



TITLE: Is Neoliberalism killing family farms and farming communities in Australia?

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The number of family farms in Australia has been in decline since the 1970s. However, the introduction of neoliberalist policies in the 1990s seems to have greatly hastened the withdrawal families from former farming communities such that not only have the numbers of families involved in farming been greatly reduced, but rural populations in nearby towns have also declined. What were once thriving rural farming communities, albeit supported by earlier protective government policies, are now struggling to find enough people to fill the roles of social support and community functions necessary for rural communities to remain attractive and viable. My current qualitative research into farming families and how family members negotiate intergenerational family farm transfer indicates that there is more at stake in farming communities than merely negotiating a successful transfer of a family's farming property. The neoliberalist drive for efficiency, increased productivity and market determination of the returns for individual farming enterprises appears to be driving people from rural farming regions. It is timely to assess the direct and indirect social effects of neoliberalism on the farming sector and how this also affects urban Australia.