

Foreword

Dr Skippington's book offers a fresh, highly accessible, and interdisciplinary perspective on the intractable problem of shrinking populations and resources in rural and remote Australia. His research not only challenges the conventional wisdom of community development theories and practices, but envisages more central roles for the creative disciplines in revitalisation and futures planning. It speaks to a broad church of relevant stakeholders — policymakers, artists, arts workers, community and business leaders as well as academics — as part of the author's conceptual recognition of what one commentator described as 'the underpinning and essential essence and pervasive value of creative inputs in the milieu of factors and influence that can determine community survival and growth'.

This book is refreshing in that it does more than tilt at the problem; it is all too easy to dismantle what is there, to breathe the air of negativity over work that precedes one's own. He recognises the inherent problems in the application of urban-derived solutions to rural and remote contexts. His approach is both positive and proactive. He proposes a new model of community development — the Creative Communities Development Pyramid (CCDP) — which does not rely for its efficacy on the external wisdom of *experts*. It is a self-help tool designed to assist communities to identify and consolidate their idiosyncratic existing strengths — and then to use these as the basis for developing a planning platform for the adoption of integrative community-wide practices to set and achieve a sustainable outcomes stream for rural and remote communities. In demonstrating the use of the model across a range of scenarios, he demonstrates it to be a highly original framework with significant potential for broad national and international application.

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