

Narratives from women in drought

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Jane Rich is a geographer with interests in how the environments around us affect our health and wellbeing. Jane has worked with the Australian Longitudinal Study on Women's Health for the past two years and is now undertaking her PhD exploring women and their experiences with drought. Jane believes in the value of qualitative research to promote harmony between policies and on the ground action.

This research examines the mental and emotional wellbeing of women living with drought in the context of ageing. The study explores longitudinal qualitative data collected by the ALSWH. Free text comments, collected at five time points (1996, 1998, 2001, 2004, 2007) were subjected to a narrative analysis. Findings indicate that drought is a heavy burden for women and is at the forefront of their lives. The drought burden has influence over a woman's identity, which was challenged by the experience of drought. However, the pressure of drought was also found to draw out strength and resilience. Parts of Australia have been in drought for over a decade. The results demonstrated that the experience of drought cannot be disentangled from the realities of ageing. Findings will contribute to the improvement and development of policy and practice for those affected by drought.