1.88	0.173	0.09	0.758
Emotion	3.39	0.068	0.13	0.718

* Significant at $\alpha = 0.05$

Discussion

Rural and Metropolitan Life Quality

The central purpose of the study was to make comparisons of life quality between two rural samples (farmers and ex-farmers) and a metropolitan sample. While deviations were observed between farmers and metropolitan residents, none were observed between ex-farmers and the other sample groups. This was so despite ex-farmers displaying apparently lower mean levels of overall subjective life quality than either of the other groups (see Tables 1, 2, & 3). Also, no statistically reliable differences were observed between groups on any SQOL measures, a finding which runs contrary to both hypotheses and past findings (Haavio-Mannila, 1971; Dale, 1980; Oppong et al, 1988; Wyatt et al, unpublished).

A possible explanation for the discrepancy between these and past findings lies in the multiplication of satisfaction and importance scores, used herein to calculate the subjective axis of the ComQol variables. This procedure represents a theoretically plausible way to account for inter-individual differences in domain weightings, however, it appears to bring about the statistical disadvantage of increased within group variation (see Table 3). Therefore, the possibility of detecting between groups effects using dependent variables constructed in this way, is reduced and may have led to the lack of significant group differences on subjective life quality variables in the present study.

It was found that farmers did score significantly lower than metropolitan residents on reports of intimate contact with family and friends (objective intimacy domain).

They also scored significantly higher than metropolitan residents on involvement in the community (objective community domain) and on frequency of productive activity (objective productivity). The intimacy and community differences reflect a pattern of social interactions which is understandable on the basis of another objective variable; that of distance.

In metropolitan areas, social interaction with friends and extended family is relatively easy, since the physical distances between these people are typically not great. The metropolitan situation provides an environment in which social interactions can be initiated almost at will, however, this is not always the case for individuals involved in primary industry. An effect of the decline in the number of farms in rural Australia is that farm sizes are growing, as land is subsumed into those farms which maintain viability. Because of this, the physical distances between people in the country are large and growing larger, in comparison to the population density of metropolitan areas, with the average total farm area in Australia growing by over 11 percent between 1992 and 1994 (Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics, 1993; 1995).

The interpretation of these effects in terms of distance is sustained by an examination of the questionnaire items from these domains (Appendix C). Greater distance between people could be expected to negatively influence how often respondents spoke with close friends (intimacy item one) and were able to engage in social activities at will (intimacy item three). The increased need for organisation of social activities, made necessary by greater distances, could be expected to positively influence the reported frequency of contact with clubs, societies, sporting groups, church and school groups (community item one) which represent focal points for social interaction in rural communities.

Also, lower population density may influence the proportion of farmers who are required to assume positions of responsibility within these organisations at a local level (community item two), and this in turn could influence reports of how often farming respondents were asked for advice by people outside of their home (community item three). Among the intimacy and community domains, the only item for which this interpretation does not appear appropriate is intimacy item number two. It appears that this particular item would be more influenced by the gender makeup of the farming and metropolitan samples, with the predominantly male farmers (70 percent male) reporting that they were less often cared for when sad or depressed. The typically stoic demeanour of farming men could be expected to influence responses to this item, since they would be less likely than females to indicate to those around them that they were experiencing emotional discomfort.

It is likely that the observed difference between farmers and metropolitan respondents on objective reports of productivity is simply an outcome of the composition of these two sample groups. While the metropolitan sample consisted of 'people in general', the farmers sample by its very nature, consisted of individuals involved in the production of agricultural commodities. It should not be surprising, therefore, to find that a group of people selected on the basis of their involvement in a particular industry reported higher levels of productive activity than a group selected from the general population.

Although differences were expected between rural and metropolitan samples on measures of subjective life quality, none were found. This finding is atypical among past research, which has tended to show lower perceptions of life quality in rural areas.

A particularly surprising aspect of this result was that no statistically reliable differences were detected between ex-farmers and either of the other two sample groups.

The finding that SQOL was stable across these apparently heterogeneous sample groups provides support for two basic theoretical principles relating to quality of life, which have been outlined previously. Firstly, this effect evidences the stability of perceptions of life quality at their position in the positive half of the distribution. Secondly, it demonstrates the relative independence of objective and subjective measures of life quality.

The Stability of SQOL

The SQOL levels reported by all samples fell extremely close to the normative range established by Cummins (1995), of 75 ± 2.5 percent of scale maximum (see Table 2). By identifying the mean life satisfaction score from 16 unrelated general population studies as lying within the range of 70 - 80 percent of scale maximum, this author proposed that perceptions of life satisfaction might be maintained by the existence of a set of psychological, homeostatic mechanisms. He also contended that the operation of such processes would be highly adaptive, ensuring that under relatively stable living conditions, most people would feel satisfied with their lives, resulting in a non-zero sum benefit to the population (Cummins, 1995). Evidence from the present study has shown that a population of ex-farmers did not differ significantly on perceptions of life quality from samples of farmers and metropolitan residents. Given that the mean length of time which had elapsed since ex-farmers had left the land was less than five years (mean = 4.8 years), it appears that Cummins' "gold standard" (Cummins, 1995, p.179) level of

subjective well-being may also be relatively stable in situations where life circumstances are not stable at all. Further investigation of this potentiality would require longitudinal analysis.

However, an alternative explanation of this result involves the influence of habituation (Helson, 1964). It could be predicted from the habituation component of Helson's (1964) adaptation level theory that while ex-farmers would experience a change in happiness or satisfaction immediately after leaving the farm, they would gradually become used to their new situation and fail to perceive a happiness or satisfaction differential between their circumstances at present and those prior to leaving. With an average time since leaving the farm of around five years, it is conceivable that life quality judgements in this group did experience a change, but that the present study missed this effect. Therefore, it is possible that a briefer interval between leaving the farm and measurement may have yielded a significant result.

The Independence of OQOL and SQOL

The independence of overall OQOL and SQOL was demonstrated by the discovery of significant group effects on objective, but not subjective indices of life quality. A possible mechanism by which overall SQOL levels may be maintained relatively independently of changes in OQOL was presented by Michalos' (1985) multiple discrepancies theory (MDT), and receives some support from the findings presented herein. MDT predicts that normative levels of subjective life quality can be maintained by lowering the importance placed on comparisons in which a negative discrepancy (and therefore low satisfaction) is found to be present. Partial evidence for such an adaptive

weighting of comparisons is provided by the data which show that subjects tended to rate the domains with which they were most satisfied as the most important and those with which they were least satisfied as least important. Spearman's rank order correlation coefficient between domain importance and domain satisfaction across all groups was quite high at $r = 0.52$, however, this statistic was lower for the ex-farmers group alone ($r = 0.29$).

An unfortunate feature of these results was that the response rates were so low, at 23 percent for farmers, around 44 percent for ex-farmers, and 52 percent for metropolitan. Given the lack of any clear trends in the data, it is possible that the subjects who responded to the survey comprised a relatively homogenous subgroup of each population, whose choice to respond was influenced by common personality factors. This possibility presents a serious threat to the generalisability of the results, since the individuals included in the samples may not be representative of their group in general, but may actually be more similar to each other than to other individuals in their respective populations.

Perceived Social Support and Spiritual Well-Being

Investigations into life quality have often attempted to identify the aspects, or domains of life which contribute to an individual's overall sense of well-being (Heady, 1988; Brown et al, 1993; Cummins et al, 1994). In order for the measurement of life quality to be as comprehensive as possible, all relevant aspects of the construct should be included in the measurement instrument. While the possible contribution of spiritual well-being to quality of life has often been overlooked in the literature, the present study has achieved

findings which imply that spiritual well-being may require consideration as a life domain within the ComQol instrument.

An examination of studies which did involve spiritual well-being revealed that many of the significant relationships between the construct and overall subjective well-being had come from socially related variables (e.g. frequency of worship attendance). Therefore, it was possible that a considerable portion of the variance contributed by spiritual well-being to quality of life had been detected through purely social measures, in studies which had ignored spirituality. Hypothesis three tested the expectation that perceived social support variables could be used to predict spiritual well-being.

It was revealed that around 20 percent of the variance in spiritual well-being was predictable on the basis of variables measuring perceived social support; a finding that has implications for the way in which life quality is measured. Since most of the variance in spiritual well-being was not accounted for by social variables, the likelihood of variance shared with spiritual variables being detected through purely social measures was low. Thus, the possibility arose that a spiritual domain could add variance to the prediction of overall SQOL which was independent of the socially relevant ComQol domains, such as intimacy and community. Multiple Regression Analysis undertaken to assess this potentiality revealed that the spiritual domain accounted for the second largest amount of independent variance in overall SQOL, behind just one of the original ComQol domains (see Table 6).

The quality of life literature is characterised by studies which either neglect the possibility that spiritual factors effect life quality (e.g. Cummins, in press a & b), treat the possibility

in a cursory fashion (Campbell et al, 1976), or at the opposite extreme, assume that spirituality and religious factors effect the life quality of all respondents (Ellison, 1983). Evidence from the present study supports the inclusion of a spiritual domain of life quality, however this assertion carries a major caveat. Unlike the original seven domains, respondents who did not hold any religious or spiritual beliefs were not required to complete the spiritual satisfaction item (see Appendix D). Since almost a third of respondents did not respond to that item ($n = 63$), it is apparent that this domain does not hold meaning for the life quality of all individuals. Therefore, neither the approach taken by Cummins (in press a & b) and others in ignoring the domain, nor the approach taken by Ellison (1983) in assuming relevance to all respondents, appear to be ideal.

In a stepwise regression analysis, the spiritual domain did not enter the equation until step six, prior to just two of the original ComQol domains (see Table 7). It is likely that this was due to the small overlap between the spiritual domain and the original ComQol domains, which were able to contribute larger improvements to the regression equation, due to shared variance. Evidence of this is given by the large contribution of the productivity domain at step one, in comparison to this variable's small squared semi-partial correlation coefficient (see Table 6). The results from these analyses complicate searches for the 'true' number and nature of life domains, such as those undertaken by Heady (1988) and Cummins (in press b), by raising questions about the way in which models of life quality are constructed and evaluated.

Cummins (in press b) argued that the most parsimonious way to model life quality is to search for a small number of domains that share a great deal of variance. In this author's view, parsimony demands as few component terms (domains) as is practical to accurately

describe the phenomenon. However, with only a few components, reliance is placed on interactions or shared variance between terms to explain much of the variability in overall life quality (as is the case with the seven original ComQol domains). In the stepwise multiple regression, this type of modelling led to most of the variability in SQOL total being explained by the first one or two independent variables to enter the regression equation. With most of the variance in SQOL total accounted for by just one or two domains, the remaining domains approached redundancy. Thus, it can be argued that the presence of interaction between terms in a model of life quality is not a sign of parsimony, but one of unnecessary complexity. Parsimony, then, could also demand that investigators search for the set of domains which display the simplest interrelationships. The spiritual domain may be an exemplar of this type of domain, since it displays small correlations with the seven original ComQol domains, yet accounts for a relatively large amount of unique variance in SQOL total (see Table 6). It appears that future modelling of life quality requires a compromise between the paradoxical demands of (1) few terms and much interaction, and (2) many terms with little interaction.

Service Provision and Quality of Life

It was expected that farmers who used services addressing issues related to a particular life domain would show higher levels of OQOL and SQOL for that domain than non-users (Hypothesis five). The rationale behind this hypothesis was that the success of services could be judged in terms of improvements to service user's life quality.

However, the advantage of service use was not a pervasive effect, having an influence on just one axis of one domain (objective productivity). Further, the interpretation of this effect is somewhat ambiguous, since a clear delineation between which of these measures

represents a causal influence and which represents an effect is not easily made in the case of productivity services. It is possible that the impact of these services raised levels of objective productivity. However, it is equally possible that reports of higher objective productivity were given by more proactive respondents who were more likely to actually seek out services than others.

Heady (1981) identified two types of services through which agencies could aim to improve perceptions of life quality in their clients. The former were termed positive welfare programs and the latter compensatory welfare programs. The purpose of Headey's research was to enable the recommendation of positive programs, which would aim to actually improve subjective quality of life (Heady, 1981). This contrasts with the aims of compensatory programs, which would aim only to address decreases in life quality perceptions when they occurred, in what is colloquially termed a 'band aid' fashion.

If the 'band aid' pattern was reflective of the actual pattern of rural service use, it could be expected that people would seek out services when a decrease occurred in perceptions of life quality, and subsequently experience a return to normative levels when the deficit had been addressed. It could also be expected that non-users of services would not score lower on life quality, since they were categorised as non-users due to the very fact that the perceived need for a 'band aid' compensatory service had not arisen. The present data appear to reveal the use of services in such a fashion in the rural community. The finding of largely non-significant differences in life quality between service users and non-users describes a situation in which rural respondents were only motivated to seek out services when a particular need arose in a particular life domain.

Limitations and Future Directions

A number of factors associated with sampling technique effect the generalisability of results from this study to populations outside of the particular samples used. Sampling of ex-farmers was not undertaken on a random basis and the administration of questionnaires to these respondents differed, with the material being presented in an interview style to some and via mail out to others. Accurate figures for these different administrations are not available, since sampling for this group was performed through a third party (the Rural Counselling Service). Another factor which limits generalisability of results from these samples is the low response rates, and the possibility that self selection factors operated to bring them about. 350 questionnaires were mailed out to V.F.F. members, of which 81 were returned for a response rate in this sample of 23 percent. In the metropolitan sample, the response rate was a more acceptable 52 percent (92 responses from 177 questionnaires; including those metropolitan respondents who were placed into the ex-farmers sample). An exact response rate for the ex-farmer sample could not be assessed due to the sampling methodology employed, however it is likely that the figure lies around 44 percent (31 responses received from around 70 questionnaires presented).

Despite these limitations, it has been possible to bring together a number of theoretical ideas to form plausible explanations of the observed effects. However, the necessity for explanations in terms of multiple, disparate concepts makes plain the conceptual inadequacy from which the field of life quality is suffering, in the absence of an overarching theoretical framework. The search for the most parsimonious account of the

processes by which perceptions of life quality come about, are maintained, and experienced by individuals requires that strands of evidence from diverse research programs be gathered together and assimilated under a single theory. Recently, a candidate theory has come to light, in the form of Heckhausen and Schultz's (1995) 'Lifespan Theory of Control'. Unfortunately, this theory became known too late to enable its incorporation into the present study, however it represents an approach which has the potential to enhance understanding of many of the effects observed in the life quality literature, and to generate testable hypotheses for future research.

The lifespan theory of control is based on two essentially different types of control which individuals are inherently motivated to exert. The first kind, 'Primary control' refers to actions which are taken to alter the environment. The second kind, 'Secondary control' refers to attempts made by the individual to alter cognitions regarding the objects of primary control (Heckhausen & Schultz, 1995). Primary control is given primacy over secondary control, so that secondary control is used only when primary control fails. It is through the use of secondary control that individuals can alter cognitions regarding the importance or necessity of achieving primary control when this method fails, and thereby maintain a sense of sovereignty over the environment.

Possible applications of Heckhausen and Schultz's (1995) theory to the subject matter of this study include (1) the use of services in an attempt to gain primary control, (2) the use of secondary control mechanisms in maintaining the subjective life quality of ex-farmers and (3) the secondary control functions of spiritual beliefs and perceptions of social support. Future research in the field of quality of life may benefit from the potential that this theory holds for explaining life quality in terms of a single set of

coherent concepts, in contrast to the mixing and matching which has characterised the field to this point.

Notwithstanding these theoretical issues, the findings of this study bode well for the quality of rural life and the well being of farmers who are forced from the land. Contrary to past research, no consistent pattern of disadvantage was revealed among people from rural communities, relative to those in metropolitan areas. Thus, it would appear that the hardships being experienced in rural Victoria are, at present, being matched by the resilience of those who choose to make the country their home.

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Appendix A

Demographic items from the Rul-Q Rural form

(1) Please indicate your Gender ...

Male

Female

(2) Please indicate your age in years _____

(3) Are you ...

Currently a farm owner → go to question 4(a)

Currently not a farm owner → go to question 5(a)

CURRENT FARMERS

4(a) What type of farming are you involved in ?

Grain

Wool

Livestock

Dairy

Mixed

Other (specify) _____ → finished here, please continue over page

EX-FARMERS

5(a) If you are currently not in farming ...

How long ago, in years, did you leave farming ? _____

5(b) Would you say that your leaving the farm was ...

Not at all Pressured

Somewhat Pressured

Very Pressured

5(c) What type of farming were/are you involved in ?

Grain

Wool

Livestock

Dairy

Mixed

Other (specify) _____

5(d) Have you moved away from the farm ? YES → go to 5(e) NO → finished here, please continue over page

5(e) Would you describe the area that you moved into as a ...

Another Farm

Country Town (e.g. Daylesford, Swan Hill)

Provincial City (e.g. Shepparton, Bendigo, Mildura)

Metropolitan (e.g. Melbourne)

Suburban (e.g. Ringwood, Melton)

finished here, please continue over page

Appendix B

Demographic items from the Rul-Q Metropolitan form

(1) Please indicate your Gender ...

Male

Female

(2) Please indicate your age in years _____

(3a) Have you ever in your life lived outside of the city or suburbs (for example, in a provincial city such as Bendigo, a country town such as Daylesford or on a farm ?)

YES → go to (3b) NO → finished here, please continue over page

(3b) If YES, how would you describe the area? (if more than one, indicate the area in which you spent the longest time)

A Farm

→ go to (4a)

Country Town (e.g. Daylesford, Swan Hill)

→ finished here, please continue over page

Provincial City (e.g. Shepparton, Bendigo, Mildura) → finished here, please continue over page

(4a) How long ago, in years, did you leave the farm ? _____

(4b) Would you say that your leaving the farm was ...

Not at all Pressured

Somewhat Pressured

Very Pressured

(4c) What type of farming were/are you involved in ?

Grain

Wool

Livestock

Dairy

Mixed

Other (specify) _____

finished here, please continue over page

Appendix C

Items comprising the objective ComQol dimension

1 a) What is your personal or household (whichever is most relevant to you) gross annual income before tax ?

- | | | | |
|---------------------|--------------------------|---------------------|--------------------------|
| Less than \$10,999 | <input type="checkbox"/> | \$41,000 - \$55,999 | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| \$11,000 - \$25,999 | <input type="checkbox"/> | More than \$56,000 | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| \$26,000 - \$40,999 | <input type="checkbox"/> | | |

b) Where do you live ?

- | | |
|---|--|
| A house, flat or apartment of : | Which best describes who you live with : |
| -High Quality <input type="checkbox"/> | - Alone, family, close friend <input type="checkbox"/> |
| - Medium Quality <input type="checkbox"/> | - 1 or 2 acquaintance(s) <input type="checkbox"/> |
| - Low Quality <input type="checkbox"/> | - 3 or more acquaintances <input type="checkbox"/> |
| - or Hostel <input type="checkbox"/> | |

c) How many personal possessions do you have compared with other people ?

- | | | | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| More than almost anyone | More than most people | About average | Less than most people | Less than almost anyone |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

2 a) How many times have you been to the doctor over the past three months ?

Number of times _____

b) Do you have any disabilities or medical conditions ? (e.g. visual, hearing, health, etc.)

Yes No

If "Yes" please specify:

**Name of disability
or Medical Condition**

e.g. Visual, Diabetes

**Extent of disability
or Medical Condition**

Require glasses for reading
or require daily injections

c) **What regular medication do you take each day ?**

If none tick box

OR

Names of medication

3 a) How many hours paid work, formal education or unpaid child care do you do each week ?
(average over past three months)

Hours paid work _____ Hours formal education _____

Hours unpaid child care _____

b) In your spare time, how often do you have nothing much to do ?

Almost
always

Usually

Sometimes

Not usually

Almost
never

c) Over the past week, list the most productive things you have done. These can include anything you have made, collected, performed, created, mended or any voluntary work.

None (tick)

OR

Description

Over how many days in the week did this
happen ?

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

4 a) How often do you talk with a close friend ?

Daily	Several times a week	Once a week	Once a month	Less than once a month
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

b) If you are feeling sad or depressed, how often does someone show that they care for you ?

Almost always	Usually	Sometimes	Not usually	Almost never
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

c) If you want to do something, how often does someone else want to do it with you ?

Almost always	Usually	Sometimes	Not usually	Almost never
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

5 a) How often do you sleep well ?

Almost always	Usually	Sometimes	Not usually	Almost never
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

b) Is your home a safe place to be ?

Almost always	Usually	Sometimes	Not usually	Almost never
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

c) How often do you feel worried or anxious during the day ?

Almost always	Usually	Sometimes	Not usually	Almost never
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

6 a) Below is a list of activities. Indicate how often in an average month you do each one.

Activity

Number of times per month

(1) Clubs/Groups/Societies
(please provide the name as
well as the number of times
you attend each month)

(2) Hotel/Bar _____

(3) Watch live sporting events
(not on T.V.) _____

(4) Church _____

(5) Chatting with neighbours _____

(6) Restaurant _____

(7) Movies _____

(8) Other (describe) _____

b) Do you hold a position of responsibility in relation to any club, group or society ?

Yes No

If yes, please describe ...

c) How often do people outside your home ask for help or advice ?

Almost every day Quite often Sometimes Not often Almost never

7 a) How often can you do the things you really want to do ?

Almost always Usually Sometimes Not usually Almost never

b) When you wake up in the morning, how often do you wish you could stay in bed all day ?

Almost always

Usually

Sometimes

Not usually

Almost never

c) How often do you have wishes that cannot come true ?

Almost always

Usually

Sometimes

Not usually

Almost never

Appendix D

Items comprising the importance component of the subjective ComQol dimension

How important are each of the following life areas to you ?

Please answer by placing a (X) in the appropriate box for each question.

There are no right or wrong answers. Please choose the box that best describes how **important each area is to you**. Do not spend too much time on each question.

1. **How important to you are the THINGS YOU OWN ?**

Could not be more important	Very important	Somewhat important	Slightly important	Not Important at all
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

2. **How important to you is YOUR HEALTH ?**

Could not be more important	Very important	Somewhat important	Slightly important	Not Important at all
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

3. **How important to you is WHAT YOU ACHIEVE IN LIFE ?**

Could not be more important	Very important	Somewhat important	Slightly important	Not Important at all
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

4. **How important to you are CLOSE RELATIONSHIPS WITH YOUR FAMILY OR FRIENDS ?**

Could not be more important	Very important	Somewhat important	Slightly important	Not Important at all
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

5. **How important to you is HOW SAFE YOU FEEL ?**

Could not be more important	Very important	Somewhat important	Slightly important	Not Important at all
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

6. **How important to you is DOING THINGS WITH PEOPLE OUTSIDE YOUR HOME ?**

Could not be more important	Very important	Somewhat important	Slightly important	Not Important at all
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

7. **How important to you is YOUR OWN HAPPINESS ?**

Could not be more important	Very important	Somewhat important	Slightly important	Not Important at all
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Appendix E

Items comprising the importance component of the subjective ComQol dimension

How SATISFIED are you with each of the following life areas ?

There are no right or wrong answers. Please choose the box that best describes how satisfied you are with each area.

1. **How satisfied are you with THE THINGS YOU OWN ?**

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Delighted	Pleased	Mostly Satisfied	Mixed	Mostly Dissatisfied	Unhappy	Terrible

2. **How satisfied are you with YOUR HEALTH ?**

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Delighted	Pleased	Mostly Satisfied	Mixed	Mostly Dissatisfied	Unhappy	Terrible

3. **How satisfied are you with WHAT YOU ACHIEVE IN LIFE ?**

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Delighted	Pleased	Mostly Satisfied	Mixed	Mostly Dissatisfied	Unhappy	Terrible

4. **How satisfied are you with your CLOSE RELATIONSHIPS WITH FAMILY OR FRIENDS ?**

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Delighted	Pleased	Mostly Satisfied	Mixed	Mostly Dissatisfied	Unhappy	Terrible

5. **How satisfied are you with HOW SAFE YOU FEEL ?**

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Delighted	Pleased	Mostly Satisfied	Mixed	Mostly Dissatisfied	Unhappy	Terrible

6. **How satisfied are you with DOING THINGS WITH PEOPLE OUTSIDE YOUR HOME ?**

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Delighted	Pleased	Mostly Satisfied	Mixed	Mostly Dissatisfied	Unhappy	Terrible

7. **How satisfied are you with YOUR OWN HAPPINESS ?**

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Delighted	Pleased	Mostly Satisfied	Mixed	Mostly Dissatisfied	Unhappy	Terrible

Appendix F

Spiritual well-being scale

For each of the following statements place a number in the space provided (from 1 to 7 as shown below) according to the extent of your agreement or disagreement.

Where:

Strongly Agree=7
Moderately Agree=6

Agree=5
Undecided=4
Disagree=3

Moderately Disagree=2
Strongly Disagree=1

- I don't know who I am, where I came from, or where I'm going
- I feel that life is a positive experience
- I feel unsettled about my future
- I feel very fulfilled and satisfied with life
- I feel a sense of well-being about the direction my life is headed in
- I don't enjoy much about life
- I feel good about my future
- I feel that life is full of conflict and unhappiness
- Life doesn't have much meaning
- I believe there is some real purpose in my life

Do you hold religious beliefs concerning God ?

If YES → please continue below

If NO → finished here, please continue over page

- I don't find much satisfaction in private prayer with God
- I believe that God loves me and cares about me
- I believe that God is impersonal & not interested in my daily situations
- I have a personally meaningful relationship with God
- I don't get much personal strength and support from my God
- I believe that God is concerned about my problems
- I don't have a personally satisfying relationship with God
- My relationship with God helps me to not feel lonely
- I feel most fulfilled when I'm in communication with God
- My relationship with God contributes to my sense of well-being

Appendix G

Perceived social support scale

Please circle the appropriate response for each item below, in regard to your experience.

How easy would it be for you to approach somebody to ...

(a) Ask advice about the weather (1)------(2)------(3)------(4)------(5)------(6)------(7)
very moderately hard unsure easy moderately very
hard hard easy easy

(b) Ask advice when buying a car (1)------(2)------(3)------(4)------(5)------(6)------(7)
very moderately hard unsure easy moderately very
hard hard easy easy

(c) Ask for assistance following (1)------(2)------(3)------(4)------(5)------(6)------(7)
very moderately hard unsure easy moderately very
hard hard easy easy

Now think of the person who has provided the most support to you over the last month...

To what extent were they a source of helpful guidance to you over the last month ?

(1)------(2)------(3)------(4)------(5)
not a little unsure somewhat extremely
at all

How reliable is this person ?

(1)------(2)------(3)------(4)------(5)
not a little unsure somewhat extremely
at all

How much does this person boost your spirits when you feel low ?

(1)------(2)------(3)------(4)------(5)
not a little unsure somewhat extremely
at all

How much does this person make you feel he/she cares about you ?

(1)------(2)------(3)------(4)------(5)
not a little unsure somewhat extremely
at all

How much do you feel you can confide in this person ?

(1)------(2)------(3)------(4)------(5)
not a little unsure somewhat extremely
at all

Appendix H

Schedule assessing utilisation of, and satisfaction with rural services

The services which are available in the rural community can be comprehensively grouped under several categories. For each of the following categories of services, please indicate (a) whether you have used a service in that category, (b) how satisfied you were with that service and (c) which service/s they were.

- If you have made use of more than one service in a group, just mark your overall satisfaction with that group of services.
- If a service is not listed as an example, just use your best judgment as to which group it belongs in.
- Rural Counsellors are listed as examples in several categories. This is because they may serve a variety of functions, you may list rural counsellors wherever is appropriate for you.

MATERIAL/FINANCIAL RELATED SERVICES

This group includes any agency or individual which provides a financial service such as loans, grants and in kind contributions.

Examples are: The Rural Adjustment Scheme, The Rural Finance Corporation, The Department of Social Security, Banks, Finance agencies.

(a) Have you made use of a service or agency in this category? YES NO

(b) If YES, how satisfied are you with the performance of that service or agency?

(1)------(2)------(3)------(4)------(5)------(6)------(7)
 Delighted Pleased Mostly Satisfied Mixed (About equally Satisfied and Dissatisfied) Mostly Dissatisfied Unhappy Terrible

(c) If Yes, Who provided these services to you?

HEALTH RELATED SERVICES

This group includes any agency or individual which provides health care services.

Examples are: Hospitals, General Practitioners, Immunisation Programs.

(a) Have you made use of a service or agency in this category? YES NO

(b) If YES, how satisfied are you with the performance of that service or agency?

(1)------(2)------(3)------(4)------(5)------(6)------(7)
 Delighted Pleased Mostly Satisfied Mixed (About equally Satisfied and Dissatisfied) Mostly Dissatisfied Unhappy Terrible

(c) If YES, Who provided these services to you?

PRODUCTIVITY RELATED SERVICES

This group includes any agency or individual which provides services relating to your business' productivity or your personal productivity.

Examples are: Industry Marketing Bodies, Rural Research and Development Programs, Crop/Livestock Disease Prevention Programs, Vermin Eradication.

(a) Have you made use of a service or agency in this category? YES NO

(b) If YES, how satisfied are you with the performance of that service or agency?

(1)------(2)------(3)------(4)------(5)------(6)------(7)
Delighted Pleased Mostly Satisfied Mixed (About equally Satisfied and Dissatisfied) Mostly Dissatisfied Unhappy Terrible

(c) If YES, Who provided these services to you?

INTIMACY or EMOTIONAL RELATED SERVICES

This group includes any agency or individual which provides services relating to interpersonal relationships, family or individual counselling.

Examples are: Social Workers, Rural Counsellors, Psychologists, Marriage Guidance Counsellors.

(a) Have you made use of a service or agency in this category? YES NO

(b) If YES, how satisfied are you with the performance of that service or agency?

(1)------(2)------(3)------(4)------(5)------(6)------(7)
Delighted Pleased Mostly Satisfied Mixed (About equally Satisfied and Dissatisfied) Mostly Dissatisfied Unhappy Terrible

(c) If YES, Who provided these services to you?

SAFETY RELATED SERVICES

This group includes any agency or individual which provides services intended to bring about increased personal control, knowledge of rights, competence or stability in life.

Examples include: Rural Counsellors, Legal Advisors, Farming Skills Training, Bookkeeping Skills Training.

(a) Have you made use of a service or agency in this category? YES NO

(b) If YES, how satisfied are you with the performance of that service or agency?

(1)------(2)------(3)------(4)------(5)------(6)------(7)
Delighted Pleased Mostly Satisfied Mixed (About equally Satisfied and Dissatisfied) Mostly Dissatisfied Unhappy Terrible

(c) If YES, Who provided these services to you?

COMMUNITY RELATED SERVICES

This group includes any agency or individual which provides services related to participation in community education, events, activities, community welfare and the like.

Examples include: The Red Cross, Apex, Rotary, C.W.A., Y.M.C.A.

(a) Have you made use of a service or agency in this category? YES NO

(b) If YES, how satisfied are you with the performance of that service or agency?

(1)------(2)------(3)------(4)------(5)------(6)------(7)
Delighted Pleased Mostly Satisfied Mixed (About equally Satisfied and Dissatisfied) Mostly Dissatisfied Unhappy Terrible

(c) If YES, Who provided these services to you?

Appendix I

Letter of approval from Deakin University Ethics Committee

Faculty of Health and Behavioural Sciences

Geelong Campus



Tel: (61) (052) 272884 Fax:(61) (052) 272499 e-mail: barnesj@deakin.edu.au

To: Dr Robert Cummins
School of Psychology (B)

Date: June 4, 1996

From: Jennifer Barnes
Secretary, Ethics Sub-committee

Project: EC-H 68/96 "The Quality of Rural Life: Leaving the Farm, Service Satisfaction and the Social Support Function of Spiritual Well-Being."

The above mentioned application, submitted by **Christopher Best**, for which you are the supervisor, has now been **recommended for approval**. The application is proceeding to the Deakin University Ethics Committee for ratification and, in the absence of any further advice, may commence.

As supervisor you are responsible for secure storage and retention of all data pertaining to this project for the minimum of **two** years after completion. You are requested to comply with this requirement.

Good luck with the project !

Jennifer Barnes

Jennifer Barnes

EC-H 68/96 BEST Chris # 129