

Disclosures

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Exploring Drug & Alcohol Treatment Access for Older Adults in Rural NSW

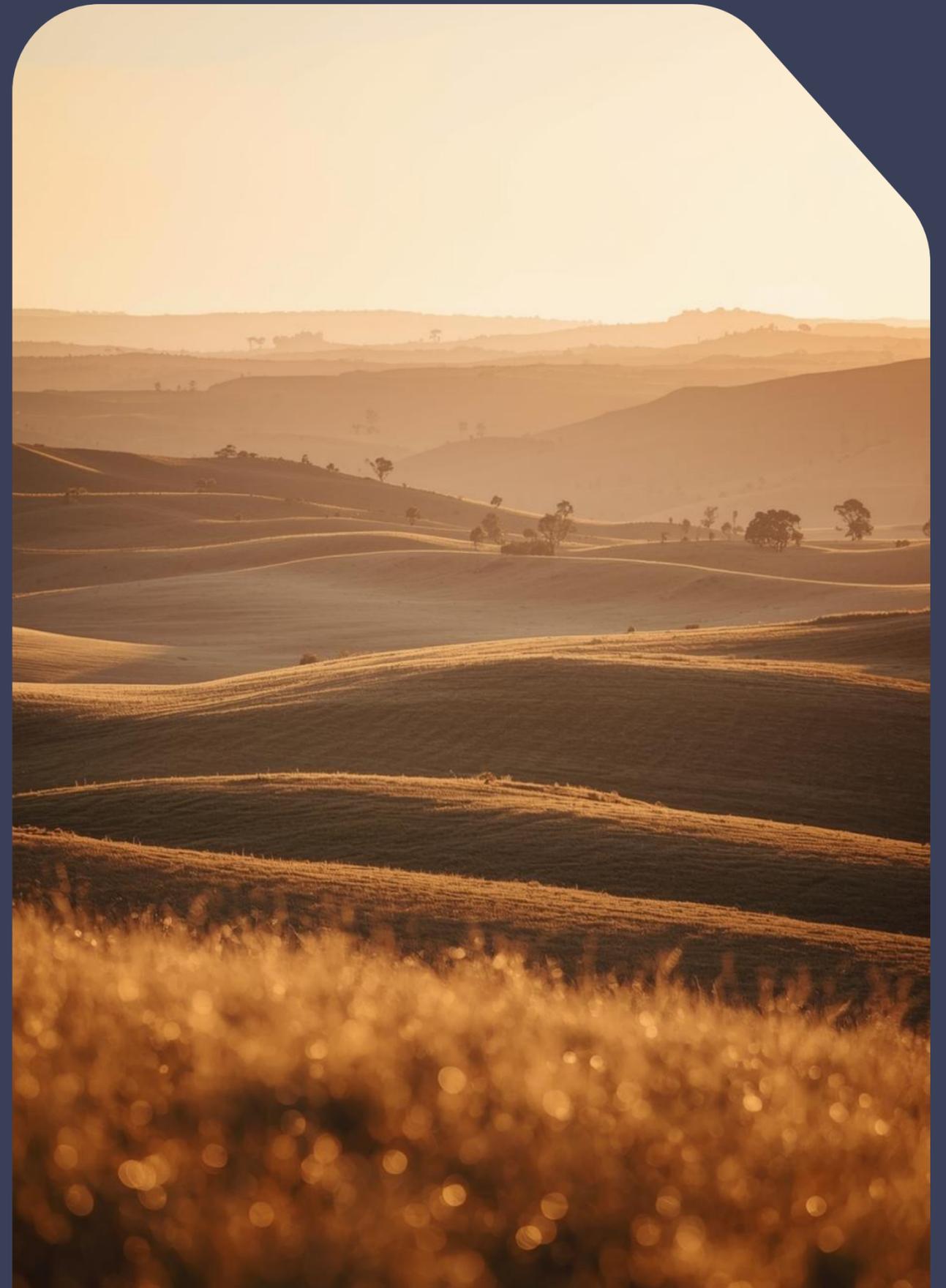
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Background & Aims

Understanding the Factors Influencing Treatment Access

AOD in Older Adult Population

- Increased hospitalisations, greater risk of falls, decreased medication efficacy, increased complexity of psychosocial needs (1,2,3)
- Likely to be underdiagnosed and undertreated (4)
- Significant change across multiple life domains, which may impact on drug and alcohol use (5)
- Gaps in drug and alcohol service delivery for older adults (6)

Research Aims

The study aimed to identify the **key factors** influencing treatment access and develop insights that can inform strategies to improve service availability for older adults in these communities.

Design & Methods

Qualitative Research Approaches in Rural Context

Research Design

This study utilised a qualitative design, conducting focus groups to gather rich, in-depth insights from participants about their experiences and perceptions..

Study Demographics

Participants included drug and alcohol clinicians and clinicians who work predominantly with older adults.

Key Themes



Complexity

- Physical health prompting referral
- Biological age vs functional age
- Non-acknowledgement of experiences



Structural factors

- Remoteness and service availability
- Siloed services
- Role scope



Assumptions

- Inconsistent screening
- Clinician discomfort
- Assumptions about ageing and older adulthood

Conclusions & Implications

Improving Drug and Alcohol Treatment Access

“There's this kind of idea that older people – ‘oh they're probably sad and lonely, but that's just part of ageing’ - versus considering that old age can be a really healthy and joyful part of your life.”

Key Takeaways

- Dominant narratives around older adulthood influence AOD treatment and access
- Remoteness and separation of services may have a greater impact on older adults

Recommendations & Next Steps

- Education and training to encourage conversation around AOD use
- Health promotion relevant to older adults
- PhD research focusing on experiences of older adults in residential aged care, elevating older adult voices

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Thank you

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