Explaining and predicting rural turnover intentions and behaviours in Charleville, Australia

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EXPLAINING AND PREDICTING RURAL TURNOVER INTENTIONS AND BEHAVIOURS IN CHARLEVILLE, AUSTRALIA

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Doctor of Philosophy

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DECLARATION

I hereby certify that the work embodied in this thesis is the result of original research and has not been submitted for a degree to any other University or Institution

___________________________________
ABSTRACT

Attracting and retaining employees has emerged as one of the most important issues currently challenging organizations worldwide, and in the rural setting it has become a genuine concern for public and private sectors. Longstanding research into turnover has historically been rather piecemeal, for example attrition and retention research has focused on employment conditions such as pay or supervision (Richards et al. 1994; Dinham & Scott 1996; Dodd-McCue and Wright 1996; Rahim 1996; Scott et al. 1998; Cheney et al. 2004; Robinson & Pillemer 2007; Gow et al 2008; Newton 2008) or personal factors such as personality (Deary, Watson & Hogston 2003; Bakker 2006). This research study adopted a multi-focus or ecological perspective and provided a holistic understanding of employee turnover, something that has been lacking from much of the previous literature.

This thesis evaluated turnover intentions and behaviours, through investigating personal, work and community variables with a group of rural public service employees in Charleville, South West Queensland, Australia. The purpose of this study was to examine the factors that influenced a rural government workers decision to stay in or leave their job, and could these predict turnover. It has implications for organizations and workforce management in rural settings but some parts may be applied to the urban context.

Eighty-nine workers from 12 state government departments were studied in 2003 and 2004. Eight variables were researched including professional, personal and community factors, job satisfaction, stress, social support, organizational commitment, intent to remain and actual turnover behaviour. The research methods used were surveys, interviews and observations. A descriptive picture of the sample was formed using some of the data in the survey. The rest of the survey data was analysed using regression analysis. This information was then used as the basis for the interviews. This data along with the observation data were analysed qualitatively.

The two main hypotheses for this study were, 1) personal, professional and community variables influence employee turnover, and 2) that it was possible to predict turnover from these three variables. Consequently, the primary research questions were ‘can we explain employee turnover intentions and behaviours by evaluating personal, professional and community variables?’ and ‘Can these factors be used to predict turnover?’

The results of this study support both hypotheses. It was found that personal, professional and community factors did influence rural government worker turnover; and that turnover can be predicted. Furthermore, that intent can be used as a predictor of turnover. It argues that employee turnover is a complex process involving personal, professional, community, stress, job satisfaction, social support, commitment and intent variables. This study identifies the factors that influence actual and intended rural government employee turnover and gives organizations a platform for operationalizing effective retention programs.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Firstly I would like to express my appreciation to the Charleville people who kindly participated in this study. Without the generosity of their time, effort and most personal thoughts this project simply would not have been possible.

At Southern Cross University, Lismore, I would like to thank my supervisor, Dr Don McMurray, who provided wise advice and patient guidance. I am also grateful to the staff at the Southern Cross University library whose high quality and timely service made this project workable in a rural and remote location. I am also greatly appreciative of the Southern Cross University Graduate Research College for the scholarship.

In Charleville I would also like to thank the staff at the Murweh Shire library who were professional, generous, helpful and efficient and colleagues and friends who proof read, shared textbooks, and held academic conversation with me.

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<td>Australian Bureau of Statistics</td>
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<td>Bankers Trust</td>
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<td>Brisbane Teachers Education and James Cook University</td>
<td>BTEJCU</td>
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<td>Country Areas Program</td>
<td>CAP</td>
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<td>DoH</td>
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<td>DPI</td>
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<td>High Trade Congruence</td>
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<td>NSW</td>
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<td>Queensland Department of Families</td>
<td>QDOF</td>
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<td>Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation</td>
<td>RIRDC</td>
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<tr>
<td>Services for Australian Rural and Remote Allied Health</td>
<td>SARRAH</td>
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<td>United States of America</td>
<td>US</td>
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Implications of a Skills Shortage for Rural Australia

It is well recognized that not only in Australia, but worldwide, there is a skills shortage emerging which is negatively impacting on organizational performance. With record levels of economic growth, one of the lowest unemployment rates, four per cent, in thirty years, and further increases in labour force participation anticipated in the future, the skills shortage in Queensland is expected to intensify over the next decade. This is due primarily to the State’s unprecedented growth and development, an ageing population and low birth rates. In rural areas on Queensland the extent of this shortage is exacerbated due to a population which is not only ageing but declining.

Consequently, attracting and retaining employees has emerged as one of the most important and crucial challenges facing organizations today. The failure to manage workforce attrition is costly and organizations have become more proactive in introducing strategies aimed at retaining employees. Research has shown that organizations who take measures to retain workers can achieve workforce stability. This has become a priority in rural areas since it has been shown that worker attrition often leads to declining service provision and ultimately a declining population.

Declining rural populations have also been linked to increased costs, and reduced opportunities for the population creating a higher economic and the social burden of increased isolation (Lonne & Cheers 2000; Hall & Scheltens 2005).

Whilst the main source of growth in Australia’s employment has been in the services sector, this is not the case in rural areas. Employment opportunities in rural areas have been slowly declining for several decades and
consequently populations drop and services decline (Sacco 1994; Alston & Kent 2004; Lonne & Cheers 2004; Crofts & Begg 2005; Hall, Garnett, Barnes & Stevens 2007). For Australia to maintain an equitable society, this situation requires urgent attention. One starting point for this could be to develop an understanding of employee turnover intentions and behaviours and introduce strategies to create a stable workforce in rural areas.

One theme common throughout the workforce management literature is that attrition in rural areas is of great concern, can decrease rural service provision (Sher & Sher 1994; Lunn 1997; Alston & Kent 2004; Hall, Garnett, Barnes & Stevens 2007) and should be addressed as a matter of urgency. When a population starts to decline, facilities and services decline further, creating a vicious circle (Garnett & Lewis 1999; Cheney Willets and Wilson 2004). Declining opportunities for employment have been found to affect the economic vitality of regions and widen the quality of life gap between different segments of the population (Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation (RIRDC) 2000) ultimately influencing income differentials. We can therefore conclude that the withdrawal of services has been shown to be a major factor in the growth of rural poverty.

Several strategies from selection, preparation, training, and support have been suggested and implemented in rural workforces, yet the issue remains (. Moreover, much of the research into rural employee turnover has traditionally studied one group, for example, teachers or social workers (Martinez 1988; Yee 1990; Lunn 1997; McSwan 1997; McDonald 1999; Lonne & Cheers 2000; Lonne & Cheers 2004; Green & Lonne 2005; Sercombe 2006) limiting its applicability to rural workforces in general.

1.2 Reasons for Attrition
Understanding the reasons for attrition is becoming a popular human resources strategy as it guides workforce management planning. Generally speaking, the variables found to influence employee turnover intentions and behaviours can be classified into two groups:
• professional variables such as the organization, job, rewards, development opportunities, professional and personal support, colleagues, and supervisors (Yee 1990; Lunn 1997; McDonald 1999; Vandenberg & Nelson 1999; Hall et al. 2007)


However, turnover is a complex issue, and the effect of these variables on decision making is a lesser known factor.

For example, low levels of job satisfaction and organizational commitment have been strongly linked to attrition (Brayfield & Crockett 1955; Vroom 1964a; Taylor & Weiss 1969; Porter & Steers 1973; Bedner 2003; Cheney et al. 2004; Chiu, Chien, Chieh-Peng & Chin 2008). Porter and Steers (1973) were some of the pre-eminent researchers on this topic, ascertaining very strong links between job satisfaction and workers’ decisions to stay or leave an organization. Of the fifteen studies reviewed by Porter and Steers (1973), all except one found that low turnover was related to high job satisfaction and vice-versa. Similar results were found in earlier research by Brayfield and Crockett (1955) and Vroom (1964a), even though it must be noted that these studies were often methodologically less rigorous and used weaker job satisfaction measures than later studies.
The literature clearly suggests that personal factors influence the way a person deals with professional factors. Both types of factors then influence the level of stress, job satisfaction and organizational commitment a person experiences. However, stress also influences job satisfaction and organizational commitment independently. The level of job satisfaction and organizational commitment influences the intention to quit, which is generally considered a strong predictor of actual attrition. The following chapter explores these variables further, beginning with personal, professional and community variables, followed by stress, job satisfaction and organizational commitment as moderators of turnover intentions and behaviour.

The rural employee turnover situation clearly requires urgent intervention, and developing a stable rural workforce is one way to improve the issues associated with attrition in rural areas. By developing a holistic understanding of turnover intentions and behaviours, organizations may be able to put into operation some real and genuinely successful strategies for retention, and this study goes some way to providing this understanding.

1.3 This research
The purpose of this study was to analyse an array of variables including professional, personal and community factors, job satisfaction, stress, social support, organizational commitment, intent to leave and actual turnover behaviour in order to explain and possibly predict attrition. Eighty-nine subjects from twelve state government departments in Charleville, South West Queensland, Australia, were studied. All three streams of Queensland Government employees, that is, professional, administrative and technical staff were studied. The small sample and the focus on one rural community limit the study’s strengths, however, a high level of rigour and the high (40%) level of response from the targeted population assisted in overcoming this.

The null hypothesis for this study was that none of the eight variables influenced rural government worker turnover. The alternative hypotheses are that some or all will influence rural government worker turnover. The two primary research questions were: ‘Can we explain employee turnover intent
and behaviours through analysing personal, professional, community, stress, social support, job satisfaction and organizational commitment?’ and ‘Can we use these variables to predict turnover?’ It was primarily a quantitative project with a qualitative research component added to strengthen the validity and add depth to the research findings. The aim of this research was to develop a better understanding of rural government worker turnover in Charleville, with broader applications to rural human resources management.

The next chapter reviews the literature. Chapter Three discusses the research methods, Chapter Four presents the research findings, and the discussion and recommendations of the project are provided in Chapter Five.
CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

This literature review critiques employee turnover literature in an attempt to identify the critical variables which are related to employee attrition and retention. The first section (2.1) discusses the theoretical background of work and decision making, the second (2.2) introduces the literature regarding rural employee turnover, whilst the third section (2.3) defines the factors influencing both turnover intentions and behaviours. The fourth section (2.4) discusses the limitations to the existing research findings and the fifth section (2.5) presents the hypotheses and research questions.

2.1 Theoretical Background
Attrition and retention are complex concept issues, and employees’ reasons for staying and leaving a workplace are varied. Not surprisingly, the decision to resign or persist at work is complex and one that is not made lightly by any worker. This multi-foci notion is not commonly recognized but is supported by Dinham (1992), Boxall, Macky and Rasmussen (2003) and Cheney et al (2004), who found that a rural employee’s decision to leave or stay is due to the combined influence of several variables. The worker’s perceptions and attitudes of themselves, their values, their job, their organization and their place in society influence such decisions. Employees are also influenced by expected and actual rewards, how comfortable they are in that organization and their relationships with their colleagues. Consequently I argue that theories of work (2.1.1) and decision making (2.1.2) can shed light on the underlying reasons for staff turnover.

2.1.1 Definitions of Work
There is little agreement in the literature regarding the definition of work, and even in the historical literature there is disparity among the various authors and philosophies on work. Definitions vary according to each individual’s perspective. For example, from an economic perspective one early definition
referred to work as ‘a means whereby the goods and services that society desires are produced’ (O’Toole 1973, p. 10). The environmental perspective of work states that ‘work is an instrumental activity carried out by human beings, the object of which is directed at a planful alteration of certain features of man’s environment’ (Neff 1968, p. 10).

From a social viewpoint work has been defined as ‘the experience of everyday life tells us that the work we do is of first importance – it takes half of our waking lives, steers us to particular social circles, generates daily troubles or triumphs, and defines our political interests and personal identities’ (Seeman 1974, p. 9). For the purposes of this study the latter perspective is adopted to explain the role of work in today’s society. Moreover, it fits the multi-focal environmental paradigm from which this study operates.

By defining work from a social perspective we see that it serves various functions for an individual. It allows an individual to acquire knowledge, skills and mastery over themselves and their environment. By either producing goods or providing services, workers are valued by others. The individual is able to compare the evaluation of themselves against others’ evaluation of them and thus gain a sense of personal worth. As Fromm (1971) states, since workers see themselves as both the seller and as a commodity to be sold on the market, their self-esteem depends on conditions beyond their control. If the worker is successful, they may consider themselves valuable; if they are not, then they can consider themselves worthless.

Clearly then, work may be defined not only in terms of its function in society but also in terms of its significance for the individual worker including its contribution to a worker’s sense of ‘place’ in society. Thus, this perspective of work has implications for workers, organizations, governments and communities, and has been adopted for use as the basis for studying ‘work’ in this research. To better understand staff turnover, I have reviewed and analysed the theories surrounding work and decision making in the following section. It includes early work theories of 1) trade (Becker 1960; Blau 1964; Vroom 1964; Herzberg 1968) and 2) congruence (Dawis & Lofquist 1984;
Holland 1997) with overarching theories of attitude, intentions and behaviours (Fishbein 1967; Bloom 1976; Bandura 1977, 1982; 1997). These are discussed further in the following section.

2.1.2 Work and Decision-making Theories

Some of the major theories surrounding work and decision making are intertwined and can be grouped (see figure 2.1). Many of these theories suggest that the worker is trying to reach a goal, such as earning a living, developing and maintaining good social networks or holding a prestigious job. Moreover, they suggest that reaching that goal is filtered through 1) what an employee is prepared to trade, and 2) whether they feel connected, or in congruence, with the workplace.

Figure 2.1 below, developed specifically for this thesis, group a selection of major theories and illustrates their connection to the worker, to the goal and to each other. The trade and congruence theories, such as Vroom’s Expectancy theory and Becker’s Side-bets theory, interact with a group of attitudinal and behavioural theories. This latter group is another important group of theories pertaining to an employee's decision-making process regarding their work. This group includes attitude theories, such as self-efficacy and persistence (Bandura 1977; Higgins, Bond, Klein & Strauman 1986; Higgins 1989a; Dinham 1992; Bandura 1997; Boylan 1997; McDonough 2007); and intention-behaviour theories (Fishbein 1967). Figure 2.1 illustrates the connections between the worker, the goal and the theories. These are discussed in more detail below.
The trades group theories are concerned with what the worker gives and what they get in return. We can view this group from an economic perspective. Trades theories include Becker’s Side-bets theories (1960), Vroom’s Expectancy theory (1964), Blau’s Exchange theory (1964) and Herzberg’s Two Factor theory (1967). These theories see the worker and organization trading with each other. The worker trades skills, knowledge and efforts; expecting, receiving and being satisfied with the rewards, which may include pay, professional development, promotional opportunities and job satisfaction.

Such interactions alter over time however. For example, it has been stated that the expectations from both parties regarding what they have to trade may increase over time, especially as organizational commitment increases (Blau 1986, 1989, 1999; Mitchell, Holtom, Lee & Sablynski 2001). Similarly, organizational commitment can decrease if the exchange of commitment given between the employee and the employer is perceived to be disproportionate (Becker 1960; McNeil 1980; Webster 1992; Gundlach, Achrol & Mentzer 1995; Takase, Maude & Manias 2008). It has also been found that ‘young people attach lessening importance to various job rewards’ (Johnson 2001a, p. 294). It could be said then that ‘trades’ have less or more value...
according to age and/or length of time spent in an organization. This group of theories is discussed further in Section 2.1.2.1.

The ‘congruence’ group of theories comes from a social perspective and relates to the sense of ‘fit’ experienced by the worker. This group includes Theory of Workplace Adjustment (Dawis & Lofquist 1984) and Vocational Personality Types theory (Holland 1997). These theories put forward the view that some people and places ‘fit’ together and others do not. In other words, if the worker’s values, experiences or expectations are congruent with his or her colleagues, supervisor, the workplace, the organization and the community then they could be said to ‘fit’. These theories are discussed further in Section 2.1.2.2.

Overarching the application of these two categories of theories are three other theories. They relate to a worker’s attitudes, intentions and ability to tolerate experiences and the environment. These attitudes ultimately motivate worker behaviour to leave or stay according to whether goals can be met. I have called this the ‘attitudes, intentions and behaviours’ group. Two of the three theories in this group come from an affective perspective and include Bandura’s (1977) Self-efficacy construct and Self-discrepancy theory. Self-efficacy has been found to be one of the major affective influences related to a person’s attitudes, intentions and performance (Bloom 1976; Bandura 1977; Lent, Brown & Larkin 1986; Moriarty, Douglas, Punch & Hattie 1995; Abraham 1999a; McDonough 2007). Similarly, self-discrepancy theory suggests that each individual has a threshold within which they can tolerate discrepancies between expectations and reality (Higgins 1989a; Abraham 1999b).

The third, Fishbein’s Intention-Behaviour theory (1967) comes from a social perspective. This theory asserts that a person’s behaviour is a function of the intention to perform that behaviour, which in turn is a function of a) attitude towards performing the behaviour and b) a subjective norm regarding the behaviour. The subjective norm is an individual’s perception of whether or not most people who are important to them think they should perform the behaviour (Fishbein 1967; Hom, Katerberg & Hulin 1979; Jawahar 2006).
From this perspective, we can understand that a person’s intentions and behaviour are guided by their attitude which is influenced by important relationships in their lives. This supports the argument that attitudes influence intention which in turn influences behaviour. This relationship is discussed further in section 2.1.2.3.

Here we see that even the underlying theories of turnover and decision making are complex. The issues they deal with include a worker’s attitudes, social support, rewards and ‘fit’ into an environment. Common elements of these theories include the acknowledgement that workers’ decisions are complex and are motivated by several variables including their changing needs and goals. Together these theories interplay with a worker’s perceptions, attitudes, intentions and behaviours in determining whether to stay or leave their job.

2.1.2.1 Trade Theories
This category refers to the products that a worker gives and receives in return, – that is, the worker trades their skills, knowledge and efforts, expecting, receiving and being satisfied (or dissatisfied) with the rewards (for example, pay, professional development, promotional opportunities and job satisfaction). These theories include Becker’s Side-bets theories (1960), Vroom’s Expectancy Theory (1964), Blau’s exchange theory (1964).

Becker’s Side-Bets theory
Following on from exchange theory is the ‘side bets’ theory, also known as investment theory (Becker 1960). Side-bets theory suggests that a person invests in the organization or occupation by staking something they value in it, for example, knowledge, skills, time, and effort. The longer a person stays with an organization, the more they invest in the organization. As these investments are made, the greater the commitment to organization and occupation, and subsequently the attractiveness of other organizations or occupations tends to decline (Alutto et al. 1973; Mitchell et al 2001). Thus age and length of time with organization are crucial to this theory. Moreover, it supports Duval and Carlson’s (1993) study which found that organizational
commitment could be measured by personal investments the amount of discretionary time and money spent doing the job.

**Vroom’s Expectancy Theory**

Expectancy theory is another major theory pertaining to work motivation. It simply states that an individual works harder in a situation if he/she perceives that greater effort is likely to lead them to the attainment of goals that are important to them. Furthermore, that an individual is attracted more towards a job or work role that they expect will lead to goal attainment (Vroom 1964; Takase et al 2008).

Expectancy is defined as a belief that a particular act is likely to be followed by a particular outcome. An individual's motivation to carry out a particular act is a function of their expectancy and the degree of attraction of aversion. Campbell, Dunnett, Lawler and Weick (1970) suggest that ‘there are two types of expectancy; the expectancy that successful performance is possible if effort is expended and the expectancy that successful performance will lead to an outcome’ (p. 103). Expectancy theory assumes that an individual calculates the sum of the valence and probability index of each of these outcomes before acting. It also assumes that individuals behave rationally and logically in decision-making situations.

Expectancy theory may explain the effect of pay and other extrinsic rewards on a worker's motivation to perform, and the importance of an individual's beliefs in the relationship between rewards and performance. This was supported by Han (1994) who found that pay was the major moderator of satisfaction and turnover; and Proenca and Shewchuk (1997) who found that younger workers desired learning opportunities whilst older workers desired flexibility in the workplace to remain in a job. Moreover, Ashforth and Saks’ (2000) longitudinal study of newcomers found that when a worker's expectations were unmet, a prompt sense of futility and withdrawal occurred.

However there may also be mismatched trades between the worker and the organization. For example, Dodd-McCue and Wright’s study (1996) found
that choosing a job for extrinsic rewards such as pay often reduced job satisfaction. Financial compensation, for example, has consistently been identified as a key factor influencing career decisions (Salmon 1988; Yee 1990; Han 1994; Wallace 1995; Lunn 1997; Gilmour, Stewardson, Sugars & Burke 2005; Kuzyk 2008), although more recently it has been found that pay is being overtaken by some other factors (AHRI-Chandler Macleod Workplace Barometre paper 2007) including quality supervision and professional development. Self-discrepancy theory builds on this notion and attempts to explain what occurs when there is discrepancy between the worker’s expected and actual outcomes from the employer. This is discussed further in section 2.1.2.3.

**Exchange Theory**

Exchange theory is a broad theory providing a framework for understanding interpersonal relationships and how they emerge, persist and terminate over time. It can underpin people’s actions which are ‘oriented to socially mediated goals’ (Blau 1964 p. 5) towards equity, and behaviours which are ‘motivated by an expected return or response from another’ (Heath 1976 p. 2). If expected responses do not occur, then a person’s behaviour is not reinforced and nor are bonds created and hence satisfaction and commitment are affected. This is supported by Wallace (1995) and Boxall et al (2003) who found that employees could commit to organizations when certain workplace conditions existed, for example, participative work culture, promotional opportunities, social support by co-workers, and autonomy.

Exchange processes, whereby individuals satisfy their needs and desires and use and develop their skills in the work environment, lead to the development of attachment and commitment to the organization (Steers 1977). Furthermore, as capital, such as professional knowledge, skills and relationships relevant to that occupation, organization and location, is accrued over time, it is argued that the worker is less likely to leave (MacDonald 1999; Mitchell et al 2001; Maertz & Griffith 2004). In section 2.1.2.2 below, the discussion of the theory of Side Bets supports this notion and explores it further.
2.1.2.2 Congruence Theories

Person-Environment Fit

Person–environment fit theory refers to individuals seeking out environments that are congruent with their values. Three assumptions underlie these theories of person-environment fit. Firstly, that individuals seek out environments that are congruent with their characteristics. Secondly, that the degree of fit is associated with important outcomes for both the person and environment, for example, satisfaction, achievement, performance, stability, retention and tenure. And thirdly, that the relationship is reciprocal in that the person shapes the environment and the environment shapes the person. Poor fit between person and environment has been found to lead to negative outcomes, such as stress, dissatisfaction, poor performance and job turnover (Fisher 1980; Chatman & Barsade 1995; Church & Waclawski 1998; Swanson & Fouad 1999; Bedner 2003; Buckley, Schneider & Shang 2005; Eggerth 2008). In a rural context, this theory can be applied to the community in which the worker resides.

There are two more recent theories that further develop this perspective. These are Dawis and Lofquist’s (1984) theory of work adjustment and Holland’s Model of vocational personality types (1997). They deal with levels of worker-organizational fit and are discussed below.

Dawis and Lofquist’s Theory of Work Adjustment

According to the theory of workplace adjustment (Dawis & Lofquist 1984), individuals ‘inherently seek to achieve and to maintain correspondence with their environment’ (p. 18) where correspondence is defined as the ‘harmonious relationship between the individual and the environment’ (Lofquist & Dawis 1991, p. 22). There are two elements to this theory. The first is an individual’s ability in relation to the knowledge and skills required to do the job, and this creates ‘satisfactoriness’. The second is the value an individual places on the rewards available on the job, which creates ‘satisfaction’. Both satisfaction and satisfactoriness are necessary components of correspondence.
Holland's Vocational Personality Types Theory
Similarly, this theory considers levels of personal-organizational fit. The theory emphasizes vocational choice. In Holland’s (1997) terms, workers 'search for environments that will let them exercise their skills and abilities, express their attitudes and values and take on agreeable problems and roles' (p. 4). Holland’s (1997) model is based on six categories of personality types and six environmental types, and measures the amount of congruence between workers and environments. Incongruence between the person and the environment is identified as a motivator stimulating human behavioural changes, including the likelihood a worker would leave the workplace, whilst congruency encourages stability of behaviour and staying in the workplace.

Encompassing these two categories of work theories are two other theories. These include - Bandura's (1977) self-efficacy theory and self-discrepancy theory. They underlie a worker’s attitudes, intentions and behaviours and are discussed further in the following section.

2.1.2.3 Theories of Attitude, Intention and Behaviour
Self-efficacy theory (Bandura 1977; 1997) and self-discrepancy theory underlie the application of the above theories, and relate to a worker’s ability to cope, tolerate and persist with experiences and the environment; and ultimately motivate worker behaviour to leave or stay.

Bandura’s Self-efficacy Construct
Not classified as a theory but as a part of social cognitive theory, self-efficacy is a construct based on cognitive and behavioural concepts of an individual’s perception of their skills and abilities. Bandura (1986) has defined self-efficacy as ‘people’s judgements of their capacities to organise and execute courses of action required to attain designated types of performances’ (p. 391). Self-efficacy theory reports that particular behaviours are initiated and continue because of people’s beliefs about their behavioural capabilities and their ability to cope with demands and challenges. Furthermore, self-efficacy influences the settings and behaviours workers choose, their coping
behaviours, the level of effort exerted, and how long they will cope with difficulties (Bandura 1977; 1997; McDonough 2007).

Research has consistently revealed that self-efficacy is one of the major affective influences related to performance (Bloom 1976; Bandura 1977, 1982, 1993; Lent et al. 1986; Moriarty et al. 1995; Bandura 1997; Abraham 1999b; McDonough 2007). It has been reported by some that job dissatisfaction is the immediate consequence of a conflict between received and actual outcomes. However, self-efficacy has been found to influence the reaction to such a discrepancy (Sterrett 1998; Abraham 1999b). Hence, higher organizational commitment and persistence are associated with higher self-efficacy (Bandura 1977; Parasuraman 1982; Bandura 1992, 1993; Abraham 1998; Regenold et al. 1999; McDonough 2007).

Moreover, Bandura (1986), states that changes in psychological and behavioural processes occur in part by changing a person’s thinking about their mastery. Therefore, self-efficacy plays an important role in psychological adjustment, and is able to moderate the effects of interventions implemented to reduce attitude and behaviour problems.

Personal traits associated with a strong sense of efficacy include approaching difficult tasks as challenges to be mastered, setting high goals and firmly committing to them, a focus on the task that leads to effective performance and quick recovery of their sense of efficacy after failures or setbacks, reduced stress levels and lower vulnerability to depression. Failure is ascribed by the highly efficacious as being due to insufficient effort, while for those with low self-efficacy; failure is seen as being due to low ability (Bandura 1977; Alden 1986; Meece et al. 1990; Bandura 1993; Moriaty et al. 1995; Bandura 1997; Skaalvik & Skaalvik 2004).

Other traits associated with people who have a low sense of efficacy include shying away from difficult tasks, which they perceive as personal threats; low aspirations and weak commitment to chosen goals; focussing on self rather than on how to perform successfully; slow recovery of sense of efficacy
following failure or setbacks; and a susceptibility to stress and depression (Bandura 1977, 1982, 1993; Alden 1986; Meece et al. 1990; Moriaty et al. 1995; Bandura 1997; Skaalvik & Skaalvik 2004; Meece, Glienke & Burg 2006).

**Self-discrepancy Theory**

Self-discrepancy theory suggests that an employee has a ‘threshold comparison level’ that corresponds to the match between expected and actual outcomes from the job and organization. For example, the worker may expect certain rewards for their work but these may not match with their actual rewards. Or a worker may feel ‘out of place’ in an organization. If the actual outcomes are not in accord with expectations, they will not meet the threshold comparison level.

Under this theory the worker will tolerate the discrepancy between what they want to get and what they are getting, but only to a certain point as decided by them, and influenced by the value they put on either trades and/or congruence. Hence, a mismatch between expected and actual outcomes may lead to job dissatisfaction, reduced organizational commitment and attrition but at the worker’s discretion (Reichers 1986; Mathieu & Hamel 1989; Abraham 1999a; Baker & Baker 1999; Boxall et al 2003; Takase et al 2008).

Together, these theories influence a worker’s attitudes, feelings and decision-making processes. They enlighten the turnover process in terms of understanding what motivates and agitates workers to leave or stay. The application of these theories is discussed further in the following section.

**2.1.3 Applying these theories**

From the above theories, we can see that turnover is complex. However, in considering these theories we gain a better understanding of the worker and their decision-making processes. The theories that deal with the influences on a worker’s attitudes can be sorted into two categories – ‘trade’ theories and ‘congruence’ theories. The trades group includes Becker’s (1960) Side-bets theories and Blau’s (1964) exchange theory, which primarily view the worker and organization as being in a trade agreement in which the worker trades
skills, knowledge and efforts, expecting and receiving rewards (for example, pay, professional development, promotional opportunities and job satisfaction).

The group of theories related to congruence refers to the worker’s feelings of ‘fit’ into the workplace. This group emanates from a Person-Environment Fit perspective and includes Vocational Personality Types and Theory of Workplace Adjustment theories. This congruence between worker and workplace/community could be due to values, experiences or expectations that match with how the worker feels they relate to their colleagues, supervisor, workplace, organization and community.

Represented in the following diagrams developed for this thesis are combinations of the congruence and trade categories. The first graph (figure 2.2) positions two different workers on the graph, the first line ‘LC’ represents a worker who does not value congruence but stays in the job because of the high rewards (trades); the second line ‘LT’ represents a worker who does not value rewards or trades but does value congruence.

Figure 2.2 This graph depicts examples of a low congruence-high trade worker and a low trade-high congruence worker.
The second graph (figure 2.3) depicts a worker where both congruence and trade are high (HTC), and a worker where congruence and trade are low (LTC).

These combinations are, however, overarched by the two aforementioned theories, self-efficacy and self-discrepancy, which affect how a worker perceives their trades and their fit into their environment. Hence, a worker’s perceptions of their trades and their fit into the environment are influenced by the views they hold of themselves, their intentions and behaviour (Fishbein 1967; Bandura 1977; Buckley et al. 2005; Eggerth 2008). Together, these theories provide an insight into the formation of attitudes, decision-making processes and human behaviours which affect worker turnover, and are therefore applicable to this study. However, there are limitations to applying these theories.

2.1.4 Limitations in the application of these theories
There are limitations in applying these theories to employee turnover. For example, it has been suggested that when people are making certain decisions regarding their occupation, they are seldom completely rational. They usually make decisions after conducting selective, and often random searches for information, rather than after obtaining all the facts that are
relevant and weighing up the positives and the negatives (Simon 1979; Iverson & Roy 1994; Boxall et al 2003; Gow et al 2008).

Moreover, stress (Rahim & Psenicka 1996; Monk 2003; Chiu et al 2005) job satisfaction (Smith-Mikes & Hulin 1968; Mobley 1977; Igbaria & Guimaraes 1993; Bedner 2003; Sourdif 2004; Newton 2008) and organizational commitment (Alutto et al. 1973; Porter, Steers, Mowday & Boulian 1974; Marsh & Mannari 1977; Mowday, Steers & Porter 1979; Reichers 1985, 1986; Fresko, Kfir & Nasser 1997; Mitchell et al 2001; ) have been identified as influencing turnover (Mobley et al. 1978; Mathieu & Hamel 1989; Williams & Hazer 1986; Maertz & Griffith 2004). Thus, the process of deciding to leave or stay with an organization or job is complicated and affected by a diverse range of internal and external factors, making it difficult to simply apply any theoretical framework.

In conclusion, such theories have influenced this project’s direction, hypotheses and research questions. They have proven to be important to the analyses of rural worker turnover, particularly through identifying the personal and professional factors which influence worker perceptions about their work, workplace, organization, community; and the effect these factors have on levels of stress, job satisfaction, organizational commitment and intentions to remain or leave, and ultimately on actual turnover. The following section will contextualize the rural employee turnover situation further by discussing the elements that the literature has identified as influential. The following section begins with a discussion of the general turnover literature and is followed by a section specific to the rural turnover literature.

2.2 Literature pertaining to employee turnover

Much of the research into employee turnover categorizes the variables into either the professional or personal group and research combining the two groups is rare (Lunn 1997; Montgomery 1999; Boxall et al 2003; Hall et al. 2007).
Professional variables which have been identified as influencing turnover include tenure, remuneration, working conditions, job role, and the organization (Yee 1990; Igbaria & Guimaraes 1993; Kim & Loadman 1994; Richards et al. 1994; Proenca & Shewchuk 1997; Ostroff & Rothausen 1997; Harrison & Hubbard 1998; Hall et al. 2007). The effect of these is compounded by the level of availability of employment opportunities (Behrend 1953; Armknecht & Early 1972; Waters et al. 1976; Rhodes & Doering 1993; Kim & Loadman 1994; Kim, Price, Mueller & Watson 1996; Chirumbolo & Hellgren 2003; Brandes 2008).

The personal variables include demographics such as age, marital status, education levels, rural experience (Igbaria & Guimaraes 1993; Harrison & Hubbard 1998; Hall et al. 2007); and personality characteristics (Church & Waclawski 1998; Abraham 1998; Parks & Waldo 1999; Swanson & Fouad 1999; Day & Jreige 2002; Deary, Watson & Hogston 2003); and living environment/community (Boylan et al. 1993; Lunn 1997; Boylan 1997; Montgomery 1999; Lonne 2001; Hall et al. 2007; Gentry et al 2008).

There is, however, some contention with regards to the effect of each of these categories on turnover. For example, it has been stated that professional elements are the primary motivator of worker turnover behaviours (Lunn 1997; Vandenberg & Nelson 1999; Zhao, Thurman & He 1999; Yoon & Thye 2002; Newton 2008), while on the other hand it has been found that enhanced retention was strongly related to personal and community factors, more than it was to professional factors (Lonne and Cheers 2000; McNearney, Hunnicutt, Maganti & Rice 2008). There is consistent evidence to show that organizational factors do not influence an employee’s commitment and/or intent to leave or stay as powerfully as do personal factors (Morris & Steers 1980; Bateman & Strasser 1984; Mathieu & Hamel 1989; Schwab 1991; Gow et al 2008) or job factors (Welsch & La Van 1981; Gilmour et al 2005). These are discussed further in section 2.6.

It has also been found that personal and professional variables indirectly influence turnover (Brayfield & Crockett 1955; Herzberg, Mausner, Peterson &

It must be noted that most of these studies are based on one employee group, for example, teachers, police, doctors, dentists or information technology workers (Wallace 1995; Boylan & McSwan 1998; Baker & Baker 1999; Parks & Waldo 1999; Zhao, Thurman & He 1999; Lonne & Cheers 2000; Hall et al. 2007). This limits the applicability of the research. That aside, the literature generally asserts that personal and professional factors are significant in directly and indirectly affecting turnover. The following section reviews the literature pertaining to rural turnover.

2.2.1 Rural Turnover Literature
The literature regarding rural employee turnover is both longstanding and diverse. Radford (1939) was one of the first to discuss rural teacher turnover in Australia, whilst rural worker turnover has been researched in Australia (Lunn 1997; Boylan & McSwan 1998, Lonne & Cheers 2000; Hall et al. 2007), the UK (Mercer & Evans 1991), the US (Cross & Billingsley 1994), Canada (Montgomery 1999), and Africa (Mazibuko 1999).

Research into this field has primarily attempted to identify and evaluate variables influencing employee turnover, and because rural turnover has the added spin-off of impacting on declines of service provision and population decline, the focus has been on attracting and retaining government workers
(Lonne 1990; Higgins 1993; McSwan 1997; Cheers 1998; Archer 1999; Lonne & Cheers 2000; HREOC 2000; SARRAH 2000; Department of Human Services Victoria 2002; Department of Families 2003; Department of Communities 2006).

There are several consistently identified variables that are found to influence rural government worker turnover, including age, experience, family, pay, professional development, supervision and colleagues (Boylan et al. 1993; Lunn 1997; McSwan 1997; Boylan & McSwan 1998; Lonne & Cheers 2000; Boxall et al 2003; Hall et al. 2007). I have divided these factors into three categories based on where they fit into a worker’s life. Consequently, these groups are personal, professional or community. These are discussed below, starting with section 2.3.1.1.

Some of the research also evaluates the demographical makeup of rural workforces. This is understandable when we consider that such data may predict future performance (Owens & Schoenfeldt 1979; Eberhardt & Muchinsky 1982; Mumford & Stokes 1992; Harvey-Cook & Taffler 2000; Gow et al 2008). However, to better understand rural employee turnover, a holistic view of the rural situation must be adopted. One recent study has attempted to address this by studying workers from the education, health, human services and law enforcement fields in rural Canada, finding that they experience common issues living and working in rural areas (Montgomery 1999).

Understanding rural workforces and contextualizing rural workplaces and communities may provide an insight into the extremely high rates of rural turnover. In an attempt to do this, the following section reviews the definitions of rural, discusses the rates of turnover and identifies the rural working population, focussing primarily on the literature emerging from the eastern states of Australia.
2.2.2 Definition of Rural

The definition of rural varies according to country, and even state. Clark (1990) states that inconsistencies in the definition are ‘not limited to empiricism; there are basic philosophic differences in constructing a rural definition’ (Clark 1990, p. 7). Supporting this notion, Sher’s (1981) work says, ‘Ruralness, like beauty, lies in the eye of the beholder’. Furthermore, the variety of factors used to define rurality across the different countries shows that ‘there is not a single definition of rural which is meaningful in an international context’ (Sher 1981, p. 22).

Consequently a variety of descriptors has been used to define ‘rural’ in the Australian literature. These include: population density and distance (Dunnell 1980); community size and degree of isolation from the sole major metropolis within a state (Lake 1985; Monk 2003); educational regions, population structure, ethnic groups and economic base (Duck, Webb, Cunningham & McSwan 1988); Country Areas Program (CAP) area, distance from urban centre, economic base, employment opportunities and population density (French 1981) and Commonwealth Taxation Department zones (Brentnall & Dunlop 1985).

However, more recently some states in Australia such as New South Wales and Queensland have adopted definitions based on service accessibility and service delivery as set out by the federal government. For example, the NSW Department of Community Services (DoCS) (2000) describes rural as referring to ‘large and small towns and villages and locations where population density is low and primary production and mining are generally the major industries. Remote areas are characterised by low population density and a lack of access to larger service centres and transport routes’ (p. 11). Characteristics such as these mean that service delivery is (1967) ‘distinctly different from the metropolitan service systems’ (DoCS 2000, p. 11).

In Queensland, the State Government defines rural and remote according to the Department of Health and Aged Care’s (1999) Accessibility Remoteness Index of Australia. This includes all areas except ‘all Queensland Local
Government Areas falling within major cities of Australia and all regional city councils and urban shires in Inner Regional and Outer Regional Australia’. Hence, the Department of Housing (DoH) (2002) classifies the larger regional centres such as Cairns, Townsville Bundaberg and Toowoomba as urban (see Figure 2.4).

![Map of Queensland with rural/remote and non-rural/remote shaded red and green respectively.](image)

It is important to note here that the definitional issues surround rurality make it difficult to compare and contrast rural turnover literature, and ultimately limits the relevance of the rural turnover research to other situations.

### 2.2.3 Rural Employee Turnover Rates

Rural worker turnover rates vary greatly. For example, rural teacher turnover in Queensland has been commonly reported to be as high as 50% (Braddy 1990) and 100% in some areas (McSwan 1997) per year. Queensland Health reported that the annual turnover rate for the Charleville Health district was between 30 and 40 per cent (Qld Health 1999). Lonne (2001) found that slightly more than half of the rural social workers studied had less than two years’ experience, and SARRAH (2002) found 42% of health professionals had less than two years’ experience, whilst another study found that over 50% of Victorian rural protective workers had less than six months’ experience (Department of Human Services Victoria 2002). This demonstrates that the
very high rates of government worker turnover are Australia-wide. That said, there is emerging evidence that there is a large pool of committed rural practitioners who prefer to stay in rural communities when they change their positions (Lonne 2001). The following section critiques the rural turnover literature. It begins by reviewing the literature covering personal and professional variables influencing turnover.

### 2.3 Factors influencing Rural Employee Turnover Intentions and Behaviours

Research into why rural staff turnover is consistently high has been occurring for nearly 70 years. Much of the research has centred on the development of conceptual models of the turnover process and the empirical testing of these models (Radford 1939; Porter & Steers 1973; Ostroff & Rothausen 1997; Riggs & Rantz 2001; Day & Jreige 2002; Gow et al 2008). It has also attempted to identify key characteristics of employees who apply for and are retained in rural areas.

The findings in the literature show that factors influencing attraction and retention are complex, vary widely and include such factors as gender, age, experience, tenure, geographic location, discipline, employer incentives and supports (Krecker 1994; Ostroff & Rothausen 1997; Proenca & Shewchuk 1997; Harrison & Hubbard 1998; Riggs & Rantz 2001; Department of Families 2003; Hall et al. 2007). In line with existing categories in the literature (Porter & Steers 1967; Day & Jreige 2002; Robinson & Peillemer 2007; Gow et al 2008), this study will also divide these factors into personal and professional categories.

Most research into turnover, particularly the urban-based research, suggests that turnover is determined by a combination of personal and professional factors. These tend to be personal, job and organizational factors and are consequently restricted in their application to rural areas because of their lack of recognition of community/environment factors. Some rural employee turnover literature has meshed personal and professional factors with the element of community (Boylan et al. 1993; Storey 1992; Griffith 1997, Boylan...
1997; Lunn 1997; Montgomery 1999; Lonne & Cheers 2000; Hall et al. 2007), on the basis that rural worker turnover is also related to the community where the work is taking place. Hence, it is asserted that working, and living in rural and remote communities can be very challenging and the concept of rural and remote practice is seen as a distinct form of practice (Martinez-Brawley 1983, 1990; O’Sullivan, Ross & Young 1997; Cheers 1998; Lonne & Cheers 2000; Krieg-Mayer 2001; Chenoweth 2004; Sercombe 2006).

This distinction relates specifically to the context in which the work takes place and consists of elements associated with ‘rural community’. These include a lack of infrastructure (Boylan et al. 1993; Lonne 2001; Lunn 1997; Boylan & McSwan 1998; Hall et al. 2007), high cost of living (Lunn 1997), and lack of support networks (Lonne 2001; Lunn 1997; Green & Lonne 2005). Such factors are peculiar to rural areas, and have generally been found to have a negative relationship with attrition (Boylan et al. 1993; Lunn 1997; McSwan 1997; Boylan & McSwan 1998; Lonne 2001; Hall & Scheltens 2005; Hall et al. 2007).

Whilst there is evidence that personal, organizational and community factors work together to influence turnover (Boylan 1997; Lonne 2001; Gentry et al 2007) there is some contention regarding the importance of these factors. For example, some reports found community and personal factors to be a stronger influence on retention than organizational factors (Lonne & Cheers 2000; Mitchell et al 2001; Hall et al. 2007). Others found that workplace conditions, such as rewards, professional autonomy and support, perceived by the worker may be equal to if not more important than the other variables (Schwab 1991; Weiss 1999; Maertz & Griffith 2004; Hall et al. 2007; Robinson & Pillemer 2007). That aside, the role of ‘community’, or ‘living environment’ as discussed by Lunn (1997) and Gentry et al (2007), is important in understanding rural employee turnover, and its lack of acknowledgment in much of the literature pertaining to general worker retention and attrition is a real flaw in this field of research.
2.3.1 Personal Factors

The following section is drawn from the general employee turnover research, meshing rural or urban studies. This is due to a lack of rural-specific research in several of these areas, but wherever possible rural studies were used.

The literature pertaining to employee turnover and personal factors can be divided into two categories. The first category deals with demographics, which includes variables such as age, gender, marital status, education level, previous rural experience, and length of service. The second category deals with personality considerations, which include personal orientations such as introversion/extroversion, coping ability (also referred to as adjustment), and self-efficacy. It has also been found that demographic data could predict future performance better than any other employee selection practice, supports the importance of personal factors (Harvey-Cook and Taffler 2000; Gow et al 2007). The demographic and personality literature and their subcategories are discussed in the following section.

2.3.1.1 Demographics

2.3.1.1.1 Age

Age has frequently been identified as influencing turnover rates (Igbaria & Guimaraes 1993; Krecker 1994; Lunn 1997; Harrison & Hubbard 1998; Lonne & Cheers 2000; Boxall 2003), more specifically, turnover rates generally decline with age (Porter et al. 1974; Krecker 1994; Lonne 2001; McNearney et al 2008). For example, Porter et al. (1974) found that the mean age for those who stayed (stayers) was 31.9 years, which was significantly higher (p < .01) than the mean age for those who left (leavers), 23.9 years. This is supported by Sommers and Eck’s (1977) claim that up to 56% of people in their 20s will change occupations within a 12 month period. Age has also been found to influence job satisfaction and organizational commitment (Hoppick 1935; Gibson & Klein 1971; Welsch & La Van 1981; Smith & Hoy 1992; Igbaria & Guimaraes 1993; Krecker 1994; Harrison & Hubbard 1998; Gow et al 2008).

Possible explanations for this include Buhler’s (1968) suggestion that people between the age of 15 and 25 are non-committal and experimental in setting
goals and charting paths (Buhler 1968). Furthermore, Johnson (2001b) found that job rewards were less important to younger workers. Hence, it has been suggested that flitting between jobs prior to settling down is the norm for workers in their late teens and twenties (Taylor 1978). This suggests that any relationship found between attitudes and turnover could be moderated by age. If this is the case, it also suggests that some of the issues pertaining to high turnover in rural areas are unfixable due to the high number of young workers in rural government workforces.

### 2.3.1.1.2 Gender

Gender has consistently been found to affect turnover (Igbaria & Guimaraes 1993; Fresko et al. 1997; McSwan 1997; Boxall et al 2003; Kuzyk 2008). It has been suggested that women tend to have higher turnover rates than men (Davies & Shackleton 1975; Dodd-McCue & Wright 1996; Gow et al 2008) and lower organizational commitment levels (Krecker 1994; Kuzyk 2008). This link can be demonstrated through the consistent positive relationship between absenteeism and attrition (Brayfield & Crockett 1955; Herzberg, Mausner, Peterson & Capwell 1957; Burke & Wilcox 1972; Somers 1996).

A study of female telephone operators showed that employees who quit displayed progressively worsening absenteeism ending in turnover (Burke & Wilcox 1972). Furthermore, it was found that unmarried women take more sickness absences than men and married women (Davies & Shackleton 1975). This is important when we understand that an employee quitting their job is an extreme behaviour along a continuum of behaviours such as absences and visits to medical dispensaries (Brayfield & Crockett 1955; Herzberg, Mausner, Peterson & Capwell 1957; Burke & Wilcox 1972; Scott & Wimbush, 1991; Somers 1996).

### 2.3.1.1.3 Education Levels

Employee education levels have also been identified as influencing a person’s decision to leave or stay in an organization. More highly-skilled employees were more likely to stay, particularly for reasons such as job satisfaction rather than external factors, and the reverse was true for the lower skilled
employees (Davies & Shakelton 1972; Igbaria & Guimaraes 1993; Parks & Waldo 1999; Sourdif 2004). Moreover those with a higher school education reported higher levels of work persistence (Strauser, Ketz & Keim 2002; McDonough 2007). This is not surprising when we consider that completion of higher school education requires persistence.

2.3.1.1.4 Previous Rural Experience

Previous rural experience has also been found to play an important part in retention (Martinez 1983, 1990; Higgins 1993; Lonne & Cheers 2000; Chenoweth 2004; Hall et al. 2007). For example, Martinez (1983, 1990) reports rural placement programs for student-teachers have had positive results. That is, teaching courses that include a rural element better prepare rural teachers and produce more teachers willing to go to rural areas, and develop positive attitudes towards rural areas. Consequently this has led to increased length of stay (Martinez 1990; Higgins 1993; Hall et al. 2007).

2.3.1.1.5 Length of Service

The length of service in an organization, also referred to as tenure, has been consistently linked to retention and attrition. It has been found that longer-tenured employees were more likely to stay with an organization. Rates of turnover have been found to be significantly higher amongst those with shorter tenure (Bloom, Alexander, & Nuchols 1992; Phillips 1993; Gray 1994; Somers 1996; Hall et al. 2007). Moreover, it was reported that a worker's previous length of service with an organization was a good predictor of the length of service possible in their current job (Davies & Shackleton 1975). Consequently, tenure is viewed as an important variable, potentially predictive of turnover (Waters et al. 1976; Marsh & Mannari 1977; Mobley 1978; Igbaria & Guimaraes 1993; Parks & Waldo 1999; Hall et al. 2007). One rationale for this could be that longer-tenured workers have more investments or side-bets in the organization and are consequently less likely to leave; another is age which as previously stated was also linked to turnover behaviours.

In conclusion, the literature suggests that these demographics influence turnover, however, the situation is complex and other personal factors
including attitude and disposition have been identified as influencing turnover and also as influencing the effect the demographic variables have on turnover. More specifically, these include personality, the ability to cope and self-efficacy. These are reviewed in the following section.

2.3.1.2 Attitude and Disposition
2.3.1.2.1 Personality
Personality has been identified as influencing turnover primarily by moderating the effect of variables influencing turnover decisions. It has been found that those who tend to change jobs regularly have different personality characteristics from those who tend to stay. In one study, exiting technical and scientific personnel were found to possess higher levels of need for achievement, independence and aggression, while the stayers appear to be more emotionally stable and mature (Davies & Shackleton 1975; Bakker, Van Der Zee, Lewig & Dollard 2006; Hall et al. 2007). Furthermore, Parks and Waldo (1999) found that sales employees who had greater assertiveness and emotional intensity stayed in sales longer than those who did not possess such traits.

Personality factors have been found to influence a worker’s attitude toward work, lifestyle and relocation, as well as their ability to cope in a new environment. For example, Day and Jreige (2002) found that striving and impatience were two personality measures that were able to moderate the effects of job stressors and psychosocial outcomes. Lazarus and Folkman (1984) noted that personality differences influenced worker perceptions about stress, whilst Parks and Waldo (1999) identified high ego as common to successful sales people.

These findings are important when we consider that factors such as work success and stress levels are linked to rates of attrition (Cross & Billingsley 1994; Bedner 2003; Bakker et al 2006; Hall et al. 2007). Furthermore, some research suggests that stress, job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and intentions are complementary attitudinal components of an individual actually terminating employment. Satisfaction and commitment in particular
are seen to be prominent precursors of turnover intentions and behaviour (Smith-Mikes & Hulin 1968; Porter & Steers 1973; Fishbein & Ajzen 1975; Mobley 1977; Welsch & La Van 1981; Williams & Hazer 1986; Cross & Billingsley 1994; Wong & Li 1995; Sourdif 2004; Gow et al 2008). However, the literature also identifies stress and intent as important moderators in the turnover process (Jayaratne & Chess 1984b; Billingsley & Cross 1991; Rahim & Psenicka 1996; Vandenbarg & Nelson 1999; Bedner 2003; Monk 2003; Chiu et al 2005; Hall et al. 2007).

Moreover, evaluations have studied attitudes towards just the work itself and found it to be of major importance in determining an employee’s intent to stay in a company (Kraut 1975; Vandenbarg & Nelson 1999; Buckley et al. 2005; Hall et al. 2007). Hence, it is viewed that attitudes and dispositions play a part in worker job satisfaction, organizational commitment and turnover.

Research into the personality traits of rural workers has focussed more on their attitudes and whether these are in line with rural work and life, including coping with rural relocation, local friendships and involvement in community activities (Boylan 1997; Lunn 1997; Montgomery 1999; Lonne & Cheers 2000; Bakker et al 2006; McDonough 2007). This is related to Bandura’s (1982) self-efficacy construct, which states that people who tend to cope and adjust well to situations have positive attitudes and perceive themselves as in control of their lives, see life as a challenge rather than a threat, and set goals for themselves rather than avoid decisions. Hence, it has been found that self-efficacy can influence attitude (Bandura 1986) and this can influence attrition (Evans & Tribble 1986; Lunn 1997; Regenold et al. 1999; Lonne & Cheers 2000; Sullivan & Mahalik 2000; McDonough 2007).

From this we can see that attitude and disposition influence turnover. Three main personality factors have been identified as relevant: introversion-extroversion orientation, the need for achievement and self-efficacy. These are key determinants of a person’s ability to cope. The following section reviews these further.
2.3.1.2.2 Introversion-Extroversion Orientation

A variety of studies have investigated a worker’s introversion-extroversion orientation in relation to success and attrition. Cattell’s (1965) work found that introversion-extroversion is one of the two factors (the other was anxiety) that account for the most variance in human behaviour. Jessup and Jessup’s (1971) study of pilot recruitment used the Eysenck Personality Inventory to see if introversion-extroversion orientation could predict the success of trainee pilots. This study showed that the highest success rate is among the stable introverts (84%) and lowest among the neurotic introverts (40%). Furthermore, extroversion was a valid predictor of success in two of the five occupations tested by Wilson (1997). This is consistent with findings from Hough, Eaton, Dunnette, Kamp, and McCloy (1990) and Barrick and Mount (1991).

Introversion and extroversion have also been found to influence turnover (Cattell 1965; Parks & Waldo 1999; Deary, Watson & Hogston 2003). In Taylor and Weiss’s (1969) study, personality correlates with sickness absence. It was found that the ‘never sick’ were characterized by high introversion and low neuroticism, whilst the ‘frequently sick’ by high extroversion. This is significant when we see that rates of absence from work are linked to turnover (Brayfield & Crockett 1955; Herzberg, Mausner, Peterson & Capwell 1957; Burke & Wilcox 1972; Somers 1996; Robinson & Pillemer 2007).

2.3.1.2.3 Need for Achievement

Several researchers have investigated the relationship between the need for achievement and work performance and success (Steer & Braunstein 1976; Steers 1977, Bird 1989; Rahim 1996; Skaalvik & Skaalvik 2004; McNearney et al 2008). Researchers have found that workers with a high need for achievement work longer and harder than others to accomplish a job, seek out achievement-related activities and persist with them longer, and that these qualities have been shown to translate to longer lengths of stay (Davies & Shackleton 1975; Boxall 2003; McNearney et al 2008).
It has been found that work offers a person an opportunity to be challenged; hence the worker with a high need for achievement exerts a great deal of effort in their work and identifies strongly with their work role (Saal 1978; Mannheim, Baruch & Tal 1997; McDonough 2007; McNearney et al 2008). These workers also seek out achievement-related activities and persist with them longer because they see success or failure as determined by their own efforts and thus experience greater internal rewards and punishments (Davies & Shackleton 1975; Skaalvik & Skaalvik 2004; Siegle & McCoach 2007; Kuzyk 2008). Moreover, it has been found that the achievement motive is fairly consistent throughout a person’s life (McClelland 1961), suggesting that the associated attitude and behaviours are consistent throughout a person’s work life. Similarly, attitudes and behaviour related to self-efficacy relate to how a worker performs. This is discussed in the following section.

2.3.1.2.4 Self Efficacy

Self-efficacy also plays a large part in how attitudes are formed. This concept relates to ‘how people feel, think, motivate themselves, and behave’ (Bandura 1993, p. 118), and is a frequently studied personality trait. Research has revealed that self-efficacy beliefs are one of the major affective influences related to task performance (Bloom 1976; Bandura 1993; Moriarty, Douglas, Punch & Hattie 1995; Siegle & McCoach 2007). Studies into of self-efficacy in the workplace have found that those with high self-efficacy perform better and have a lower propensity to leave (Evans & Tribble 1986; Regenold et al. 1999; Sullivan & Mahalik 2000; McDonough 2007).

It has also been found that explanations given by exiting teachers centred primarily on a low sense of efficacy, whether emphasizing their own job performance or frustration over low achievement in the classroom (Fresko et al. 1997; Siegle & McCoach 2007). Self-efficacy is also about having confidence in one's ability to cope with various stressors in the environment, as well as confidence in one’s ability to obtain desired goals and outcomes (Ozer & Bandura 1990; Bandura 1997; McDonough 2007). Thus, it can be seen that workers’ levels of self-efficacy can influence turnover rates.
Ultimately these attitudes can influence whether or not an individual is able to cope.

2.3.1.2.5 Ability to cope
Research has found that an array of variables influence a person’s ability to adjust and cope. For example, age and personality factors such as self-efficacy have been linked to ability to cope (Brim & Ryff 1980; Ozer & Bandura 1990; Parks & Waldo 1999; Lonne & Cheers 2000; Hall et al. 2007; Gow et al 2008).

Furthermore, it has been found that people can adjust and develop from the events in their lives, specifically if they occurred ‘on time’ – that is, if they were ready or prepared for the event, and received support from their social networks (Brim & Ryff 1980; Berger 1983; Wallace 1995; Ducharme & Martin 2000; Robinson & Pillemer 2007). This suggests that proper preparation and support would be an effective means of helping them adjust and cope with the change to rural work and life.

In conclusion, it can be seen that demographics and attitudes are important considerations when rural employers require employees who can successfully adjust and actively involve themselves in a new work and life environment, successfully develop a connection with the organization and the community, and ultimately be retained. However, there has been some debate as to the validity of using any type of personality measure for studying performance-related outcomes. Evidence suggests the relationship between personality and performance is consistent but modest (Schmitt, Gooding, Noe & Kirsch 1984; Hogan, Hogan & Roberts 1996; Church & Waclawski 1998; Deary et al 2003; Bakker et al 2007).

That aside, the literature points to an opportunity for rural organizations to work with people’s attitudes to encourage a positive way of thinking before and/or whilst living and working a rural setting, or the selection of people with certain attributes, such as high self-efficacy, to work in rural settings and improve retention. For example, research by Martinez (1987), who studied
beginning rural teachers, recognizes that preparing teachers for rural communities is essential.

It has been consistently found that professional elements play a major part in the attitudes and behaviours of workers, particularly in regards to turnover. These are discussed in the following section.

2.3.2 Professional Factors
There has been a significant amount of research into professional factors influencing turnover. These factors can be divided into two categories: firstly, those related to the organization and secondly, those related to the job.

Organizational variables such as workgroup size, supervision, remuneration and rewards, seniority, tenure, skill, job prestige and promotional opportunities in the organization have been identified as important factors influencing turnover (Hackman & Lawler 1971; Feldens 1986; Geraets 1986; Watson et al. 1987; Cross et al. 1989; Watson et al. 1989; Crowther, Cronk, King & Gibson 1991; Sacco 1994; Proenca & Shewchuk 1997; Hoover & Aakhus 1998; Zhao, Thurman & He 1999; Pollock, Whitbred & Contractor 2000; Lonne 2001; Boxall et al 2003; Buckley et al. 2005; Hall et al. 2007; Morgan 2008).

Variables related to the job include the job content and job grade (Hackman & Lawler 1971; Waters et al. 1976; Welsch & La Van 1981; Richards et al. 1994; Wallace 1995; Pollock et al. 2000; Robinson & Pillemer 2007; Newton 2008).

Several researchers have argued that professional factors are the predominant influence on worker attrition (Feldens 1986; Geraets 1986; Watson et al. 1987; Cross et al. 1989; Watson et al. 1989; Crowther et al. 1991; Sacco 1994; Hoover & Aakhus 1998; Zhao, Thurman & He 1999; Lonne 2001; Morgan 2008). For example it has been said that employees base their decision to leave or stay with an organization on their perception of various features of the work environment (Proenca & Shewchuk 1997; Zhao, Thurman & He 1999; Buckley et al. 2005).
The rural work environment is unique. It has been stated that rural workers face extraneous pressure from having to adapt and cope with the challenges and pressures of living and working in a rural area (Boylan et al. 1993; Boylan 1997; Lunn 1997; McSwan 1997; Boylan & McSwan 1998; Lonne & Cheers 2000; Hall et al. 2007). This is exacerbated by the general lack of several key workplace elements including opportunities for networking (Sacco 1994; Green & Lonne 2005; Sercombe 2006), the quality of the work facility (Buckley et al. 2005) and professional support (Porter & Steers 1973; Lunn 1997; Lonne & Cheers 2000; Green & Lonne 2005; Hall et al. 2007). In Sacco’s (1994) study of rural human services personnel attrition, work-related issues such as lack of career path were the most frequently mentioned. However, a diverse range of other issues was also raised including isolation, distances travelled, lack of career path, availability of work, lack of resources and the importance of access to in-service.

Research into turnover intentions, particularly with regard to rural workers, has also shown that professional support, collegial contact, proper resources and professional development opportunities rate highly as variables influencing attrition (Feldens 1986; Geraets 1986; Watson et al. 1987; Cross et al. 1989; Watson et al. 1989; Crowther et al. 1991; Lunn 1997; Proenca & Shewchuk 1997; Lonne & Cheers 2000; Riggs & Rantz 2001; Yoon & Thye 2002; Hall et al. 2007). Rural employees reported that these problems in these areas were caused by isolation and included limited access to professional support and resources (Watson et al. 1989; Crowther et al. 1991; Lunn 1997; Sercombe 2006; Hall et al. 2007).

Furthermore, the quality and style of supervision appears to be a major factor in determining turnover (Davies & Shakelton 1972; Lonne & Cheers 2000; Boxall et al. 2003; Hall et al. 2007; Taplin & Winterton 2007). This is alarming when we consider rural work usually occurs in isolation and lacks resources such as high-level support, quality supervision and social interaction (Davies & Shakelton 1972; Porter & Steers 1973; Sacco 1994; Lunn 1997; Lonne & Cheers 2000; Monk 2003; Hall & Scheitens 2005).
Indirect links between professional factors and turnover were also found. For example, satisfaction with employment factors, particularly professional development, was found to be the major predictor of retention in Hoover and Aakhus’ (1998) study, whilst Vandenberg and Nelson (1999) found that the only motivator of intention to leave was disaffection with the organization and its values. Moreover, Lonne (2002) argued that employers provide the foundation on which employees make decisions about their length of stay, and that workers may be more likely to stay in rural areas if employers provide a work environment that meets workers’ expectations in regard to job security, professional development and career advancement.

The following section further examines these factors. The factors are categorized into two main groups – the job, which includes job content and job grade; and the organization, for example the work environment, conditions, access to professional development, supervision and support, and social environment; and rewards, which includes pay and promotional opportunities.

2.3.2.1 The Job
2.3.2.1.1 Job content
Job content, or duties of the job, has proven to be an important element in the turnover picture. Job content was found to be a more accurate predictor of general worker satisfaction and organizational commitment than pay and conditions of work (Welsch & La Van 1981; Kuzyk 2008; Newton 2008), whilst dissatisfaction with job content factors, due in particular task repetitiveness, and lack of challenge and interest, have been shown to be important to the worker and relate positively to turnover rates in both industrial and clerical workers (Hackman & Lawler 1971; Pollock et al. 2000). The difference between satisfiers and dissatisfiers is consistent with Herzberg’s (1967) two-factor theory of motivation.

Other studies support the notion that job content is important to the worker, including Dinham and Scott (1996), Ferrell, Morgan and Winterowd (2000) and Kuzyk (2008), found that rewards intrinsic to the job role were the major
satisfiers. More specifically Ferrell et al.'s (2000) study into mental health workers in prisons found that counselling gave great satisfaction, whilst the major dissatisfiers were matters interfering with their efforts to do their jobs effectively such as report writing.

2.3.2.1.2 Job Grade
The prestige of a job grade, or job level, also appears to influence job satisfaction and turnover. High-prestige occupations are associated with greater satisfaction than those with low prestige. In one survey it was found that an average of 43% of white collar workers would choose similar work again, but only 24% of blue collar workers would (O’Toole 1973).

It has also been found that an employee’s reasons for staying in a job vary with job grade. It was found that higher-level employees were more likely to have higher organizational commitment and were therefore more likely to stay with the organization (Waters et al. 1976; Welsch & La Van 1981; Richards et al. 1994). Job grade is also related to the degree of perceived autonomy and responsibility a worker receives, which is also strongly and positively associated with organizational commitment and turnover (Wallace 1995).

2.3.2.2 The Organization
Organizational factors are also important in evaluating turnover. Herman (1999) found that there were five common reasons why people changed employers, and they were all related to the employee’s dissatisfaction with the organization. These were:

- incompatible corporate culture
- unsatisfactory relationships with co-workers
- insufficient support to get tasks accomplished
- inadequate opportunities for growth
- dissatisfaction with compensation (p. 8).

Other organizational factors are related to the workplace and conditions including the professional development, supervision, support, opportunities,
colleagues and size of the workplace. These are discussed in the following section.

2.3.2.2.1 Professional Development

Professional development has been one of the major influences identified in the job satisfaction, organizational commitment and employee turnover literature (Welsch & La Van 1981; Sacco 1994; Lunn 1997; Proenca & Shewchuk 1997; Jiang & Klein 2000; Lonne & Cheers 2000; Cline, Reilly & Moore 2003; Benko & Weisberg 2007). The lack of available professional opportunities is affecting rural professionals’ decisions to work and stay in rural areas (Dale 1994; Dawson 1994; Taylor 1998; Sercombe 2006). For example, Taylor (1998) reports that one common perspective is that a rural teaching postings offer little opportunity for professional development and advancement, and so beginning career teachers are reluctant to accept rural postings.

Understanding this is important when we consider that access to continuing professional development was seen as a key factor in job satisfaction, development of professional confidence, maintenance of professional competence and willingness to work in rural locations (Department of Families 2003). It has also been found that professional development is more important to workers who have been with the organization for a shorter period of time (Proenca & Shewchuk 1997) than to those employed more permanently. When we consider that many rural government workers are young, on temporary work contracts and mobile we see that professional development is an element of the rural workplace that is particularly important.

2.3.2.2.2 Management Style and Supervision

Research regarding management style and effective and ineffective workplaces has found that effective workplaces have supervisors who are 'employee-centred' and advocate participative climates, while the ineffective workplaces had 'job centred' supervisors (Stogdill & Coons 1957; Likert 1961; Welsch & La Van 1981; Harrison & Hubbard 1998; Ferrell et al. 2000; Force & Van Oven 2005; Taplin & Winterton 2007). A more specific example of
research supporting this notion is Richards et al.’s (1994) study of teachers, which found that limited teacher input into school decisions was one of the major causes of job dissatisfaction and teacher attrition.

The behaviour of the immediate supervisor is a major force in determining the performance and satisfaction of their staff (Blau 1999), and has been found to relate to increased levels of turnover, absenteeism, accidents and grievances (Davies & Shackleton 1975; Jiang & Klein 2000; Taplan & Winterton 2007). Good supervisors are approachable, hold regular meetings, ask for workers’ opinions, show respect for their ideas, put workers’ suggestions into operation, and gain worker approval before going ahead (Davies & Shackleton 1975; Force & Van Oven 2005).

However, the picture is not so straightforward. There are some researchers who oppose the notion that management and supervision play a major part in employee retention and attrition. For example, Vroom (1964) and Schuh (1967) reviewed worker relationships with supervisors and turnover without finding any significantly consistent patterns. It was also found that not all workers wanted a democratic, participative workplace, with some employees preferring an authoritarian style (Sadler 1968). Finally, the extent to which a supervisor can be participative or directive, and the extent to which they can affect their team’s motivation are limited by the organizational environment in which they all work (Davies & Shackleton 1975; Buckley et al 2003; Morgan 2008).

2.3.2.2.3 Professional Support

Research also recognizes that colleagues, supervisors and mentors have consistently been found to play a major part in a worker’s life and have been found to influence employee retention (Brown & Wambach 1987; Colbert & Wolff 1998; Gentry et al 2007; Hall et al. 2007). Such support sets the tone for relationships to develop between workers, colleagues and supervisors and has been found to be important. ‘Bonding involves relationships, communication, and a sense of belonging that provides job satisfaction,
increases organizational commitment, shields against offers from other employers and increases retention’ (Umiker 1999, p.6).

Research into the importance of social interactions at work and the influence of informal group norms on job satisfaction and productivity began with Mayo and his colleagues in the 1930s. No simple relationship was discovered, but more recently it has been shown that informal social groups within the organization influenced individual attitudes, job performance and turnover (Eisenberger, Fasolo & Davis 1990; Chappell & Novak 1992; Kim & Loadman 1994; Wallace 1995; George & Jones 1996; Lim 1996; Wayne, Shore & Liden 1997; Pollock et al. 2000; Riggs & Rantz 2001; Sourdif 2004; Gentrey et al 2007). The importance of social groups is seen in Taylor’s (1998) study that found that workers were more responsive to the social pressures of their group than to the control of management.

Recently there has also been a good deal of research regarding the effects of mentoring on improved persistence (Abraham 1999b), performance (Goodlad & Hirst 1990; Maxwell 1991; Slavin 1992; Slavin 1996; Thompson 1999) and retention (Annis 1983; Martin, Blanc & DeBhur 1983; Thompson 1999; Marrow 2008). Mentoring has also been found to reduce stress and social isolation, improve self-esteem and self-efficacy, confidence and attitudes towards work, peers and the workplace (Bloom 1976; Fondacaro et al. 1984; Lent et al. 1986; Slavin 1990; Bandura 1993; Abraham 1999b; Carl, 2006). Hence, the literature consistently finds that mentoring is important in positively influencing retention both directly and indirectly (Anis 1983; Martin, Blanc & DeBhur 1983; Slavin 1992; Richardson 1995; Colbert & Wolff 1998; Thompson 1999; Carl 2006; Marrow 2008).

2.3.2.2.4 Size of the Workplace
There seems to be some disagreement regarding the effect of the size of the workplace or team on turnover. One study into industrial workers found the larger the size of the work unit, the higher the turnover (Porter & Lawler 1965). However, Ingham (1970) found turnover to be unrelated to the size of the organization. With regard to satisfaction, individuals working in small groups
tend to be more satisfied than those working in large groups (Davies & Shackleton 1975), however, workplace size has not necessarily been found to have a negative effect on organizational commitment (Wallace 1995).

Suggested rationales for this include the notion that as organizations become larger, the capacity of individuals to form relationships with others becomes more difficult. It has also been suggested that larger organizations tend to be more bureaucratic, with more mechanistic organizational processes including increased use of formal communication and increased job specialization (Davies & Shackleton 1972) however, workplace size has not necessarily had a negative effect on organizational commitment (Wallace 1995).

2.3.2.3 Pay and Promotional Opportunities
Financial compensation has consistently been identified as another key factor people take into consideration when making career choice decisions (Salmon 1988; Yee 1990; Han 1994; Wallace 1995; Lunn 1997; Boxall et al 2003; McNearney 2008). Goodlad (1984) stated that low salaries ranked second as a reason for why teachers leave the profession. It has been suggested that this focus on remuneration as a source of satisfaction has been reported to change over time (Goodlad 1984; Bacharach, Lipsky & Shedd 1985; Han 1994; Boxall et al 2003; SEEK 2006; Hall et al. 2007).

Furthermore, it has been found that some employees begin their careers with an intrinsic motivation (Bacharach, Lipsky & Shedd 1985; Kuzyk 2008). That is, they are willing to forego higher salaries anticipating intrinsic rewards from their work. This is supported by Cheney et al. (2004) who found that money wasn't the major motivator for rural doctors to stay in rural areas. However, if these expectations of intrinsic rewards are not met, salaries become a source of considerable job dissatisfaction, which is often manifested in high rates of turnover (Goodlad 1984; Han 1994; Boxall 2003; Gow et al 2008). However, there is emerging evidence that salary levels are becoming more important to beginning and experienced employees (Han 1994; Kim & Loadman 1994; SEEK 2006;), demonstrating that remuneration isn’t only important to older
workers, as some research reports (Goodlad 1984; Bacharach, Lipsky & Shedd 1985; Han 1994; Boxall et al 2003; Hall et al. 2007).

It has also been suggested that shifts in satisfaction with pay and promotions are unrelated to changes in the employee’s intention to stay (Welsch & La Van 1981), but such rewards ‘will determine which job an employee chooses to take next’ (Hellriegel & White 1973 p. 241). Moreover, Proenca and Shewchuk’s (1997) study of nurses claimed that lower-tenured nurses desired professional development and promotional opportunities, whilst longer-tenured nurses wanted flexibility in the workplace. Ultimately, researchers argue that if such expectations concerning rewards, particularly those that are highly valued, are not met then withdrawal behaviour may occur (Porter & Steers 1973; Goodlad 1984; Han 1994; Wallace 1995; Boxall 2003; Hall et al. 2007).

In conclusion, the literature pertaining to professional factors provides a strong argument for the influential effects of professional/organizational elements on turnover. On the whole, the literature views professional factors as important in influencing turnover and in some cases as a stronger influence than personal and community factors. However, this is still debated in the literature with some studies identifying community life and/or lifestyle as the most important and influential variable in the rural employee turnover picture (Lonne 1990; Boylan et al. 1993; Lunn 1997; Lonne & Cheers 2000; Montgomery 1999; Gentrey et al 2007; Hall et al. 2007). These are discussed in the following section.

2.3.3 Community Factors
Community-related factors have been found to directly and indirectly influence turnover. They include size of community, degree of isolation, amount of anonymity, and proximity to available services (Dale 1994; Dawson 1994; Sacco 1994; Lunn 1997; Taylor 1998; Montgomery 1999; Lonne & Cheers 2000; Monk 2003; Sercombe 2006; Gentrey 2007; Hall et al. 2007). Community can also influence stress, job satisfaction and organizational commitment levels and influence a person’s intent to stay or leave an
organization (Bedner 2003; Monk 2003; Hall et al. 2007). These factors are seen as playing a significant part in rural employee turnover (Boylan et al. 1993; Boylan 1997; Lunn 1997; Montgomery 1999; Lonne & Cheers 2000; Sercombe 2006; Gentrey et al. 2007; Hall et al. 2007; Gow et al. 2008).

The effect of community on attrition, however, has proven difficult to evaluate accurately, with some research findings suggesting that community-related factors are not significant at all (Welsch & La Van 1981; Parasuraman 1982; Igbaria & Guimaraes 1993; Harrison & Hubbard 1998; Hall & Scheitens 2005). One study into community and turnover differed from most others by finding that town size does not predict turnover (Hoover & Aakhus 1998), whilst Lonne and Cheers (2000; 2004) found that retention was more strongly related to personal and community factors than professional factors.

Furthermore, community factors have been found to play a part in determining levels of satisfaction and turnover intent (Boylan et al. 1993; Boylan 1997; Lunn 1997; Montgomery 1999; Lonne & Cheers 2000; Sercombe 2006; Hall et al. 2007). Lonne and Cheers (2000) researched the professional and personal adjustment of rural social workers and reported that these workers experienced problems that were associated with rurality such as size of community, isolation, and services offered. Boylan (1997) found it be one of the four determinants influencing rural teachers’ decisions to remain or leave. Furthermore, Lunn (1997), Greem and Lonne (2005) and Sercombe (2006) found the lack of rural infrastructure affected rural employees’ decisions to work in rural areas.

Importantly, from an organizational point of view, these elements cannot be easily altered as a means of addressing the problem of high rural worker turnover. Attrition may, therefore, be controlled better by targeting certain professional or personal elements. For example, organizations can improve social support for their workers, provide workers with pre-employment site visits, and improve job and organizational factors that influence levels of stress, job satisfaction, organizational commitment and intent. These are further discussed in the following section.
2.3.4 Social Support

Social support can be broadly defined as the building of good relationships and the availability of help from supervisors, co-workers, family members, and friends in times of need. Social support has been found to positively affect the physical and mental health of workers (House 1981; Constable & Russell 1986; Russell, Altmaier & Van Velzen 1987; Fusiler, Ganster & Mayes 1987; Rahim & Psenicka 1996; Yoon & Thye 2002; AHRI – Chandler Macleod 2005; Hall et al. 2007). It has also been found to positively influence whether a person perceives a situation as being stressful (Jayaratne & Chess 1984a; Lazarus & Folkman 1984; Jayaratne & Chess 1986; Mathieu & Hamel 1989; Igbaria & Guimaraes 1993; Rahim 1996; Day & Jreige 2002; Hall et al. 2007), reduce job dissatisfaction (Abraham 1998; Ducharme & Martin 2000; Robinson & Pillemer 2007); increase job satisfaction (Reichers 1985), increase organizational commitment (Abraham 1999b) and decrease intent to leave (Caplan 1976; Fisher 1980; Fisher 1985; Boxall et al 2003; Hall et al. 2007; Robinson & Pillemer 2007).

Social support has also been found to indirectly affect negative stressors on a person (House 1981; Abdel-Halim 1982; Kobasa & Puccetti 1983; Seers, McGee, Serey & Graen 1983; Etzion 1984; Reichers 1985; Rahim 1996; Fusilier, Ganster & Mayes 1987; Kirmeyer & Dougherty 1988; Abraham 1998, 1999a, 1999b; Monk 2003) by acting as a buffer. For example, social support was found to lessen the negative effects of emotional dissonance on a worker by moderating its impact on job satisfaction and organizational commitment (Abraham 1998, 1999a; Yoon & Thye 2002). However, it should be noted that the effect of social support on organizational commitment appeared to be less powerful than its influence on job satisfaction (Abraham 1999a, 1999b).

Social support is, therefore, deemed to be an important factor in the worker turnover equation. It is clear that social support is important to workers and that it works both directly and indirectly in a positive manner. Such results may mean that social support will be very important in the rural situation, especially for workers who live and work in an isolated environment.
2.3.5 Stress

The term ‘stress’ in this study refers to the effect work has on one’s physical and mental health, and includes physical signs such as hand trembling, upset stomach, faintness and dizziness. It has been found that stress is commonly associated with dissatisfaction with work (Sales & House 1971; Jayaratne & Chess 1984a; Jayaratne & Chess 1986; Bedner 2003; Bakker et al 2006) and has been consistently related to the worker’s intent to leave and can be linked to increased attrition (House & Rizzo 1972; Bernardin 1977; Parasuraman 1982; Jayaratne & Chess 1984b; Elovaino & Kivimaki 2001; Hall et al. 2007). This is not surprising since anxiety motivates people to escape from or avoid stress situations.

Stress in the workplace is a common and serious problem in Australia. It has been linked to record numbers of sick days, with the Australian Bureau of Statistics revealing that in every fortnight, more than one million Australians took a sick day, largely due to stress in the workplace (ABS 2004). The ABS’s National Health Survey 2001 also shows Australians, especially women, are experiencing record levels of mental distress with one in five taking medication to combat it.

Causes of stress in the workplace include high levels of responsibility, exceptionally heavy workloads, long working hours, role ambiguity, and status incongruence (a situation where an individual’s job level is not matched by other variables such as educational level) (Rahim 1996; Rahim & Psenicka 1996; Elovaino & Kivimaki 2001; Takase et al 2008). For example, it has been shown that stress can come from poor person-environment fit (Rahim & Psenicka 1996; Hall et al. 2007; Eggerth 2008), and increases the propensity to leave a job (Mathieu & Hamel 1989; Igbaria & Guimaraes 1993; Rahim & Psenicka 1996; Abraham 1999b; Boxall et al 2003; Hall et al. 2007).

Whilst these factors have been shown to exert some stress on the worker, there is little or no evidence that work stress directly affects turnover intentions independent of job satisfaction and/or organizational commitment.
(Igbaria & Guimaraes 1993; Rahim & Psenicka 1996; Elovaino & Kivimaki 2001; Bedner 2003). Most research studies have found that stress in the workplace is related to job satisfaction and organizational commitment, thus having indirect effects on behavioural intentions to leave the organization (Parasuraman 1982; Jayaratne & Chess 1984; Baroudi 1985; Igbaria & Guimaraes 1993; Bakker et al 2006; Hall et al. 2007). Consequently, the effect of stress is frequently positioned within models that claim stress is directly linked to job satisfaction, organizational commitment and/or intent and indirectly linked to turnover.

The effects of job satisfaction and organizational commitment are discussed in the following section.

2.3.6 Job Satisfaction

Job satisfaction is used to describe how content a person is with their job. Job satisfaction has been identified as one of the most important factors influencing turnover (Porter et al. 1974; Williams & Hazer 1986; Igbaria & Guimaraes 1993; Cross & Billingsley 1994; Abraham 1999a; Vandenberg & Nelson 1999; Maertz & Griffith 2004; Robinson & Pillemer 2007; Newton 2008). It has consistently been reported as having a direct positive influence on the length of time workers intend to stay (Williams & Hazer 1986; Igbaria & Guimaraes 1993; Cross & Billingsley 1994; Abraham 1999a; Vandenberg & Nelson 1999; Sourdif 2004; Gilmour et al 2005). In an evaluation of special education teachers’ intent to stay in teaching, Cross and Billingsley (1994) found the strongest direct influence on intent to stay in teaching was job satisfaction.

There are two domains from which satisfaction comes, intrinsic and extrinsic, and each has a different relationship with organizational commitment, intention and turnover. For example, extrinsic factors, such as dissatisfaction with pay, were consistently found to affect some worker’s levels of satisfaction (Porter et al. 1974) and organizational commitment (Goodlad 1984; Bacharach, Lipsky & Shedd 1985; Kirby & Grissmer 1993; Gilmour et al 2005), whilst intrinsic rewards such as satisfaction from helping others has
been found to be of more importance to those staying with rather than leaving an organization (Heyns 1988; Fresko et al. 1997; Sourdif 2004; Kuzyk 2008).

Some research has found that the notion of work satisfaction and dissatisfaction may not lie at opposite ends of a continuum. Rather, they can be seen as two distinct concepts independent of each other (Herzberg 1968; Zhao et al. 1999). However this dichotomous nature of satisfaction, as identified by Herzberg (1967) may have resulted because of the methodology used, as very few studies were able to support his theory. These methodological issues include the close link with personal identity and self-esteem, as Kahn (1972) suggests, and that the measure used to gauge job satisfaction may be have been based on the snapshot given by an employee, who may dislike their work today but on the whole enjoy their work and have no intentions of leaving.

Furthermore, there are some reports (Mobley et al. 1978; Maertz & Griffith 2004; Sourdif 2004; Robinson & Pillemer), found that the effect of job dissatisfaction was on thoughts about quitting, on intentions rather than on actual turnover behaviours. Vandenberg and Nelson (1999) found that organisational, rather than job, dissatisfaction is the major contributor to staff turnover. Waters et al (1976) found that while there was a consistent and inverse relationship between job satisfaction and turnover, it was not strong. Some other studies of employee turnover (Newman 1974; Porter et al. 1974; Kraut 1975; Baker & Baker 1999; Morgan 2008) found that organizational commitment discriminated better than job satisfaction when studying the workers’ staying with and leaving their organizations.

Finally, some researchers have proposed that job satisfaction and organizational commitment work together as the main precursors of turnover (Clegg 1983; Williams & Hazer 1986; Mathieu & Hamel 1989; Robinson & Pillemer 2007; Gow et al 2008). Research findings have consistently identified a relationship between the two, but findings on their direct effect upon turnover have been inconclusive. This uncertainty aside, it is clear that
satisfaction and organizational commitment are interrelated in influencing worker turnover.

The role of organizational commitment is discussed in the next section.

2.3.7 Organizational Commitment

Organizational commitment can be referred to as the ‘strength of an individual’s identification with his or her work organization’ (Mowday et al. 1979). Four important characteristics have been identified as making up organizational commitment. These are 1) loyalty and pride toward the work organization, 2) belief in the goals and values of the organization, 3) willingness to exert effort for the organization, and 4) a desire to maintain membership with the organization. Organizational commitment has been referred to as being more global in nature than job satisfaction (Porter et al. 1974).

Research suggests that low levels of organizational commitment correlate better with certain employee behaviour, including turnover, than other commonly used attitudinal measures, such as job satisfaction (Hom et al. 1979; Morgan 2008). Like job satisfaction, organizational commitment has been significantly related to turnover (Alutto et al. 1973, Kraut 1975; Mobley, Steers & Porter 1979; Welsch & La Van 1981; Reichers 1985; Williams & Hazer 1986; Cross & Billingsley 1994; Baker & Baker 1999; Boxall et al 2003; Gow et al 2008; Morgan 2008). Organizational commitment and turnover intentions have been identified as the two most critical factors in a worker’s decision to terminate employment. These two elements have also been found to be more stable, consistent and more strongly related to turnover than other factors including job satisfaction (Newman 1974; Porter, et al. 1974; Kraut 1975; Morgan 2008). This indicates that organizational commitment is a vital factor in worker turnover. However, a wide array of job, workplace and organizational aspects has been found to influence organizational commitment.
For example, Welsch and La Van (1981) found that role conflict and role ambiguity are negatively related to organizational commitment, while climate, teamwork, job satisfaction, promotional opportunities, age, tenure and length of service are positively related to organizational commitment. Meanwhile Harrison and Hubbard (1998) found that higher age predicted higher organizational commitment. Wallace (1995) found that lawyers increased their commitment to organizations when certain organizational conditions were in place, for example, a participative climate, promotional opportunities, social support from co-workers, and autonomy. Taken together, these studies provide support the argument that attrition could be a result of organizational management rather than the result of isolation and the characteristics of rural communities (Lonne 2001; Green & Lonne 2005). This means the incidence of turnover could be reduced with a change in management style and process.

However, there are some contrary findings to the research. For example, there is some criticism surrounding the unclear use of organizational commitment measurements (Fresko et al. 1997), including the use of intent as part of the organizational commitment construct. Moreover, some literature suggests that organizational commitment should refer to a variety of commitments, for example, to the organization, to colleagues and to the occupation (Alutto et al. 1973; Hom et al. 1979; Reichers 1985; Baker & Baker 1999; Maertz & Griffith 2004; Kuzyk 2008) rather than just consist of one general measure.

2.3.8 Intent

Intent refers to the worker’s propensity to leave or stay in a job. It has also been identified as one of the most powerful predictors of turnover (Kraut 1975; Waters et al. 1976; Mobley 1977; Mobley et al. 1978; Hom et al. 1979; Parasuraman 1982; Igbaria & Guimaraes 1993; Vandenberg & Nelson 1999; Robinson & Pillemmer 2007). Mobley (1977) identified intent as the major factor influencing turnover and Mobley et al.’s (1978) study found that intention to quit was the only significant regression co-efficient with actual turnover. Similar findings can be seen in research by Waters et al. (1976);

In Arnold and Feldman’s (1982) study it was found that low job satisfaction and low organizational commitment led to increased intentions to quit, which had a positive relationship to increased turnover. Williams and Hazer’s (1986) study found that both low job satisfaction and low organizational commitment positively influence intentions to leave, with organizational commitment having more of an effect on intent to leave than job satisfaction, however, this was a tentative result because it applied to only one of the two sample populations in their study. Furthermore, intent has been negatively correlated with job satisfaction and performance (Gibson, Weiss, Dawis, & Lofquist 1970; McNmNearney et al 2008; Gow et al 2008).

There are several studies that have linked intent to remain or leave with the work, worker’s personality or workplace (Kraut 1975; Igbaria & Guimaraes 1993; Abraham 1999a; Parks & Waldo 1999; Deary, Watson & Hogston 2003; McDonough 2007). For example, stress has been found to be consistently and positively associated with intent to leave a job (Mobley, Griffith, Hand, & Meglino 1979; Mowday, Porter, & Steers 1982; Rahim & Psenicka 1996; Parks & Waldo 1999; Bakker et al 2006). Job burnout (Burke & Deszca 1986; Jackson, Schwab, & Schuler 1986; Monk 2003), role conflict (Rahim 1990; Takase et al 2008) and organizational disaffection (Vandenberg and Nelson 1999; Bedner 2003) have also been found to correlate with intentions.

These findings are consistent with theories constructed by Fishbein (1967) which state that attitudes have a very real relationship with behaviours through intentions; and Locke (1975) who stated that the most immediate motivational determinant of choice is the individual goal or intention. However, there has been criticism that this link is overly simplistic (Hom et al. 1979; Reichers 1985; Fresko et al. 1997) and unable to provide any real support for understanding turnover (Marsh & Mannari 1977).
There is also some opposing evidence regarding such relationships. This indicates that the relationships are complex. For example, it has been found that low job satisfaction had an influence on organizational commitment, but not on intent to leave (Bluedorn 1982a). Rahim (1996) and Rahim and Psenicka (1996), however, found no significant relationship between stress and an employee’s propensity to leave a job. Furthermore, Parks and Waldo (1999) found strong direct links between personality and turnover, indicating that intent may not play such an important part in the turnover situation as first thought. These issues aside, the role of intent is deemed as important. It is a complex element that plays a crucial part in the attrition process.

Put simply, the literature presents a complex web of relationships in which personal, professional, community elements combine with a worker’s levels of social support, stress, job satisfaction, organizational commitment and intent, to influence worker turnover. The following figure, devised for this thesis, depicts these eight parts of turnover behaviour, and illustrates the concepts focussed on in this research (figure 2.5).

![Figure 2.5 The eight main factors identified in the rural literature as influencing turnover which will be researched in this thesis.](image)

Undoubtedly, the eight variables reviewed here have been found to directly and/or indirectly influence turnover, and whilst the research findings are generally consistent, there is an element of contention particularly with regard
to the extent of the influence that each variable has on turnover. This could be due to the wide array of limitations within the research. These are discussed in the following section.

2.4 Limitations to the Existing Research Findings
It must be noted that inconsistencies in the research into worker turnover are diverse. Primary reasons for this are methodological and definitional limitations within the research (Mobley et al. 1978; Parks & Waldo 1999), with some reported to be at both ends of the spectrum regarding their effect on turnover. These are discussed further in section 2.4.1.

Some examples of the contrasting nature of the existing research include Parasuraman’s (1982) study which found that personal factors had little direct effect on turnover; but rather that their effect is channelled through behavioural intentions. On the other hand, Williams and Hazer (1986) found that the effect of personal and organizational characteristics on turnover was only through their direct effect on job satisfaction and indirectly on organizational commitment. This is supported by Mathieu and Hamel’s (1989) study into professional and non-professional groups that found positive correlations between personal and organizational characteristics and job satisfaction.

Job satisfaction was found to directly affect employees’ intentions to remain (Cross and Billingsley 1994; Boxall 2003; Newton 2008), whilst Vandenberg and Nelson’s (1999) research found that disaffection with the organization and its values resulted in the loss of employees. This was supported by Lonne (2001) who found that employers were in a strong position to influence an employee’s decision to stay or leave.

Other findings of indirect links between turnover variables include a study that found that job satisfaction, participative decision making and age predicted organizational commitment but did not predict turnover (Harrison & Hubbard 1998; Boxall 2003). Furthermore, age, job satisfaction and organizational commitment have been found to influence the intention to search for
alternative work, while such intentions, together with tenure and perceived job 
security, have been found to influence turnover directly (Arnold & Feldman 
1982; Somers 1996; Boxall et all 2003).

Role conflict and role ambiguity were the only two factors negatively related to 
organizational commitment (Welsch and La Van 1981; Takase et al 2008) 
found that. It was also found that and climate, teamwork, job satisfaction, 
promotional opportunities, age, tenure and length of service were positively 
related to organizational commitment. Although it did not reach any firm 
conclusions as to their effect, this study viewed these variables are viewed as 
important factors influencing turnover.

This contention within the research findings allows for another viewpoint to be 
applied here – that there are indirect links between personal, professional and 
community variables, and that job satisfaction, organizational commitment 
and intent influence actual attrition or retention and they moderate the 
dependent and independent variables. This means that any effect such 
elements have on turnover may not influence directly but moderate or be 
moderated by some other factor/s. Such a strong representation of indirect, 
rather than direct, relationships between the eight variables and actual 
turnover could be put down to other research limitations. These include lack 
of methodological rigour, definitional issues, lack of recognition of community 
effects and lack of a holistic perspective. These are discussed in the following 
sections.

2.4.1 Lack of Rigour
Several turnover studies have lacked a rigorous research approach, for 
example some have not discussed the sampling frame and possible biases, 
others have relied on responses elicited in exit interviews, and many lack 
control groups and random sampling techniques.

Most of the studies focused on one occupation group, for example, teachers, 
social workers, IT workers, doctors or lawyers (Martinez 1988; Yee 1990; 
Lunn 1997; McSwan 1997; McDonald 1999; Lonne & Cheers 2000; Yoon *
Much of the research lacks broader demographic data on groups in the workforce like non-professionals, indigenous, mature or young workers. Moreover, the majority of findings came from cross-sectional studies rather than longitudinal ones, and the majority of turnover studies evaluated groups of workers that were not only of different ages but from different generations. This lack of sample diversity restricts the applicability of the research to the wider population.

2.4.2 Definitional and Methodological Issues
There have been issues with the definitions of several of the concepts that are important parts in this research project. The first are the definitions of organizational commitment, which have been criticized for being too simplistic. To overcome this Reichers (1985, 1986) recommends researching a variety of worker commitments, such as commitment to colleagues or job, not just the organizations as suggested by Porter et al. (1974). Empirical support for this argument is provided by Reicher (1986) who observed that commitment was not correlated with organizational commitment but with the work team. Furthermore, whilst the Organizational Commitment Questionnaire (OCQ) (Porter et al. 1974) is a widely used and respected tool due to its ability to predict turnover accurately, there has been some suggestion that this may be due to the measure of intent forming part of the questionnaire (Morrow 1983; Reichers 1985).

Marsh and Mannari (1977) found that neither commitment nor any other variables measured were better predictors of who would leave when the turnover interval was short, suggesting that the opportunity to leave has a more important effect on turnover than any changes over time in one’s commitment to the organization. It has been said that elements such as availability of acceptable job alternatives and a worker’s attitudes towards the job and organization capture the dynamic nature of interrelationships among satisfaction, organizational commitment, and intentions (Marsh & Mannari 1977; Mobley et al. 1978; Wong & Li 1995; Vandenberge & Nelson 1999; Boxall et al 2003; Skaalvik & Skaalvik 2004; Siegle & McCoach 2007).
This has been supported by research which finds the relationship between intent to leave a job and actual attrition is complex and includes several moderating influences. For example, in response to the lack of multivariate research, Mobley (1977) studied a linear model of the withdrawal process. He found strong links between thinking about quitting, intent to search, probability of finding an alternative job, intent to quit and finally actual turnover.

Another limitation to the existing literature is the lack of research into the nature of the organization when measuring a worker’s organizational commitment (Reichers 1985; Igbaria & Guimaraes 1993; Robinson & Pillemker 2007; Gow et al 2008; Newton 2008). Since it is the organization that is the focus of the individual’s commitment, attention to the nature of the organization is important in the evaluation of satisfaction, commitment and intent. This supports the notion of a holistic ecological view of turnover. Such contextualization has been identified as important in making a ‘picture’ of turnover particularly in rural environments (Lunn 1997; Montgomery 1999; Lonne 2001; Boxall et al 2003).

There are also similar limitations to the satisfaction and intent measures. For example, tools such as Smith-Mikes and Hulin’s (1968) Job Description Index (JDI) lack the ability to gather specific data about the attitudes workers hold towards the job and the organization. Such knowledge would give the organization specific information about which aspects of the work and organization it needed to review and address in order to prevent unwanted turnover. Such information tends not to be available from general job satisfaction tests, nor from questions of intent (Marsh & Mannari 1977; Mobley et al. 1978; Igbaria & Guimaraes 1993; Wong & Li 1995; Vandenberg & Nelson 1999; Maertz & Griffith 2004; Robinson & Pillemker 2007).

All these limitations aside, the research community in general still considers the Porter et al. (1974) and Smith-Mikes et al. (1968) questionnaires to be leaders in measuring job satisfaction and organizational commitment. The adoption of their survey instruments has been longstanding and widely used.
2.4.3 Lack of Recognition of Community and Holistic Perspective

There has also been a serious lack of research into the effect that community has on turnover. With an increasing number of worker-focussed research philosophies, this is changing. Some recent studies have taken community elements into consideration evaluating turnover from a broader base (Igbaria & Guimaraes 1993; Agho, Mueller & Price 1993; Rhodes & Doering 1993; Kim et al. 1996; Lunn 1997; Hoover and Aakhus 1998; Montgomery 1999; Lonne & Cheers 2000; Green & Lonne 2005; Gentrey et al 2007; Hall et al. 2007).

The view that environmental factors can predict behaviour has recently been challenged. Research has emerged indicating that a person’s expectations and values are also fundamental to explaining and predicting human behaviour (Marini 1992; Johnson 2001a; Hall et al. 2007; Takase et al 2008). Thus, the demonstrated benefits of studying values and community, particularly when studying rural workers, provide a sound rationale for these elements to be included when researching worker turnover.

Research which has included community has provided a clearer picture of rural employee turnover. For example, there is evidence that personal, community and organizational factors do not work in isolation of each other but in conjunction with each other (Agho, Mueller & Price 1993; Rhodes & Doering 1993; Kim et al. 1996; Lunn 1997; Boxall et al 2003; Hall et al. 2007). Moreover, congruence between personal values and organizational culture has been shown to be a better predictor of performance, organizational commitment, and length of stay than either characteristic alone (Chatman 1991; Cheney et al. 2004; Maertz & Griffith 2004; Gentrey et al 2007).

Moreover, personal, professional and community elements have been found to influence levels of stress, job satisfaction and organizational commitment, (Hrebiniak & Alutto 1972; Alutto et al. 1973; Kraut 1975, Marsh & Mannari 1977, Mobley et al. 1978, Mathieu & Hamel 1989; Agho, Mueller & Price 1993; Igbaria & Guimaraes 1993; Bedner 2003; Monk 2003; Gentrey et al 2007). Igbaria and Guimaraes (1993) attempted to predict intent using four variables: 1) role stressors; 2) personal characteristics including age,
education, tenure and gender; 3) job satisfaction; and 4) organizational commitment. Their research found that role stressors were moderated by personal characteristics, and were directly related to job satisfaction and organizational commitment. Job satisfaction also directly affected organizational commitment; consequently, job satisfaction had direct and indirect effects on behaviours including the intention to leave the organization (Igbaria & Guimaraes 1993; Robinson & Pillemer 2007; Newton 2008).

Welsch and La Van's (1981) study of organizational commitment amongst health care workers found that personal and organizational factors had negative relationships with organizational commitment, and role conflict and role ambiguity were detrimental to organizational commitment. That aside, there is still a general lack of holistic research; hence the effect of community on turnover is still unclear. Developing a holistic perspective of turnover has been one way of improving our understanding of attrition and retention. Another has been studies which attempt to predict turnover. There have been some solid attempts to predict turnover, however there is some contention regarding their applicability. Consequently the results are inconclusive. These issues are discussed in the next section.

2.4.4 Issues with Predicting Turnover
A variety of variables and research methods have been used to predict turnover, including the employees’ attitudes towards their work, opportunities elsewhere, and aspects of a worker’s personal and professional life (Fishbein’s 1967; Waters et al. 1976; Marsh & Mannari 1977; Mobley et al. 1978; Hom et al. 1979; Wong & Li 1995; Vandenberg & Nelson 1999; Sheeran, Trafimow & Armitage 2003).

A comparison of Fishbein’s (1967) model of social behaviour, Smith and Hulin’s (1968) job satisfaction index and Porter's (1974) organizational commitment construct was conducted to identify which model best predicted turnover. It was found that all three models predicted with a high degree of accuracy. Fishbein’s model was found to be the best, having a multiple correlation of .65; followed by Porter .58; with Smith .55; (Hom et al. 1979).
Hence, it has been suggested that job satisfaction levels may predict this better.

Herman’s (1973) work also supports this, suggesting ‘that attitudes may be more stable predictors of behaviour than expressed intent’ (p. 220). This means that job satisfaction may have a more stable relationship with turnover than intent or organizational commitment. Furthermore, Hulin (1966) reported a significant relationship between reported job dissatisfaction and turnover, even with a lag of 12 months, thus overcoming the issue of lack of time allowed for other employment opportunities to arise. Newman (1974) showed that Fishbein’s model predicted employee attendance less accurately than job satisfaction did.

Low job satisfaction also predicted spontaneous acts of withdrawal, such as tardiness and absenteeism more reliably than organizational commitment was able to predict such behaviour. Hence, when the withdrawal behaviours are impulsive and less deliberate, behavioural intention and approaches based on intention may not predict as well as job satisfaction. (Hom et al. 1979; Somers 1996; Maertz & Griffith 2004)

Other researchers have proposed that organizational commitment is the major precursor of turnover intentions and behaviours (Arnold & Feldman 1982; Clegg 1983; Williams & Hazer 1986; Mathieu & Hamel 1989; Iverson & Roy 1994; Yoon & Thye 2002; Gow et al 2008). For example, Williams and Hazer (1986) found that organizational commitment had more of an effect on intent to leave than job satisfaction did, whilst Erlich (1969) suggests research into organization commitment focuses on norms, such as work conditions and their effect of attrition. Consequently, predicting a worker’s actual attrition when these normative conditions become relevant and important to the worker, could increase predictability. This latter concept is related to self-discrepancy theory and applies a threshold comparison level that corresponds to the quality of expected and actual outcomes from the job and organization (Marsh & Mannari 1977; Abraham 1999b; McDonough 2007; Tasake et al 2008).
It has, however, been repeatedly said that the best factor for predicting turnover is the employee’s direct estimate of his/her future tenure, also known as ‘intent to remain’ or ‘self prediction’ (Hulin 1966; Kraut 1975; Marsh and Mannari 1977; Mobley et al. 1978; Hom et al. 1979; Wong & Li 1995; Vandenbarg & Nelson 1999; Mitchell et al 2001; Gilmour et al 2005; Gow et al 2008). Moreover, Kraut’s (1975) study found that turnover intent correlated with actual turnover, both in the short term (about eight months) and long term (approximately five years).

Several studies also found intent to be more successful in predicting turnover than job satisfaction and organizational commitment (Hom et al 1979; Hom & Kinicki 2001). However, whilst the first study predicted turnover with a high level of accuracy, it could be that the tendencies of the population studied, members of the US National Guard, would due to organizational practices, predict with an atypically high degree of accuracy. This was due to some unique characteristics of the withdrawal process in the National Guard, for example, every member must make an explicit decision to remain or leave at some point during his or her tenure. Civilian employees are not typically expected to make such a decision.

Furthermore, intent has been identified as one of the most powerful predictors of turnover (Kraut 1975; Waters et al. 1976; Mobley et al. 1978; Hom et al. 1979; Parasuraman 1982; Igbaria & Guimaraes 1993; Wong & Li 1995; Vandenbarg & Nelson 1999; Mitchell et al 2001; Maertz & Griffith 2004; Gow et al 2008); hence there is emerging research pertaining to the moderators of intent (Wong & Li 1995; Vandenbarg & Nelson 1999). Such moderators of intent vary across the personal, professional and community facets of a worker’s life, and an employees’ intent to remain has been found to be closely tied to feelings about the work itself and about the company as a place to work (Kraut 1975; Mobley et al. 1978; Vandenbarg & Nelson 1999; Mitchell et al 2001; Gilmour et al 2005; McNearney et al 2008). Hence, measuring intent would be a sound way of predicting rural government turnover and is a major element of this research project.
This research aims to look at rural employee turnover from a more holistic perspective taking into consideration personal and work characteristics, personality/orientation, stress, job satisfaction, organizational commitment, social support and turnover intentions to evaluate turnover. The following section outlines the research hypotheses and research questions leading this research.

2.5 Hypotheses and Research Questions

The null hypothesis for this study is that no personal, professional and/community variables influence rural government worker turnover. The alternative hypothesis is that some or all of the identified variables will influence rural government worker turnover. More specifically, through the identification and evaluation of eight variables, personal, work, social support and community elements (more specifically, demographics, personal orientation, job and organization, personal perceptions of the organization, work and community), stress, job satisfaction, organizational commitment and intention levels, we can better understand attrition and retention and perhaps even predict its occurrence.

This study investigates the effect these eight variables have on rural government worker turnover in Charleville. It is a case study based on six hypotheses (see Table 2.1) and six research questions (see Table 2.2). The first three hypotheses develop explanations for the factors influencing turnover, turnover intentions, and whether turnover intentions lead to turnover behaviours. The latter three hypotheses move from gathering an understanding of which factors influence intent and turnover, to predicting intent and turnover.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hypothesis</th>
<th>Specific or General</th>
<th>Explaining or predicting</th>
<th>Associated Model</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Personal, professional, community, stress, social support, satisfaction, organizational commitment and intent variables influence rural government worker turnover in Charleville.</td>
<td>Specific</td>
<td>Explaining</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Personal, professional, community, stress, social support, satisfaction and organizational commitment influence intent levels of rural government workers in Charleville.</td>
<td>Specific</td>
<td>Explaining</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Intent influences the turnover of rural government workers in Charleville.</td>
<td>Specific</td>
<td>Explaining</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Rural worker turnover can be predicted by some or all of the 8 variables (as mentioned previously in H1)</td>
<td>General</td>
<td>Predicting</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Rural worker intent can be predicted by some or all of the 7 variables (as mentioned previously in H2)</td>
<td>General</td>
<td>Predicting</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Intent can predict a rural worker's actual leaving or staying.</td>
<td>General</td>
<td>Predicting</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2.2 Research questions and associated hypotheses.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Hypothesis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Do personal, professional, community, stress, social support, job satisfaction, organizational commitment and intent variables influence rural government worker turnover in Charleville?</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do personal, professional, community, stress, social support, satisfaction and organizational commitment influence intent levels of rural government workers in Charleville?</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does intent influence the actual turnover of rural government workers in Charleville?</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can rural worker turnover be predicted by some or all of the personal, professional, community, stress, social support, satisfaction, organizational commitment and intent variables?</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can rural worker intent be predicted by some or all of the personal, professional, community, stress, social support, satisfaction, organizational commitment and intent variables?</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can intent predict a rural worker’s actual leaving or staying?</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This research aims to improve our understanding of rural government worker turnover in Charleville with broader applications to the rural human resources realms. Simply, this research project will attempt to identify the factors which influence attrition and can be used to predict turnover. This research also evaluates the role of intent as a reliable predictor of rural government worker turnover. The models to be tested are illustrated in the following diagrams (figure 2.6, figure 2.7, and figure 2.8).

![Diagram](image_url)

Figure 2.6 This model will evaluate the effect of seven factors on intent, and whether these factors can be used to predict intent.
In summary, this research attempts to explain and predict the turnover phenomena in Charleville, a rural town in South-West Queensland, Australia. It investigates the effect of eight key variables identified in the literature as influencing turnover from a personal and professional perspective. The following section refers to the research methodology underpinning this research and the research methods used in this study.
CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH METHODS

This chapter discusses the research methodology underpinning this study and the research methods used to collect and analyse the research data. The first section (3.1) discusses the research methodology, section 3.2, discusses the research perspective and principles and section 3.3 discusses the research site, including the town of Charleville and the sample population. Section 3.4 explains the research design and construction, section 3.5 discusses the ethical application, and section 3.6 discusses the research stages and following this is the section pertaining to the limitations of the research (3.7).

3.1 Research Methodology

This section deals with the underlying assumptions and principles of the research. Firstly I discuss research methodology and the three underlying assumptions – epistemological, ontological and methodological. A section about research perspective and principles follows this.

Research methodologies used for any research project are influenced by a researcher’s intent, or as Denzin and Lincoln (2002) state ‘the direction of inquiry is steered by a philosophical persuasion’ (p. 1004). The methodological approach ‘merely suggests directions along which to look’ (Denzin & Lincoln 2002, p. 1004), and offers a ‘net of beliefs, involving the epistemological, methodological and ontological principles which guide the researcher’s action’ (Denzin & Lincoln 2002, p. 12). Such transparency is important because it enables others to understand the rationale behind the research and conclusions. The following section discusses the assumptions underpinning this research. First, it discusses epistemological, ontological and finally methodological assumptions.
3.1.1 Epistemological Assumptions

Epistemology relates to knowledge and theory, and addresses the philosophical problems surrounding the theory of knowledge. It is concerned with how knowledge is gained and what makes information knowledge. Epistemological assumptions view the researcher as an active learner, not an expert (Cresswell 1998), and view knowledge creation as an inquiry between the researcher and the research participants over the duration of the study.

Furthermore, the ‘trawling’ nature of this research means that the active learning cycle can easily be applied, allowing for the participants, the data, the research process and myself, as the researcher, to influence the research direction. The use of semi-structured interviews also allowed me to be an ‘active learner’ and the informal and open nature of the study ensured that relationships with the participants were casual and honest, and that the participants were not viewed merely as objects of research.

This study aimed to define, interpret and understand a particular situation, and then relay this understanding. Hence the paradigm, or lens, through which this research was viewed was the constructivist-interpretivist paradigm (Shulman 1988). Adopting the constructivist-interpretivist approach ensured that I, as the researcher, viewed, understood and shared the situation, or reality, from the participants’ perspectives. The assumptions of this paradigm are discussed further in the next section.

3.1.2 Ontological Assumptions

Ontology relates to the form and nature of reality and what can be known about reality. As noted, the constructivist perspective views reality as an analytical construct held by the person or group. However, such constructs are not passive, nor are they set in concrete, but are active and dynamic and may change with knowledge and experience gained by the holder.

An interpretivist assumption regarding ontology links people’s realities with their sense of control over the present and future. Behaviours are, therefore, viewed as intentional, emanating from constructs. In this research such
notions are adopted and the research processes investigate the workers’ constructs, attitudes and experiences that make up their realities and what influenced their attrition or retention behaviours. It is acknowledged that past attitudes and experiences with work and rural areas will influence their perceptions or constructs. A constructivist-interpretive approach was adopted to examine these areas that make up a worker’s reality.

3.1.3 Methodological Assumptions
Methodology details how a researcher can find meaning in the data gathered. This research examined who the workers were, and what meaning they gave to rural work and life and how they made decisions. More specifically, in this study I examined the make-up of the participants, their perceptions about the work, organization and community, and their expectations and intentions.

The constructivist-interpretivist approach also acknowledges that interpretation is a matter of finding meaning from language and behaviour. Constructivist-interpretivist interpretation views reality as existing ‘only in the context of a mental framework’ (Guba 1990, p. 25), and fits well with studies of society and people’s attitudes or constructs. In this study, the search for an individual’s understanding of their reality was gathered through gaining an insight into rural workers’ constructs of themselves, their jobs, organizations, and the community.

In conclusion these methodological assumptions are important in this research. There are, however, some equally important underlying research perspectives and principles which underpin this research project. These are discussed in the next section.

3.2. Research Perspectives and Principles
3.2.1 Rogerian Perspective
A Rogerian (or ecological) theoretical framework also directed the design and conduct of this research through theoretical frameworks, subject matter and research principles. For example, adopting a non-judgemental listening style
and unconditional positive regard for the participants follows the basic tenets of the Rogerian principles (Payne & Edwards 1997).

This perspective also allows the research topic to be opened up and broadened, and allowed me to search in a variety of directions, observe, explore and interpret with an acceptance of difference and not focus on any emerging theme more than the others. Thus, an ecological perspective is built on sound research principles of accepting diversity and uncovering multiple perspectives on a situation. Throughout the research process, emerging perspectives can be challenged and further explored, enabling the study to move beyond a surface understanding of the situation. Given these research parameters, this research project utilizes mixed modal research methods to measure the relationship between rural government workers their workplace and community.

3.2.2 Ethnographic Perspective
An ethnographic perspective (Spradley 1979) was also adopted to observe and seek understanding of rural government workers’ constructs and realities. The research is primarily a quantitative study enhanced by qualitative research, with a research emphasis on understanding a particular situation and gaining an insight into a particular issue. This study aimed to find an explanation for the high government worker turnover phenomenon that exists in Charleville, and the workers’ interactions with their workplace and community. It examined rural government workers’ perceptions, realities and meaning of ‘living and working in Charleville’ through a mixture of quantitative and qualitative research methods.

There were, however, some important underlying principles to the research, and these are discussed in the next section.

3.2.3 Research Principles
There are some underlying research principles which directed this study’s research processes. Slavin (1992), and Burgess (1985) collectively view the underlying research principles of qualitative research as follows:
Qualitative research is affiliated with the interpretivist, sociological manner of inquiry into the social world. It 'seeks to discover participants' perspectives of their worlds, views inquiry as an interactive process between researcher and participants, is both descriptive and analytic, and relies on people's words and observable behaviour as the primary data' (Marshall & Rossman 1995, p. 4). Qualitative research observes people from various distances or 'vantage points' giving different information about people, how they feel, act and interact (Judd, Smith & Kidder 1986) measuring attitudes and behaviours. In this study it is also used to confirm or disconfirm the hypotheses of this study, and to provide information about the workers, their thoughts, attitudes and behaviours.

Quantitative research is affiliated with the constructivist approach of inquiry. It is said that quantitative research can show 'the strength of statistical association between variables' and surveys can 'measure facts, attitudes or behaviours through questions' (May 1997, p. 84). A common notion regarding quantitative research is that it is affiliated with empirical inquiry and generates statistical data and analyses. It focuses more on numbers and statistics and can be used to describe the sample and/or to infer that the population or community is like the sample surveyed (Leary 1991). The underlying principles of quantitative methods as discussed by Leary (1990) include:

- reducing 'large numbers of scores and observations down to interpretable numbers such as averages and percentages' (p. 19);
- allowing the data to 'summarize and describe the behaviour of subjects in a study' (p. 19)
• drawing ‘conclusions about the reliability and generalizability of findings’ (p. 19).

There are two types of statistics that are used to interpret data: descriptive and inferential. In this study both types were used, firstly to find relationships between workers and the personal, community and work variables, and their intentions and turnover behaviour; and secondly, to provide a description of the sample population, their attitudes and behaviours of the participants.

Measuring attitude and behaviour is important in predicting behaviours. Measuring attitudes and tendencies to act in a certain way has been strongly related to behaviours performed, and one way we can measure the tendency is by measuring thoughts and feelings. However, behaviour is not always consistent with thoughts and feelings. Behaviour emerges from a combination of norms, habits and reinforcements, as well as the cognitive and affective components of attitudes (Jessup & Jessup 1975).

Measuring attitudes and behaviours in this study was a three-part process evaluating the way a person thinks, feels and acts (Doob 1974; Jessup & Jessup 1975). This study measured workers’ thoughts and feelings about certain variables and how these influenced behaviours. This was done primarily through the use of a survey, however it was augmented by interviews and observations.

There are issues with linking attitudes to behaviour. It has been suggested that the relationship between attitudes and behaviour is a result of multiple attitudes and the situation (Newcomb, Turner & Converse 1965; Kraut 1975). Furthermore, early research by Erlich (1969) noted, ‘studies in relation to attitudes and behaviours have almost consistently resulted in the conclusion that attitudes are a poor predictor of behaviour’ (p. 29). These questionable relationships between attitudes and turnover behaviour have implications for researching turnover and this study.
That said, several researchers have consistently found that a worker’s measure of intent is the best predictor of actual turnover (Hulin 1966; Kraut 1975; Marsh and Mannari 1977; Mobley 1978; Hom et al. 1979; Wong & Li 1995; Vandenberg & Nelson 1999; Robinson & Pillemer 2007). This is understandable when we consider that intent is an attitude and the use of a consistent measure strengthens the research’s ability to relate attitude to behaviour. Consequently, this was recognized as an important factor in predicting turnover and is used as a test on its own. In the following section I discuss the site and sample population, and the research methods for this study.

The actual research process began by observing the people, workplaces and community which contextualized the research setting. This laid the foundation for understanding how workers perceive their personal and professional lives, their workplace and environment. This was followed by the development and implementation of the survey with self-selecting participants. Some of those participants (again self selected) were also interviewed, which further explored the survey and observational data.

The research methodology steered the methods used and improved the project’s transparency in an attempt to increase its validity and reliability. The epistemological, ontological and methodological assumptions underlying this study meant the primary aims of the study were to find meaning in the data, create knowledge and portray reality.

Meaning was gained from language and behaviour. This data was collected from surveys, observations and interviews, and provided insights into the employees’ constructs of themselves, their jobs, organizations and community. An active learning approach was adopted to collect and analyse the data, that is, a ‘trawling’ process was used to collect the data, the interviews were semi-structured and the research process was flexible.

The research reliability was limited due to using only one research site, however the findings of this research could be applied to other rural service
towns due to the similarities between some rural communities with significant populations of government workers. The research setting was realistic and representative of the community, which strengthens its reliability. However, the sample was self-selected which also led to issues of validity. For example, certain personality types may have been more prone to participating in such studies, and hence this selection bias threatened the validity of the research.

The survey questions were adapted from known, popular and validated tests, for example, Smith’s Job Description Index, Porter and Steer’s Organizational Commitment Questionnaire, and Caplan et al.’s Social Support Scale. This substantially strengthened the study’s internal validity. Other questions that were added by me or adapted from another study created validity problems. However, the use of triangulation of research methods and comparisons of results from the long stayers and short stayers has minimised this problem.

Furthermore, the data collection and analysis processes were used consistently. For example, all participants were given the same instructions and information and all observations were collected and treated in the same manner. This reduced the inconsistencies in the research processes and increased the reliability of the measurement tools and procedures. Moreover, I repeated questions of a similar nature throughout the survey to ensure I gathered accurate data. For example, some of the questions about job satisfaction and the organizational climate were asked up to three times. This cross-checking procedure aimed to increase the study’s validity.

Qualitatively, there were research limitations with the interviews that should be noted. These included possible low reliability and validity due to interviewer response error and bias. In an attempt to overcome these problems, I presented each interviewee with a summary of their survey in a profile format. This allowed them to agree or disagree with my records. Finally, when gathering the qualitative data I would ‘replay’ what they were stating. This assisted in capturing accurate data, and increased the internal validity of the study.
3.3 Site and Sample Populations

The site of this research is Charleville, a government service town in South West Queensland, Australia. It can be classified as a rural community using the Queensland Government’s definition of rural and remote, which is any community not ‘falling within major cities of Australia or all regional city councils and urban shires in Inner Regional and Outer Regional Australia’ (see figure 2.4).

The Murweh Shire consists of three towns, Charleville with a population of 3300, Morven with 220, and Augathella with 350 people; and a significant number of people on outlying rural properties. Nearby towns include Quilpie (200 kilometres west), Roma (300 kilometres east), and Cunnamulla (200 kilometres south). Statistical data from the ABS (2007a) found that Charleville’s population declined by five per cent since 2001. Some government workforces have also been declining for example percentage of Charleville residents employed by the local council dropped from 101 to 72 (ABS 2001, 2007a) over the same period, and the Department of Primary Industries declined from 58 employees in 2000 to 38 in 2006.

Charleville is approximately 750 kilometres west of Brisbane (see figures 3.1 and 3.2) and is situated on the banks of the Warrego River. It lies in Queensland’s mulgalands, a region with a strong pastoral industry, and a growing tourism market. The climate is generally hot and dry. In summer the maximum temperatures commonly rise over 40°C, and winter minimums commonly drop below 0°C.
Figure 3.1 Map of Australia with states and territories marked. The state of Queensland is located in the north-east region of Australia.

Figure 3.2 Map of South West Queensland with Charleville and other major centres identified (Inset top left - Queensland with South West Queensland region shaded).

Charleville is also known as the ‘Hub of the South West’ because of its ability to offer a range of services to the region. It sits along the Warrego Highway, which links many of the South West Queensland towns to Brisbane. It also has daily flights to Brisbane and a rail passenger service twice a week. The rental market is very limited with very few quality houses for rent, and the average weekly rental is between $250 and $400. Charleville has a strong sporting culture along with a number of recreational groups in town, for
example, art and craft groups, Rotary, Lions and Toastmasters. The town also caters to most Christian denominations with weekly church services for Catholics, Anglicans and Seventh-day Adventists.

It has a regional hospital and Royal Flying Doctor base, two private doctors and a nursing home. It has offices for most state government departments including the departments of Communities, Environment, Primary Industries, and Transport. There are several educational facilities including a private and a state primary school, one high school and a TAFE college. The Department of Communities (previously Families) rates Charleville’s client accessibility as one of the most remote in Queensland, illustrating that there are issues with the remoteness of the town. Whilst, several departments, including the Department of Primary Industries (DPI), the Department of Education, and Department of Communities offer their staff remote allowances and cheap housing as incentives for working in Charleville.

According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics (2007a), there were 3,278 persons usually resident in Charleville of which 49.5% were males and 50.5% were females. Of those employed and usually resident in Charleville 7.9% work in the Education industry, seven per cent work in the Hospital, and 4.5% work in Local Government Administration. Moreover, 16.8 % Professionals, 13.2% were Clerical and Administrative Workers, and Managers made up 10.7%, down from 14% in 2001. This gives a total of 41% employed people in high-level service roles down from 44% in the 2001 census. Finally, the median weekly individual income for persons aged 15 years and over who were usual residents in Charleville was $502, compared with $466 in Australia.

The following table provides a list of the Queensland state government departments in Charleville and the staff numbers (table 3.1). The sample population for this study included professional, administrative and technical staff for the Queensland Government’s public service. Primarily, their roles were to serve the public and perform their duties according to the government directives associated with their work projects and programs.
The numbers were provided from survey participants and there is around an 18% discrepancy between workforce figures given by the participants and given in state government documentation. Three reasons are suspected for this mismatch in worker population. Firstly, it could be due to the age of the ABS data, or the figures being estimates only as provided by the participants, or a number of unfilled vacancies existing, hence the staff aren’t ‘on the ground’ but are ‘on the books’. That aside, it is clear that the Murweh Shire provides a high number of important services, and reflects the notion that Charleville is one of the largest towns in South West Queensland, servicing the region.

Table 3.1 State Government departments and staff numbers according to survey participants.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Government Department</th>
<th>No of Staff in Charleville</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Emergency Services</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QBuild</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environment</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Families</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Justice</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natural Resources</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Police</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary Industries</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Health</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Railway</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>437</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Charleville is one of the main towns in South West Queensland and the major centre for the Murweh Shire. It was chosen as a research site for several reasons. Firstly, it is where I currently reside, and secondly, it is typical of most rural service towns providing government and business support to rural populations, eg. Longreach in central Queensland. This is illustrated in the following table (3.2), which compares Charleville and Longreach populations and labour forces, and also compares these data to Australian data. The similarity between these two rural service towns suggests that this research and its findings could be applied to similar rural service towns across...
Queensland and even Australia. This simple comparison uses data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics’ Urban Centre Data, 2006 Census.

Table 3.2 A comparison of Charleville, Longreach and Australian populations and labour forces.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Town</th>
<th>Charleville</th>
<th>Longreach</th>
<th>Australia</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Population</td>
<td>3300</td>
<td>3000</td>
<td>19,855,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labour Force (%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professionals</td>
<td>17.5</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>19.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management</td>
<td>12.9</td>
<td>10.7</td>
<td>13.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clerical &amp; Administration</td>
<td>12.4</td>
<td>13.2</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community &amp; Personal Services</td>
<td>10.7</td>
<td>9.6</td>
<td>8.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industry (%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Education</td>
<td>9.3</td>
<td>7.9</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local Government</td>
<td>6.2</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hospital</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.4 Research Design and Construction
As discussed in the previous chapter, employee turnover literature influenced the design, questions and methods of this research. The variables tested have been outlined in the following model (figure 3.3). These include personal, professional and community elements, a worker's social support, levels of stress, job satisfaction and organizational commitment, and turnover intentions and behaviours.
The sample was drawn from different state government departments and was therefore heterogenous. Consequently, a mixture of both qualitative and quantitative research methods was adopted to examine this diverse sample, and two measures of the population were taken 12 months apart in an attempt to strengthen the validity of the study. A survey was the primary measurement tool in this study. It asked 167 questions in total, and collected primarily quantitative data. The survey is discussed in detail in section 3.6.2.1. Qualitative research processes were interviews and observations. Mark and Shotland (1987) support this approach, stating that information from a variety of sources provides ‘stronger or greater confidence… in the validity of one’s conclusions’ (p. 77). These research methods are discussed further in sections 3.6.2.2 and 3.6.2.3.

This convergence, or triangulation, of data from different research methods and worker groups is also used to reduce the limitations and/or biases in the data and to improve the reliability of the data (Jick 1983; Mathieson 1988).
Ethical considerations were also a part of the research design and construction. These are discussed in the following section.

3.5 Ethical Considerations

Codes of ethical practice were considered when devising and completing the research to ensure no participant was harmed in any way. With the research being done in a small rural community, I was aware of possible public exposure of the participants. Hence, measures were taken to ensure that anonymity and confidentiality were maintained at all times.

All organizations and participants were given information about the rationale and nature of the research. This included my role as researcher, the role of the participants, risks associated with the research and the of participants right to cease involvement or get help at any time. Participants were required to give informed written consent (see Appendix 1), the form on which they did so re-iterated their rights to ask any questions or to pull out of the study at any time. It also contained an assurance that their identity would not be disclosed and their data would be kept secure and confidential.

It was also acknowledged that participants could experience discomfort from responding to some of the highly personal questions. Any negative experience resulting from participating in the research would be handled sensitively and respectfully, and at all times I attempted to be sensitive to the emotional needs of the participants. If participants were reluctant to discuss an issue, it was not pursued. Participants were to feel safe, valued and respected during their participation in the research process. Such guidelines were imperative to this research as it probed into people’s personal lives. Because the study was set in the context of a small town, these ethical philosophies were applied in all research processes. There were three specific research stages: participant recruitment, data collection and data analysis. These are discussed in the following section.
3.6 Research Stages

The research involved surveys, observations and interviews. Participants had to be recruited as the surveys and interviews were self-selected.

3.6.1 Stage 1 – Participation Recruitment

Each Queensland Government department that has an office in Charleville was approached for this research project. Residing in Charleville allowed me to make connections with government departments easily. Firstly, I would meet with office managers to discuss the research and the possible participation of their department. Once the initial approval and support was gained, information about the research was passed on to staff through department newsletters, posters in staff rooms or at staff meetings (see Appendix 2).

I presented an outline of my research project and passed out surveys during staff meetings. Approval was gained from state government departments interested in participating and an introductory session was held to familiarise participants with the research, prior to the surveys being handed out. This included information such as when the surveys could be filled in and when they would be picked up, the sort of data that would be collected, how long the surveys would take, and that the information would be kept confidential and safe at all times.

Surveys were also left in common areas such as staff tea rooms with posters giving information about the research, the survey, where the surveys could be left for pickup and date of pick up (see Appendices 2 and 3). Information regarding the aims of the research, participant anonymity, the option to cease participation (see Appendix 2) and instructions for the survey were written on the front of each survey (see Appendix 3). This allowed those who were not at the face-to-face sessions outlining the research to participate. Participants were given two weeks to drop the questionnaires into a box left at their workplace. The final question on the survey allowed participants to leave their details if they wished to participate in the interview stage of the research.
participants were then phoned or emailed to arrange a meeting time and place for the interview. The process was repeated with the second round of data collection which occurred 12 months later.

### 3.6.2 Stage 2 - Data Collection

Three data collection methods were used in this study including a survey, observations and interviews. Table 3.3 shows the research method applied to each of the research questions, followed by a more in-depth review of these methods.

#### Table 3.3 Research methods applied to research questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Surveys</th>
<th>Observations</th>
<th>Interviews</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Can personal, professional, community, stress, social support, job satisfaction, organizational commitment and intent variables influence rural government worker turnover in Charleville?</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can personal, professional, community, stress, social support, job satisfaction and organizational commitment influence intent levels of rural government workers in Charleville?</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can intent influence the actual turnover of rural government workers in Charleville?</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural worker turnover can be predicted by some or all of the personal, professional, community, stress, social support, job satisfaction, organizational commitment and intent variables?</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can rural worker intent be predicted by some or all of the personal, professional, community, stress, social support, job satisfaction, organizational commitment and intent variables?</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can intent predict a rural worker’s actual leaving or staying?</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### 3.6.2.1 Surveys

Social surveys can collect information about people, for example, demographic data and information about attitudes and intentions. This survey did this through collecting descriptive statistical data and inferential data. The
survey (see Appendix 3) was the primary data collection tool in this research project. It was distributed in two rounds, firstly over three months (April, May and June) in 2003 and again over three months (February, March and April) in 2004. Actual turnover behaviour was measured 12 months after the survey was completed.

There were seven sections to the survey.

- Section one included questions about the individual’s personal and work characteristics including gender, age, gross income, rural experience, and the job role.
- Section two asked questions about personal orientation such as coping ability, organization fit, stress, and extroverted – introverted orientation.
- Section three measured job satisfaction
- Section four measured organizational commitment.
- Section five examined social support in the personal and professional realms
- Section six dealt with intent to leave and associated reasons
- Finally, there were sections for additional comments and for collecting the details of those interested in participating further in the research.

The survey was distributed to all government departments in Charleville except two. One department was eliminated because it had a history of being heavily researched. Another department specifically chose not to participate, hence the pool dropped from fourteen departments to twelve. The survey consisted of 167 mostly forced-response (or closed) questions, measuring 228 variables. It collected primarily quantitative data, hence it was decided that regression analysis would be used to analyse most of the survey data, whilst the remaining parts were analysed qualitatively.

The majority of the survey was a collaboration of significant surveys being used in a variety of fields, for example, the Job Description Index (Smith-
Mikes & Hulin 1978) and the Organizational Commitment Questionnaire (Porter & Steers 1963). Some questions were an extension of existing questions from these instruments, and a small number of questions were added to test specific issues in this research project. By using proven tests, the validity and reliability of the survey instrument was strengthened.

Table 3.4 below outlines the origins of each part of the survey. Missing from the table is the variable ‘community’. This is due to lack of community-specific tool to measure the variable. Community variables were therefore measured as elements of other categories. For example, ‘reasons for considering leaving the town’ were measured as part of the intent category.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Category</th>
<th>References</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Personal and Work Characteristics</td>
<td>Boylan (1993); Curry, Wakefield, Price and Mueller (1986); Storey (1992); Watson, Hatton Squires and Soliman (1989); Rahim and Psenicka (1996)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Orientation</td>
<td>Bandura (1982); Watson, Hatton Squires and Soliman (1989); Rahim and Psenicka (1996)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stress</td>
<td>Caplan (1974)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfaction</td>
<td>Kraut (1975); Boylan (1993)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organizational Commitment</td>
<td>Porter et al. (1974); Boylan (1993)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Support</td>
<td>Caplan, Cobb, French, Van Harrison, and Pinneau (1975)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intent to leave</td>
<td>Kraut (1975); Boylan (1993); Storey (1992); Mertler (2002)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The survey was primarily made up of closed questions that collected data regarding both attitudes and behaviours. Many of the questions used a three-, four- or five-point Likert scale, and the data was almost wholly collected in a check-mark response format. This type of scale (Likert 1932) is commonly used and preferred because it is easy for researchers to devise and because people prefer the freedom of responding along a continuum.

As mentioned earlier, the survey was a collection of questions adopted and adapted from previous research studies in this area. Some questions were adapted or added to, to meet the needs of this project, but on the whole,
questions from other surveys were adopted in their entirety. Table 3.5 below illustrates this, and is followed in the following section by an in-depth review of each variable.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Area</th>
<th>Research topics</th>
<th>Question and Reference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Personal and Work Characteristics</td>
<td>Personal demographics Organizational details</td>
<td>Qns1-20 Boylan (1993)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rural experience</td>
<td>Qns21 – 23 Storey (1992)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rural work experience</td>
<td>Qns24 – 26 Curry, Wakefield, Price and Mueller (1986)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reasons for accepting position</td>
<td>Qn27 No of full time work (Storey 1992)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Expected location of work</td>
<td>Qns28 – 29 Storey (1992)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Work conditions - Role overload, insufficiency, ambiguity and conflict</td>
<td>Qn30 Watson, Hatton Squires and Soliman (1989); Qns31-34 and Qn77 Rahim and Psenicka (1996)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Orientation</td>
<td>Introversion/Extraversions</td>
<td>Qns35-39 adapted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Coping/adjustment</td>
<td>Qns40 - 48 Watson, Hatton Squires and Soliman (1989)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Self-efficacy</td>
<td>Qns49-59 Bandura (1977)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stress</td>
<td>Stress and Strain</td>
<td>Qns60-70 Rahim and Psenicka (1996)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfaction</td>
<td>Satisfaction</td>
<td>Qns71-76 Kraut (1975)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Qns78-79 Boylan (1993)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organizational Commitment</td>
<td>Level of organizational commitment</td>
<td>Qns80-81 Boylan (1993)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Change in organizational commitment</td>
<td>Qns82-96 Porter et al. (1974)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Support</td>
<td>Talking, listening, help and reliability factors of relations with colleagues,</td>
<td>Qns97-121 Caplan, Cobb, French, Van Harrison, and Pinneau’s (1975)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>family and friends</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intent to leave</td>
<td>Factors influencing decision to remain</td>
<td>Qns122-152 Boylan (1993)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>If have own way questions</td>
<td>Qns154 Kraut (1975)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ever considered leaving</td>
<td>Qns153 and 155 extended concept</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Do it all again</td>
<td>Qns156 and 157 Boylan (1993)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>When leave and where going next and in long term</td>
<td>Qns158 and 159 extended concepts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Promotion or leave professional permanently</td>
<td>Qns160 Mertler (2002)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Factors influencing reasons to leave</td>
<td>Qns161 - 163 Boylan (1993)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Qns164-165 Boylan (1993)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Qns 166-167 Storey (1992)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3.6.2.1.1 Personal and Work Characteristics

In line with commonly researched demographics this study aimed to get a profile of the worker and the population being studied. Demographics targeted include gender, age, income, occupation, number of people in work team, family, time spent in Charleville, expectations, reasons for accepting the position and past work and rural experiences.

The demographic questions were adopted from several studies. The first set of questions regarding gender, age, nationality, education levels, rural background, family situation, job and organization come from Boylan’s (1993) study. The next set of questions regarding organizational details come from Storey (1992), as does the section pertaining to the reasons for accepting the position. The questions regarding rural work experience came from Curry, Wakefield, Price and Mueller (1986). Expected work location was measured with one question adopted from Watson, Hatton, Squires and Soliman (1989). The final four questions regarding the worker’s role came from Rahim and Psenicka (1996). They succinctly measured role overload, ambiguity, conflict and insufficiency.

Personal Orientation

Personal orientation is also referred to as personality. Four main personality traits were recognized in the literature but only three were studied in this research. It was decided to eliminate the variable ‘need for achievement’ from this study, because it is very similar to self-efficacy, and collects similar data concepts as self-efficacy.

Introversion/Extroversion

It is clear that introversion-extroversion persuasions influence the way a worker performs (Taylor 1969; Jessup & Jessup 1975; Parks & Waldo 1999; Deary, Watson & Hogston 2003). There are certain questions common to many simple introversion-extroversion short test and these were adapted to measure introversion-extroversion. The test included five questions which evaluated a person’s tendency to be inwardly or outwardly focussed, outgoing
or shy, talkative or quiet, to think first or act first, and to value depth or breadth of experience.

Respondents indicated which way they leant and scores were given on a binary scale. In addition, the unweighted sum of the five scales was used as a measure of overall introversion-extroversion.

**Coping Ability**

Coping has emerged as an important factor in recruiting and retaining rural workers (Watson et al. 1989; Lonne & Cheers 2000; McDonough 2007; Gow et al. 2008). In Watson et al.'s (1989) study into new rural teachers in New South Wales, a coping measure was devised which was simple and straightforward. This was adopted in its entirety.

Seven questions measuring a worker’s ability to cope with duties, work responsibilities, location, community, town’s facilities, living conditions and maintaining preferred lifestyle were taken from Watson, Hatton, Squires and Soliman (1989). I added two questions regarding coping with being a new employee and new to Charleville in an attempt to understand the worker’s ability to cope when new to job and community.

The responses were collected according to a five-point Likert scale. In addition, a sum of the seven components was used as a measure of overall coping, a sum for the five general coping measures, and another sum for the two components, measuring responses to being new to the job and the town, were calculated.

**Self-efficacy**

Self-efficacy has also consistently proven to be a factor in worker performance and turnover (Bandura 1977, 1982, 1986, 1992, 1997; Sterret 1998; Abraham 1999a; Strauser & Ketz 2002; Skaakvik & Skaavik 2004; McDonough 2007). Self-efficacy influences an individual’s choice of setting, behaviours and persistence (Bandura 1977; 1997). Self-efficacy measures
vary widely and were deemed inappropriate for this survey because of the usually large number of questions they involve.

The self-efficacy questions were adapted from Bandura’s self-efficacy theory to suit the needs of the study. Hence, eleven questions were devised to see if 1) the person had high or low self-efficacy at work and 2) if the workplace espoused the basic tenets of Bandura’s self-efficacy expectations. These tenets include performance attainments, vicarious learning, verbal persuasion and emotional arousal and were assessed with regard to whether the person and workplace had such characteristics (Bandura 1977, 1990, 1992, 1993, 1997). The questions pertained to how the participants felt about their work performances, role models and encouragement in the workplace and how they dealt with difficult situations. In addition, the unweighted sum of the nine scales was used as a measure of overall self-efficacy.

3.6.2.1.2 Stress

A measure of stress was developed based on the eight physical and emotional elements of stress and strain identified by Rahim and Psenicka (1996). Four indices of workplace stress and four indices for measuring strain were measured including attitudes, behaviours and symptoms such as cognitive disturbances, anxiety, depression and anger.

Eleven questions were devised to test these eight elements. The questions about stress evaluated the workers’ perceptions of job demands, their ability to complete work assignments, congruence of education and skills with the requirements of the job and clarity of expectations and conflicting demands of the job. The questions about strain evaluated their ability to concentrate and remember; physical conditions such as hand trembling, upset stomach, dizziness, avoidance and fear; loneliness, depression and boredom; and being angry, irritated and critical of others. Due to the sensitive nature of researching in a small town, the questions regarding feelings of suicide and level of sexual interest were omitted from this study. In addition, the unweighted sum of the nine scales was used as a measure of overall stress and strain.
3.6.2.1.3 Job Satisfaction
Several means of assessing job satisfaction have been developed. One of the best known of these is the Job Description Index or JDI (Smith, Kendall & Hulin 1969), which assesses satisfaction in five areas – work, pay, promotional opportunities, supervision and fellow workers. It is one of the most thoroughly researched and developed tools of its kind and is strong in both predictive power and construct validity. The five components of job satisfaction have also been shown to be positively related to other important variables such as organizational commitment and intention to leave (Igbaria & Guimaraes 1993).

In this study, seven questions were used to measure job satisfaction. Six of the questions were adopted from Kraut’s (1975) study that originated out of the JDI (Smith-Mikes & Hulin 1969). Furthermore, I added another regarding satisfaction with supervision. The questions therefore measured work, organization, teamwork, promotional opportunities, supervision, pay and the amount of work done. A five-point Likert Scale was used to collect responses. In addition, the sum of the seven components was used as a measure of overall satisfaction. Furthermore, two general questions were added. These were taken from Boylan (1993) and asked participants for the greatest sources of workplace satisfaction and dissatisfaction.

3.6.2.1.4 Organizational Commitment
The Organizational Commitment Questionnaire (OCQ), as devised by Mowday, Steers and Porter in 1974 is a commonly used measurement tool that has a strong internal consistency and test-retest reliability, making it a relatively stable measure. It also has acceptable, though not perfect, levels of convergent, discriminant and predictive validity (Mowday et al. 1979; Kraut 1975; Igbaria & Guimaraes 1993).

The shortened version is a 15-item questionnaire designed to measure the degree to which subjects feel committed to the employing organization. Included are items pertaining to workers’ perceptions of loyalty toward the organization, willingness to exert a great deal of effort to achieve
organizational goals, and acceptance of the organization’s values. The wording of six items is reversed in an attempt to reduce response set bias. It was adopted in its entirety into this study. Statements are answered on three-point Likert scale.

As well as adding the unweighted sum of the scales to give a measure of total of organizational commitment as used by Porter et al. (1974), two other questions were used to test overall organizational commitment. These were adopted from Boylan's (1993) study and asked participants to 1) indicate their level of commitment to their career, and 2) asked if this had changed over the last year and why.

3.6.2.1.5 Social Support
A commonly used measure of social support is Caplan, Cobb, French, Van Harrison and Pinneau’s (1975) Social Support Scale. It assesses the extent to which six sources of social support (that is, supervisor, co-workers, spouse, friends, relatives and others) provide four types of support – ‘easy to talk to’, ‘good listeners’, ‘go out of their way’ for the subject, or are ‘reliable help-providers when needed’. Furthermore, a number of studies have confirmed the satisfactory internal consistency/reliability and criterion-related validity of the scale (Rahim 1990; Abraham 1998)

The Social Support Scale (Caplan et al. 1975) was adopted in its entirety into this study. It collected responses on a four-point Likert-type scale on which one = not at all and no person, two = a little, three = somewhat, and four = very much. Totals for the various support persons were calculated so the study could identify who gave the most and least levels of support, and a general total was gathered by calculating the unweighted sum of the scales to give an overall score for social support.

3.6.2.1.6 Intent to Leave
The use of intent as a predictor of turnover has been effective in assessing both short and long term stayers and this is due to its generalizability and utility (Kraut 1975; Waters et al. 1976; Parasuraman 1982; Williams & Hazer
1986; Abraham 1999b; Lonne 2001; Robinson & Pillemer 2007). There has, however, been some criticism that the link between intent to leave and actually leaving is overly simplistic. Consequently, it is recognized in this study that it is a complex factor to measure and several tools have been adopted and adapted to measure it accurately and validly.

First, a four-part checklist was adopted from Boylan (1993) to identify the elements that have influenced a worker’s decision to remain. This looked at 1) benefits such as pay and incentives; 2) work conditions such as peer support, supervision and job satisfaction; 3) personal factors such as proximity to family and friends, and employment for spouse; and 4) community elements such as climate, social relationships and community involvement. Within each category there were seven elements. The participants could tick as many elements as they wished, and totals were given for each category to identify the most common groups. Scores for each individual element were also totalled so the most popular responses could be identified. The survey also requested that workers identify the most and second-most important factors as ticked in the previous section. These were also tallied up to find the most important factors.

The second tool involved three questions. The first question was adapted from Kraut (1975) who asked workers ‘if they had their own way would they 1) be working for this organization but in another location in five years from now?’ I added two other questions to assess worker intent towards the town and their career. They were: ‘If you have your own way, will you be working in Charleville but in another job in five years from now?’ and ‘If you have your own way, will you be working in this career field but not this organization in five years from now?’

The third section measured the primary influences on worker intent to leave. If they had considered leaving their position, profession, organization and town, participants were asked for reasons. The first two elements, regarding the position and the profession, were adopted from Boylan (1993). I added the latter two elements (organization and town) to expand the research.
Fourth, a question was adopted from Mertler’s (2002) motivation study. It investigated the attachment the worker has to their career, and asked participants if they would choose the same career path if given the opportunity to start over again.

The final section of the part of the survey devoted to intention to leave asked questions about the participant’s plans for the future. It asked when the participant would like to leave Charleville ideally. This question was the dependent variable used to explain and predict intent. Survey participants were asked to indicate their responses on a six-point Likert scale ranging from ‘now’ to ‘not in the foreseeable future’. They were also asked about where they wanted to go next, and where they wanted to be in the long term. It went on to ask if a promotion was likely in the near future, and if leaving the profession permanently was likely in the near future. These questions were adopted from Boylan (1993). The second part of this section was a list of variables that participants could tick regarding factors which influenced their intent to leave. It was adopted from Storey’s (1992) Canadian study into rural teachers. Participants were also asked to identify the most and second-most important responses.

3.6.2.1.7 Other comments
Finally workers were given space to add any other comments they wished to add. They were also asked to leave their contact details if they wished to participate further in the study.

3.6.2.2 Interviews
The interviews were done to enhance the data collected through surveys and observations and further explore observed and emerging patterns. The questions were semi-structured and pertained to factors influencing possible attrition. The use of a semi-structured approach ensured that any identified emerging themes could be discussed further in every interview, and that the data collected would be fairly consistent (see Appendix 4). A low-key,
uncontrolling role was assumed by the interviewer so the respondents felt comfortable giving information.

It has been said that surveying employees who are leaving is of limited use due to the extremely high number of leavers who give pay or promotion as reasons for leaving (Davies & Shackleton 1972). Hence, interviews have been able to better assess employees’ reasons for leaving, as the worker tends to be more frank about the job and workplace in conversation than in a survey. Interviews also have an important role in research in general.

The advantages of interviews in research include the more personal data collected, increased participant motivation and ease of response by the participant. Furthermore, interviews are more flexible and less restrictive than surveys, allowing the participant to give more qualitative information, yielding broad and deep data (Gardner 1976).

Based on this, the interviews played an important part in adding depth to the survey and observation data and breadth in general to this study. They enabled a large amount of data to be gathered quickly, and further explored the context and reasons for rural government worker turnover in Charleville. Hence, the interviews for this study were kept consistent and were based around the participants’ survey data. They also provided further examination of emerging patterns found in the data. There are, however, some disadvantages of interviews.

The disadvantages of interviews include potential low reliability due to interviewer response error and bias, low levels of validity, the increased time required to conduct them, money and energy costs, and difficulties recording responses. The interviewer actively worked to reduce the impact of these problems, for example by running trial interviews and devising a proforma to guide the interview. The following section outlines the outcomes of the trial interviews and the subsequent conduct of the interview process.
Trial Interviews

Trial interviews were organised to run with two workers in different departments prior to data collection. There was substantial diversity between the interviewees. The demographic characteristics of each worker and each workplace were very different. The atmosphere of the interviews also differed considerably. One worker was keen to participate and was free in giving their thoughts on turnover, the workplace and the community. The other participated but by comparison said little. Consequently, I took a low-key, uncontrolling approach, allowing the respondents to comment on the areas they felt comfortable with, though under this approach there was the potential to easily divert from the topic.

The trial interviews aimed to elaborate on the survey and observational data, particularly researching the reasons why workers considered leaving and what elements of their work or home lives could make them change their decision. These questions were ‘you illustrated that you were/weren’t leaving soon, what are the reasons influencing this decision?’ It was decided that this was the crux of the survey because it expanded on the workers’ levels of intent and collected information about what influenced their decision. These questions were extended in the interview by asking about the major factors influencing their desire to leave Charleville, what would make them change their minds, and which facets of life in Charleville would they change.

Interviewees were given a promise of complete anonymity and freedom to cease participating at any time. This clarified my role, put the participants at ease, and focussed them on the topic. Both trial interviewees did not wish to be taped, and on this basis, and to increase employee ease and consequent participation, the interviews were not taped. The participants clearly felt uncomfortable with the possibility of the interviews being tape recorded and it was deemed more appropriate to take written notes. Consequently, a proforma was created (see Appendix 4).
Finally it must be noted that the interviews were dependent upon the cooperation and honesty of the participants. The development of a strong rapport with participants was, therefore, vital when collecting the interview data. It was also acknowledged and appreciated that some of the questions being asked were potentially uncomfortable. Hence, probing of these areas was done sensitively, considerately and flexibly. Trust was built between the worker and me as researcher and consequently it was considered that the data collection was open, truthful and accurate.

**Main Interviews**
The interviews were held in February and March 2004. These occurred in workplaces, and were held at a time and place chosen by the interviewee. This was for reasons of convenience and familiarity, and consequently an environment conducive to successfully conducting interviews in a confidential yet comfortable place. The interviews went for between 30 minutes and two hours. The length of the interview was dependent upon the level of openness of the participant.

Prior to each interview, the participants were informed about the research process. They were told why the topic was being researched, that the interview would be semi-structured, that notes would be taken to record the interview, that it would take up to an hour, and that I was there in the role of researcher. They were also given a promise of complete anonymity and that they could refuse to answer any questions they chose to, and that they could stop at any time during the interview or choose their data not to be used in the research project. This clarified my role, put the participants at ease, and focussed them on the evaluation.

The interviews were intentionally informal, as it is stated, ‘that when deep emotions are involved, informal methods may produce data closer to the truth. People tend to answer more truthfully in a friendly, informal setting which gives them full scope to express themselves’ (Gardner 1976, p. 60). This informal approach was important in obtaining the truth from the participants.
The questions were both open and closed and a level of probing and prompting occurred. The interview began with some forced-response questions about who they were, which organization they worked for and how long they had been living in Charleville and other rural areas. This eased the participant into the interview.

The first open-ended question measured worker’s perceptions about what the major factors influencing their desire to leave Charleville were. Question two asked them to give a ‘wish list’ of elements which would make them stay in Charleville and part two of this question asked them to categorize these elements into ‘must haves’ and ‘would likes’. The final question asked them to identify factors in their work, home and community life that they would like to eradicate, and asked for suggestions on how this could happen.

A proforma was devised with the questions written on it and ample space to record comments. It imposed some structure to the interviews and aided in record keeping. Although the decision to ask all interviewees the same key questions imposed structure, the interviews were still flexible enough to follow any tangents that arose. The record keeping on a proforma worked well on the whole. On occasion participants strayed well off track, which made note-taking slightly more difficult than just jotting down related information. Moreover the proforma directed the questions to be used but allowed for deviation and this meander was common.

The comments were recorded briefly but as comprehensively as possible. These notes were reviewed and fleshed out into interview data as soon as was possible after the interview, so no information was lost or confused by the element of time and a complete record of the discussion was gathered, which ultimately facilitated better data analysis. Categories were developed to organise participants’ answers into key themes that emerged from the interviews. Responses were then analysed according to these themes and constructivist-interpretive approaches to research.
As themes emerged they were considered in terms of meaning, reality and theory. Epistemologically, I took on an active learner role in the research process. This allowed for a meaningful relationship between the participants and me to develop. It was decided that this was a relevant and useful process in the social research project. Moreover, the data collected from participants was sifted through my own knowledge, experience and reality.

Hence, in line with accurate representation of the information collected, the interview data was regularly fed back to participants, by requotting and discussing interpretation of concepts gathered. This ensured that my understanding of the participant’s perceptions was correct and I captured the intended message. This was extremely important for two main reasons. Firstly, in an interpretive approach the link between language and meaning is crucial to gain understanding, and secondly, to gain a true representation of a participant’s message, their information should be, to the best of the researcher’s ability, precisely understood.

3.6.2.3 Observations
The observations were to take place in the workplaces and in the community. Community observations were deemed important because while the workplace is a social unit in its own right it cannot be regarded as self-contained (Hamilton & Delamont 1974). Similarly, if opportunities for out-of-community observations arose they were taken. The role of non-participant observer was employed to minimize the level of control and thus enhance the reliability of the data (Cavanagh 1984; Stenhouse 1988). Observation notes were kept about anything relevant observed or heard in conversation, newspaper articles, reports etc. Names of the people being observed, date, time, venue, and the department in which they worked were also noted. The observations were also processed qualitatively by identifying common themes that were compared and contrasted to the survey and interview data.

When we consider that ‘what people actually do is often more important than what they say’ (Denzin 1970), we find that observations are a crucial part of the social research process. Observational research was considered a useful
companion to other research methods in this study. By incorporating observations into the research process, it is assumed that ‘meaning’ can be gained from people’s practices and behaviours, and can be a reflection of thoughts, feelings and understanding (Marshall & Rossman 1995)

The rationale and focus of the observations were:

- to identify when and why a worker left
- to record the actions and statements made by the workers in relation to their attrition or retention
- to gain impressions about the workers personality, home and work situation, social interactions in relation to stress, job satisfaction and organizational commitment to their organization and community
- to gather data which will complement the survey and interview data.

Observations were conducted in the workplace and in the community. Here I used non-participant observations as much as possible to minimize the level of control and thus enhance the reliability of the data (Cavanagh 1984; Stenhouse 1988). I observed workers interacting with others at social gatherings held in the workplace, and during certain times of the year, for example, long weekends, Easter and Christmas breaks. I also held discussions with workers about their work, workplace, life in general and their intentions to stay or leave, and collected newspaper clippings on those who left and those who were new to the town.

Notes were kept about relevant visual and/or aural observations and were later expanded to properly contextualized information. The notes included worker’s reflections of their experiences, fears, enjoyments, confusions, problems, particular likes and dislikes and ways they deal with issues, in the job and community, and any changes in attitude or behaviour that could be due to the environment or culture (Spradley 1979). The notes were kept in chronological order and included dates and times, the relevant contextual situation, quotations and paraphrases, details about the informant and their department, and any synthesis or interpretation made.
3.6.3 Stage 3 – Data Analysis
Firstly, I used the descriptive statistical data from the survey to develop a simple quantitative description of the sample group. This was done using Microsoft Excel. Percentages were found for all 184 statistical variables in the survey and are presented as raw data in table format in Appendix 5. The process was also used to provide a comparative base for the two sample groups (Round one and Round two data), identifying any major differences between the two groups of survey participants.

I then used regression analysis to quantitatively analyse some of the data. Regression analysis was chosen for three primary reasons. Firstly, because of its ability to model relationships between variables, determine the magnitude of those relationships, and even make predictions. Secondly, it is commonly used in the social sciences. And thirdly, it allows one to predict the probability of discrete outcome, from a set of variables that may be continuous, discrete, dichotomous, or a mix of any of these, usually with a dependent variable which is dichotomous. Three tests were conducted to explain and predict intent and attrition from the data collected in the surveys, and to see whether turnover could be predicted from intent. ‘R’ statistical software program was used, it is freeware with similar capabilities to ‘S’ software. This process was repeated with round two participants to enable this study to enhance its validity, that is enabling the factors identified as influencing turnover intention and behaviours from the first group’s findings to be crosschecked with the second group.

Finally, some survey data and all the observational and interview data was analysed qualitatively. The qualitative data was analysed primarily through categorization processes. Categories were organised into themes indicated by repeated comments, observations, trends, regularities and irregularities in the data. These themes were then related to the research questions. The data analysis is discussed in further detail in the following section (3.6.3.1).
3.6.3.1 Quantitative Data Analysis

3.6.3.1.1 Descriptive Analysis

Initially, I analysed the survey data using descriptive statistics analyses. This enabled me to develop a picture of the survey participants and their perceptions of their workplace, town, organization, job satisfaction, social support networks, commitment and intent. My approach here was to examine the responses to individual questions and in some cases (e.g., job satisfaction) composite scores from more than one question. These results described the data in percentages, and provided a sound context for the research.

3.6.3.1.2 Regression Analysis

A second layer of analyses was conducted using logistic regression because of its ability to model complex relationships between one, or more, predictors. In this study, it was used to develop predictive models of both intent and turnover from the original 64 respondents’ survey data. Three separate quantitative analyses were conducted (Tests 1, 2 and 3 in figure 3.1). Test one modelled turnover from the survey data. Turnover data was derived from observations one year after the survey was completed and coded one for individuals still in the same position, and zero otherwise. Test two modelled intent from the survey data. The intent response was derived from question 193 of the survey that was recoded as one for response c, d, or e and zero otherwise.

Tests one and two modelled intent and turnover over the same one-year period, and so are directly comparable. Test three modelled turnover, measured identically as per Test one using only intent as a predictor. Intent was again derived from question 193, but this time kept in its original ordinal coding to preserve as much information as possible.

Tests one and two obviously differ from test three in their complexity. Whereas three is a simple analysis with one predictor (intent), tests one and two each began with a large set of potential predictors that were reduced to a
smaller set of predictors with higher predictive power. The data reduction and analyses for tests one and two are therefore discussed separately to the analysis for test three in the following section.

**Tests 1 and 2**

In the first stage of each analysis I examined the bivariate relationship between the dependent variable and each predictor, rejecting predictors with only a weak association to the dependent variable. I did this to identify a smaller, more manageable subset of predictors with some statistical association to the response, and to use these in the modelling. This data-reduction approach assumes that the strength of the predictor-response relationship also indicates the predictor's importance in multivariate models, an assumption, which is not always correct (James & McCulloch 1990). Using a more inclusive acceptance threshold (Hosmer & Lemeshow 1989), can reduce the possibility of excluding a useful predictor, hence I used a threshold of $p<0.1$ for the significance of the univariate predictor. Evaluation of predictors in the bivariate analyses varied according to the measurement scale of the predictor (that is, binary, categorical, ordinal or continuous), and this is discussed next.

For binary predictors, the response was regressed directly on predictor, and significance assessed. I rejected all predictors of $p>0.1$, as well as those where one category held fewer than five cases, on the basis that data were too sparse in that category to draw meaningful results.

For continuous and ordinal predictors, non-linearities were corrected where necessary by either polynomial or power transformation of the predictor (Fry 1993). In cases where the polynomial transformation was not significant, I accepted the transformation with the greatest significance value if $p<0.1$. Where both terms of the polynomial had $p<0.1$, both terms of the polynomial were selected if their significance was greater than that for the best univariate transformation.
Categorical variables were reconstructed as sets of binary variables so that univariate significance of different classes could be assessed. Classes of less than five cases were not examined unless they could be combined with another class on a meaningful basis such as a shared characteristic. Categories with more than five cases could also be combined if there was a meaningful basis for their combination. Once categorical variables were recoded as binary data, assessment proceeded as per other binary predictors.

The data reduction processes for tests one and two coincidentally reduced the starting set of 208 predictors to a more manageable set of 17 predictors in both cases. Having reduced the number of variables to a more manageable size, potential models could then be identified. Ideally, I would have fitted and compared all possible subsets, however even with only 17 predictors, the number of combinations is $2^{17}$ or 131,072 separate models, a number beyond the resources of this and indeed most studies.

Alternative procedures exist, most notably stepwise regression. However, stepwise regression has been criticised in a large number of studies and reviews (eg Berk 1978, Miller 1984, Flack & Chang 1987, James & McCulloch 1990, Nicholls 1991), which indicate stepwise regressions frequently select sub-optimal models, and are inappropriate in collinear data, which was the case with my data. Instead, I used a 'modified all subsets' approach to identify potentially useful models. For each analysis, all possible regressions of $k < six$ predictors were run, and for each level of $k$, the ten models with the lowest residual deviance were retained for further analysis.

In both analyses there were at least ten models of five predictors for which all terms were significant, suggesting that at least some six-term models could also have a full suite of significant predictors. However, it was beyond the resources of this work to run all possible six- and seven-term models, and a way was needed to examine larger models without creating excessive additional computational load.
This was done in test one (intent) by modelling the eight best (lowest residual deviance) four-term models and the ten best five term models included the terms prom.in5 and wk.in5. I then ran all possible six and seven term models that included these two terms. Again, only one six-term model was found for which all terms were significant, and of these none had significance of \( p < .035 \). No seven-term models, including the terms prom.in5 and wk.in5, were identified with all terms significant.

In test two (turnover) modelling, the ten best (lowest residual deviance) models of four- and five-terms respectively all included the terms prom.in5 and prom.in5.sq. I therefore ran all possible six and seven term models that included these two terms, but only one six-term and no seven term model was identified with all predictors significant.

These processes resulted coincidentally in 51 models of between one and six terms to compare in each of the intent and turnover analyses. Current best practice in regression modelling is to select models on several criteria including goodness-of-fit to parent or independent data, parsimony, and adherence to statistical assumptions. In this work I used two primary criteria for comparing models: fit to data kept independent of the above analyses (fitted deviance) and Akeake’s Information Criterion (AIC). Both of these criteria are recommended in the literature as criteria for identifying models with predictive power (Iles 1993; McCullagh & Nelder 1996).

If two hypothetical models (A and B) of the same phenomenon and from the same data are compared, and A has a slightly lower AIC than B, while B has slightly lower fitted deviance than A, it is difficult to objectively decide which model is the better predictor. To circumvent this problem, I transformed the 51 AIC scores and the 51 fitted deviance scores from both tests one and two into Z scores, and for each model averaged the Z scores for its AIC and fitted deviance. In each analysis the ten models with the highest average Z score were identified, and I then conducted analyses of their residuals, testing their approximate normality of residuals and for cases of abnormally high influence, rejecting models with underlying problems in their residual distributions. In
each analysis, the selected model was the one with the best Z score that did not have cases of unduly high influence and approximately normally distributed residuals.

**Test 3**

As stated in the previous section, test three was a simple logistic regression analysis used to predict turnover from intent. Intent was derived from survey question 193, and coded as an ordinal variable such that scores of one through six were assigned to responses one (e.g. I intend leaving my job ‘now’) through six (I do not intend to leave my job ‘in the foreseeable future’) respectively. I ran a number of analyses to identify the parameterisation of intent that explained the greatest variation in turnover. These parameterisations included all possible combinations of first, second and third order polynomial transformations of the predictor.

I also examined the five possible models with the intent expressed as a binary predictor (that is, intention to leave ‘now’ versus ‘not now’ and ‘within a year’ versus ‘not within a year’, etc). The best of all tested models was the parameterisation based around whether people wanted to leave within a year (the first two responses to question 193) versus other responses. As per tests one and two, I recorded the fitted deviance and AIC values of this model, which allowed this model to be objectively compared with those produced from test one.

**3.6.3.2 Qualitative Data Analysis**

The qualitative analysis was a process of categorizing the data and searching for meaning through the emergence of themes. The methods were triangulated to strengthen the validity, then compared with the literature to find meaning from the results. These are discussed further in the following section.

The initial data analysis involved the observation and survey data only as the preliminary results here gave direction for the interviews. A basic review and
summation of the emerging themes led to the three questions that formed the basis of the interviews.

After the interview data was collected, a more in-depth analysis was done using a mixture of some survey data, the observational and interview data. Firstly, the data was sorted into categories according to topic or theme. These themes were also quantified to measure their strength. That is, the participants' usage of comments was measured by frequency, and percentages were calculated within each category that allowed for weighting and comparisons to be made. The emerging patterns were then ranked to clarify the most popular categories and directions within the data.

To further refine this, the data was then categorized according to how long the participant had been in Charleville, a method that has been used successfully in several key rural research projects including Kraut (1975), HREOC (2000) and Hall et al. (2007). The 'short stayers’ can be defined as those who have been in Charleville less than two years, the ‘moderate stayers’ have been in Charleville more than two years but less than five years, and the ‘long stayers’ more than five years. This process was repeated three times, firstly according to government department, secondly according to research method, and finally according to how long the participant intended to stay, for example, short term (less than 1 year); short to medium term (more than one year but less than two years); medium to long term (less than four years); long term (five years or greater or not leaving). This repeated process of triangulation was used to explore the qualitative data and enhance the validity of the findings.

The trends, regularities and irregularities in the data were then related to the research questions. The same processes occurred for the second set of data. Furthermore, as conclusions were formed, they were challenged, which entailed looking for data which opposed the emerging patterns, and including them in the analysis. I also searched for alternative plausible explanations for the data and the linkages among them. Eventually, the strong emerging
patterns were evaluated against the literature to further clarify the conclusions.

### 3.7 Research Limitations

All three research methods used in this study have strengths and weaknesses. These include the researcher affecting and/or reacting to worker’s information. Furthermore, the presence of a researcher can cause participants to think and/or behave in a non-typical manner. Patton (1990) states that participants may ‘react’ differently (both verbally and behaviourally) under research conditions, particularly in the observations stage, as the overt presence of a researcher can influence behaviour performed. This can distort or completely fail to reflect the situation accurately (Patton 1990). To counter this, findings were discussed and checked for accuracy with the participants.

The observations and interviews shared the limitation of being difficult to replicate. Reliability, like validity, is influenced by the nature of the research and can be strengthened and assessed by clear descriptions of the research methods and context. Furthermore, the degree to which the results are applicable to other situations is an issue because the findings must be viewed within a specific time and place.

Bias is another potential limitation influencing the research findings. Patton (1990, p. 55) recommends a stance of neutrality. This means that the researcher does not set out to prove a particular point or manipulate the data to arrive at predisposed truths. Instead, the researcher researches the topic with no predetermined theory to prove and attempts to understand the world as it is, noting the complexities and multiple perspectives that emerge whether they complement or conflict with existing findings.

This research makes a concerted effort to reduce methodological limitations, for example, by making any research and theoretical standpoints clear, by checking and rechecking interpretations made, by comparing and contrasting findings with previous research findings, and by explicitly discussing how any limitations impacted on the research process (Patton 1990). One of the key
strengths of this research was the use of three research methods covering both qualitative and quantitative research areas, thereby reducing the effect of the limitations.

There were also limitations pertaining to the use of a small sample within a particular context, that is, government workers in a rural town. This must be acknowledged in this research project as limiting its wider applications. Overall population, time and budgetary limitations influenced the ability to examine a greater number of participants.

Finally, the workers participating in the study may not necessarily be representative of workers in other rural areas, as the sample was a self-selected group. Self-selected populations may not be representative of the general population in some important attitudes. For example, it may be that these participants were more educated, have more leisure time, were happier with life and work, had a special interest in the research, and/or were more confident because they were prepared or interested to participate, opening up their personal and work lives to research scrutiny. However, the research methods were rigorous, particularly because several research methods were employed and the triangulation of the research data is a process that assists in correcting the effects of the limitations presented here.
CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

This chapter discusses this study’s results with regard to the quantitative and qualitative analyses of government worker intent and turnover behaviour in Charleville. It also provides evidence regarding whether or not turnover can be predicted, and is divided into two main parts. The first part, Section 4.1, presents the results from the quantitative data analyses, including providing a description about the workers’ perspectives of themselves, their workplace and the community from the descriptive statistics and the regression analysis. Section 4.2 discusses the results collected from the qualitative analyses, including the survey, observations and interviews.

In this study I searched for an explanation of rural government worker intent and turnover. I also assessed if it was possible to predict turnover intentions and behaviours. As discussed in the previous chapter, three modes of research were used to collect the data – surveys, interviews and observations. The primary source of data was the survey which collected a substantial amount of quantitative and qualitative information about the worker, the workplace, the community, the job, personal orientation, self-efficacy, coping ability, stress, job satisfaction, social support, organizational commitment and intent.

Eighty-nine participants (23% of a potential 390 workers from 12 of the 14 Queensland government departments with offices in Charleville) completed the survey, and nine (10% of those surveyed) participated in the interviews. Interviews asked about the major factors influencing the worker’s desire to leave Charleville, elements that would make them change their minds, and which facets of their life in Charleville they would have liked to change. I also observed the town, the workers and the workplaces for possible explanations of turnover intentions and behaviours, particularly social support, supervisor
support, collegiality, organizational and community culture and climate. A total of 86 observations were recorded over the two years of data collecting.

4.1 Quantitative Results
4.1.1 Descriptive Statistics
This section provides a description of the sample population that completed surveys. As previously mentioned, it includes information about the workers demographics, their job and workplace, social support, stress, job satisfaction and organizational commitment levels, and their intent. Two hundred and eight variables were analysed from the 64 surveys in the first round and 25 in the second. The findings are discussed firstly according to round to illustrate any major differences between the two sample groups prior to drawing any final comparisons and conclusions from the data. The quantifiable data was collated into 182 tables of raw data (see Appendix 5) and is discussed in the following section.

4.1.1.1 Demographics
From this information we can see that the survey respondents in the first round were predominantly male (63%); young (63% were 35 years old or younger); and of Australian nationality (98%). The majority were educated to the level of bachelor’s degree or higher (64%); single (60%), were in professional occupations (87%), earned between $25 000 and $65 000 (36% earned over $50 000) and expected to work outside Brisbane (82%) or outside a large city (60%). Moreover 62% of them had some educational experience (preschool, primary or high school) in a rural area.

The demographics of the group studied in the second round were slightly different from the first. For example, more were male (76%), and more were older (44% were over 35 years old). They had lower education levels (16% had bachelor’s degrees or higher), and more were married (64%). Fewer were professional-level workers (68%), and more had rural education experience (74%).
4.1.1.2  Personal Characteristics and Perceptions as a Worker
The first group surveyed was predominantly extroverted (81%); and rated themselves as good or very good at coping in general (94%), and had positive perceptions about themselves as workers. They believed that they successfully performed given tasks (94%), felt good about their work performance (87%), learnt from workplace role models (79%), learnt from feedback (89%) and considered themselves good at their work (87%). They believed they coped well with stressful situations (69%), saw themselves as having adequate knowledge to do the job (84%), believed they had adequate skills to do the job (73%) and said they persisted when work got difficult (87%). Only 20% said they avoided work tasks in which they thought they may not be able to cope with.

In the second group of survey respondents, the personal characteristics were quite similar to the first group; however there were some notable differences. For example, more workers (96%) were extroverts and 100% considered themselves good or very good at coping in general, and more felt good about their work performance (96%).

4.1.1.3  Work and Charleville Experience
The majority of the first-round participants had not been in Charleville very long (56% for three years or less; and 67% for five years or less), and most had short career histories (28% three years or less full time work experience; and 63% had ten years or less work experience). They had low diversity of work experience (67% had worked in one or two workplaces in the past five years) and had not been in their current positions for very long (33% for one year; 56% for two years or less; 76% for four years or less).

The majority worked in small work teams (67% were in teams of less than ten people), and 34% of that group worked in groups with less than four people. A majority in this group felt they had too much to do in their jobs (24% a little too much and 26% too much), whilst 44% stated they had the right amount of work. Finally, the majority of respondents in this group wanted to be in Charleville (74%). Twenty five per cent stated that they were working in
Charleville because the job appealed to them, as opposed to the 26% who stated they were in Charleville because 1) their spouse or partner had a job based in Charleville, or 2) that they had applied for an urban posting but the Charleville position was the first or best offer.

In conclusion, there were five main differences between the first and second groups. Firstly, the second group had experience in a wider range of jobs (64% worked in four or more workplaces; and secondly, those in the second group had worked for longer (68% had worked for more than ten years – 28% higher than the first group). Thirdly, more (56%) had lived in Charleville for five years or more, fourthly, fewer workers in the second group (44%) worked in small work teams, that is, in teams of less than ten people; and finally, fewer (43%) considered they had too much work to do.

4.1.1.4 Stress
Generally, stress levels were low, with the effects of stress being experienced either not at all or occasionally for the majority of the first group. For example, only 14% of those surveyed said they experienced difficulty concentrating or remembering things. Similar results were found for other consequences of stress, such as, hand trembling, upset stomach and feeling faint or dizzy. Only 4% reported experiencing these stress symptoms regularly; 2% reported felt fearful; 8% felt lonely, bored and low in energy; 2% said they frequently lost their temper; 6% said they were easily irritated by others and 3% said they became angry about unimportant things. Only 30% said they practised relaxation techniques when they got stressed at work, however this could be related to the moderately low stress levels experienced.

Stress levels were even lower in the second group. According to the survey responses, 4% experienced difficulty concentrating, 32% felt fearful, and 100% stated they only occasionally got hand trembling or not at all, and 72%, (compared with 39% of the first group) stated that they never became angry about relatively unimportant things.
4.1.1.5 Satisfaction

Satisfaction levels with job, organization, teamwork, supervision, promotional opportunities and pay, and greatest sources of satisfaction and dissatisfaction were tested according to Smith-Mikes and Hulin’s (1969) job satisfaction test. A total score summed the satisfaction components. This was the only factor statistically significant with turnover behaviour, but it was not significant with turnover intention. None of the individual satisfaction components were found to be statistically significant with either turnover intentions or behaviours. Satisfaction also featured in the qualitative results. Many of those who left stated that they enjoyed their work and were very satisfied with the type of work they did, and with the workplace conditions. They acknowledged that working in rural areas was unique and that they had learnt a lot whilst enjoying their experiences.

On the whole, the first group enjoyed the kind of work they did (only 4% indicated they did not like it and 72% indicated it was better than ‘OK’); and they considered their organization good to work for (55% and only 12% said it was not good). A clear majority (55%) considered the teamwork to be good (75%), supervision was satisfactory (23% indicated it wasn’t); and the pay was good (64%). There were unclear results with regard to advancement and promotional opportunities. For example, 31% stated they were satisfied, 36% said they were not and 33% indicated they were uncertain.

The greatest source of satisfaction identified by the first group was from the job (64%). Other sources of satisfaction were the organization (20%), colleagues (5%) and pay (3%). The greatest source of dissatisfaction was not as clearly identifiable, but dissatisfaction with the organization was reported by 40% of the group, followed closely by the job (34%). It must be noted that the clients (8%) and pay (4%) were not rated highly as sources of dissatisfaction.

The second group had higher high levels of satisfaction, the major differences being that 100% of the second group said they liked their job a ‘bit’ or a ‘lot’,
72% rated the organization as ‘good’ or ‘one of the best’, 84% said there was ‘good’ or ‘very good’ teamwork, and 76% rated their pay as ‘good’ or ‘very good’. Notably, 60% said that they were satisfied with their advancement and promotional opportunities (compared to the 31% of the first group), and 80% said they were satisfied with their supervision (25% higher than the first group).

There were some differences between the groups with regard to the sources of satisfaction and dissatisfaction. Again, the greatest source of satisfaction was from the job, with 64% of the first group and 92% of the second group indicating this. However, there was a change in reported reasons for dissatisfaction: the second group named the job as the greatest source of dissatisfaction (44%) whilst dissatisfaction with the organization followed (32%).

4.1.1.6 Organizational Commitment
The first group was generally committed to their work as a career with 95% rating themselves as having moderate to very high organizational commitment levels. The majority of the group was prepared to put in extra effort towards the organization (74%), believed there was much to be gained by sticking with the organization (60%), and did not see working for this organization as a mistake (81%). In contrast to this, only 15% would do ‘any’ job to stay in the organization, whilst 60% definitely would not. This was supported by the 63% of workers who stated that they would work for any organization as long as the work was the same and the 23% who believed this was the ‘best of all possible organizations to work for’.

There were also results indicating that organizational variables were important to employee organizational commitment levels. For example, 39% of the workers talked up the organization, 48% were loyal and 55% are proud to say whom they worked for. Similarly, the proportion of workers who agreed with the values of the organization was 34%; whilst 26% did not agree; and 42% agreed with the organization’s employee policies. Thirty per cent found the organization inspired their best, and 32% disagreed with this; 47% cared
about the fate of the organization, and 48% were glad to have chosen to work for this organization.

The second sample group had similar levels of organizational commitment and again the group sent a mixed message in their commitment to the job and the organization. For example, no one saw their commitment levels as low, and 44% rated their commitment levels as very high. Eighty per cent were willing to put in extra effort, and 52% said they told their friends their organization was ‘great’. Only 20% said it would take very little change in their present circumstances to cause them to leave their organization. Seventy two per cent were proud to tell others they were part of their organization, 60% said they were glad they chose to work for this organization, only 28% said they found it difficult to agree with the organization’s policies, and said they 72% cared about the organization’s fate.

In contrast to this, 48% said they felt loyalty towards the organization, whilst 28% said they did not. Thirty two per cent compared of the second group, to 15% in the first group, said they would accept almost any sort of job to stay working with their organization, whilst 40% said they would not. Furthermore, 68% said they could work for any organization as long as the work was similar, and there were uncertain results again with regard to the organization inspiring workers to do their best at work.

4.1.1.7 Workplace Characteristics and Conditions

The majority of the first group said they generally felt praised and were given positive feedback and encouragement for their work (60%). The majority of participants believed they worked in a team with a positive work tone (72%); and 64% reported feeling calm and relaxed about work. However, the majority of workers (81%) also believed the job demands exceeded their personal and workplace resources. Furthermore, the perceived lack of workplace resources was more influential than perceived lack of personal resources as they considered their personal abilities quite high. That is, 91% believed their education and skills were congruent with the job. Clear majorities of those surveyed said they were able to effectively complete work
assignments (97%) and believed the priorities, expectations and evaluations of the job were clear (83%).

There were some notable differences between the two groups. For example, fewer respondents (68%) of the second group thought their job exceeded their personal and workplace resources; while more in the second group (92%) thought their job’s priorities, expectations and evaluation criteria were clear. Fewer said they were praised for their performance (48%), however more were given positive feedback (68%), and a significantly larger proportion (92%) considered themselves to have adequate skills for the job, and many less admitted to avoiding difficult tasks (76%). More of the second group considered themselves able to cope well in stressful situations (76% as compared to 69%), possibly the reason why far fewer (16% as compared to 30%) practiced relaxation techniques when work became stressful.

4.1.1.8 Social Support

The first round of workers reported receiving moderate social support from their workplaces (supervisors and colleagues) and strong social support from their homes (partner, friends and relatives). Sixty-five per cent said their supervisors were very easy to talk with, 41% described their supervisors as being very willing to listen to personal problems, 42% said their supervisors could be relied on, and 53% said their supervisors were supportive when it came to going out of their way for their employees. Colleagues were also seen as very easy to talk with (83%), however only 48% said their colleagues were willing to listen to personal problems, 69% judged that their colleagues were prepared to go out of their way and 59% said their colleagues could be relied upon (59%).

Partners, friends and relatives were overwhelmingly supportive to those surveyed in all four areas evaluated. The strongest social support however was from family, more specifically, partners and relatives. Analysis of the data according to the person or people who gave the support and perceived levels of support indicated that partners (50%) and relatives (54%) gave very high levels of support. However, it should also be noted that large majorities
of those surveyed stated that their colleagues (81%) and supervisors (61%) were moderately supportive. Table 4.1 provides these totals, in percentages, in further detail and illustrates the differences between the two groups of participants with reference to levels of social support received.

Table 4.1 Total scores (as a percentage) of the five sources of social support studied in this research

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Round one (64workers)</th>
<th>Round two (25workers)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Poor support (total score = 10pts or less)</td>
<td>Moderate support (total score = 11 – 15pts)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supervisors</td>
<td>23 61 16</td>
<td>32 44 24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colleagues</td>
<td>9 81 10</td>
<td>32 56 12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partner</td>
<td>27 23 50</td>
<td>8 4 68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friends</td>
<td>9 53 38</td>
<td>12 40 48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relatives</td>
<td>9 36 55</td>
<td>24 28 48</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The second group experienced similarly high levels of social support. In the second group however, reported slightly higher levels of support from all social support domains. Supervisors provided higher support, particularly in the areas of listening to workers’ problems (48%) and going out of their way for the worker (28%); as did colleagues, particularly in the areas of being easy to talk with (100% responding with ‘somewhat’ or ‘very much’). Levels of support given by the worker’s partner were higher in all areas than in the first group and, on the whole, friends and relatives of the second group gave higher support levels in most of the support areas (see table 4.1)

4.1.1.9 Why remain in Charleville?
There were 30 factors that were identified in the literature as influencing workers’ intent to remain. The workers could tick as many of these factors as they chose. The most outstanding four were: pay (n = 41, 64%), job satisfaction (n = 38, 59%), good social relations (n = 37, 58%), and knowledge of job (n = 36, 56%). The next-most chosen variable was healthiness of lifestyle (n = 27, 42%). When the first group was asked to identify the most
important reason for remaining, job satisfaction was the leading factor with 19% of those surveyed, and pay was second with 14%.

Moreover, when sorting the 30 factors into the four groups (benefits, personal, work/organization, and community) the major factors in the benefits group were pay (32%), followed closely by transfer opportunities (28%). The top factor in the personal group was proximity to family and friends (31%). The top two factors in the work/organizational group were good knowledge of the job (25%) and senior staff support (23%). The top factor in the community group was good social relations (22%), however a higher majority of those surveyed chose nothing (23%). These are not high percentages but they do represent the highest-rating responses. Therefore, these are considered to be the significant variables determining why employees remained in Charleville.

For the second group of workers, the two most popularly voted variables were the same as for the first group – pay and job satisfaction, however the order of the third and fourth variables was reversed. Third was ‘good knowledge of the job’ and the fourth variable was ‘good social relationships’. When asked which variables were most important, job satisfaction and good social relationships were the two variables identified as the most important reasons for remaining.

Again, taken overall, the second group ‘looks’ similar to the first group with some differences. For example, when sorting the factors into the four groups (benefits, personal, work/organization, and community) there were some differences in the second-most frequently indicated category. The top factor in the benefits group was ‘pay’, the same as result for the first group and ‘suitable housing’ came in second. The top factor in the personal group was ‘acceptance by the community’ and second, ‘employment for spouse’. For the work/organizational group the top most commonly reported factor was ‘job satisfaction’ closely followed by ‘good knowledge of the job’ and ‘senior staff support’. The top factor in the community group was ‘good social relations’
and second was ‘healthiness of lifestyle’. As was the case for the first group, close to half of the workers did not offer any response to this question.

4.1.1.10 The Future

A significant majority of those surveyed in round one reported that they intended to leave their jobs. Asked specifically whether or not they would be working in Charleville in five years, 66% said ‘no’ and 18% said ‘yes’. Furthermore, when surveyed about when they would like to leave their current position, 78% said it would be in five years or less and of those, 34% said they ‘would like to leave in one – three years’, whilst 18% said ‘not in the foreseeable future’. Supporting this, 63% said they were ‘thinking about leaving Charleville soon’.

Forty-five per cent intended to stay working for their current organizations but expected to be doing so in another location in five years’ time, and 33% said they would still be in their careers but in another organization in five years. Nearly half (47%) said they would have chosen this career even if they could go back and start over again. This is supported by the 69% who stated that it was unlikely they would leave their profession within five years.

When asked about which geographical region they would like to go next, the majority (52%) said they would like to stay in regional Queensland, 13% wanted to go to Brisbane, while others said ‘interstate or overseas’ (8%), ‘stay in Charleville’ (23%), and ‘anywhere’ (4%). Similarly of those who indicated where they would like to be geographically in the long term (n=34) 50% said they intended to remain in regional Queensland, and 18% said they intended to move to Brisbane for the long term. The results are inconclusive regarding likely promotions in the near future. When asked whether they thought they were likely to be promoted in the near future, thirty six per cent said ‘yes’, 41% said ‘no’ and 23% were ‘uncertain’.

The round two data was slightly different on this topic. More workers (36%) expected to be working in Charleville in five years, however fewer (36%) thought they would be working for the same organization in five years, and
fewer thought they would be working in the same career in five years. Furthermore, a much higher per cent (68%) said they would have chosen this career again; and much lower percentages said they wanted to leave (44% said not in the foreseeable future and 40% said in four – five years).

There was also a diverse range of results regarding the short- and long-term intentions of this group. However, it should be noted that only half of the sample responded to these questions. That aside, 30% said they intended going interstate or overseas, and 46% wanted to stay in regional/rural areas, and 13% wanted to be in Brisbane. In the long term, none of the workers in this group wanted to end up in the city, and 58% wanted to stay in Charleville. The second-round results pertaining to the promotional opportunities are similar to the first-round data. Thirty two per cent stated that it was likely a promotion was possible in the next few years, 32% were ‘uncertain’ and 36% said ‘no’, whilst 56% indicated they were thinking about leaving Charleville soon.

4.1.1.11 Why leave Charleville?
Forty per cent of the first group indicated they were thinking about leaving Charleville soon, and the most common response to why, was ‘missing family and friends’ (25%). The next most common response was the lack of available social and recreational opportunities (22%), followed by lifestyle changes (17%), and 13% indicated that it was due to their partners moving elsewhere. If we categorize this data into ‘forced to leave’ and ‘wanting to leave’, we can see that a clear majority (87%) want to leave Charleville.

Round two respondents answered this question slightly differently. The most common response was spouse/partner moving (28%), next was missing family and friends (20%) followed by lacking social/recreational opportunities (12%). Again the majority (62%) indicated that the reason they were considering leaving was because they ‘wanted to’ rather than ‘have to’.
4.1.2 Regression Analysis
Three tests were conducted. The first test examined worker intent. The second test analysed actual worker turnover, whilst the third evaluated intent as a predictor of actual turnover.

4.1.2.1 Test 1 – Worker Intent
Survey participants were asked to indicate when they would ideally like to leave their current position. They responded on a six-point Likert scale ranging from ‘now’ to ‘not in the foreseeable future’, thus measuring intent to leave and intent to remain. Table 4.2 summarises the final ten models of intent identified by the model selection process. The model ultimately selected from the intent modelling was model 1805. Model 1805 had a slightly worse AIC and fitted deviance scores less than model 7725. However, analyses of the residuals of model 7725 indicated the presence of one case of unduly large influence, hence 1805 was judged to be a superior model on the basis that it had approximately equal predictive power (based on AIC and fitted deviance) and much better adherence to underlying regression assumptions than did model 7725.

Model 1805 included four terms, likelihood of working in Charleville in five years (wk.in5), years partner has spent in Charleville (part.cha), clarity of the job’s priorities, expectations and evaluation criteria (job.clr), and likelihood of promotion in the next few years (prom.in5) (Table 4.3). The model showed good predictive skill, correctly classifying 58/64 participants in the round one data and 24/25 participants in the round two data in intent model 4521 (Table 4.4).
Table 4.2 The ten best identified models for predicting intent to leave

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model No.</th>
<th>Terms</th>
<th>AIC</th>
<th>Fitted deviance</th>
<th>Average Z</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7725</td>
<td>wk.in5, part.cha, total.intvext, job.clr, prom.in5</td>
<td>37.7</td>
<td>2.45</td>
<td>1.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1805</td>
<td>wk.in5, part.cha, job.clr, prom.in5</td>
<td>40.8</td>
<td>3.42</td>
<td>1.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7210</td>
<td>wk.in5, secondary, part.cha, job.clr, prom.in5</td>
<td>36.5</td>
<td>8.3</td>
<td>1.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7728</td>
<td>wk.in5, part.cha, total.intvext, prom.in5, total.sat</td>
<td>43.7</td>
<td>5.47</td>
<td>1.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1809</td>
<td>wk.in5, part.cha, prom.in5, total.col</td>
<td>36.4</td>
<td>10.84</td>
<td>0.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1787</td>
<td>wk.in5, part.cha, total.intvext, prom.in5</td>
<td>46.1</td>
<td>5.22</td>
<td>0.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1684</td>
<td>wk.in5, secondary, job.clr, prom.in5</td>
<td>43.8</td>
<td>7.07</td>
<td>0.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>338</td>
<td>wk.in5, job.clr, prom.in5</td>
<td>47.9</td>
<td>4.83</td>
<td>0.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>285</td>
<td>wk.in5, part.cha, job.clr</td>
<td>49.3</td>
<td>4.87</td>
<td>0.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1808</td>
<td>wk.in5, part.cha, prom.in5, total.sat</td>
<td>47.4</td>
<td>6.63</td>
<td>0.80</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.3 Selected final logistic regression model (No. 1805) for predicting worker intent to leave one year after the survey date.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Beta</th>
<th>SE</th>
<th>Z</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intercept</td>
<td>-11.284</td>
<td>3.569</td>
<td>3.161</td>
<td>.00157</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wk.in5</td>
<td>.392</td>
<td>.132</td>
<td>2.962</td>
<td>.00305</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>part.cha</td>
<td>-1.883</td>
<td>.872</td>
<td>-2.159</td>
<td>.03081</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>job.clr</td>
<td>.429</td>
<td>.154</td>
<td>2.787</td>
<td>.00532</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>prom.in5</td>
<td>.175</td>
<td>.076</td>
<td>2.290</td>
<td>.02199</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In this model both part.cha is log transformed (log(x+1)) from its raw form, wk.in5 and job.clr scores are squared, and prom.in5 scores are cubed. The model is highly significant (G=70.67, df=4, p<0.001).

Table 4.4 Classifications of intent model 4521 for participants in round one (bold) and two (italicised) of the survey.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Observed turnover</th>
<th>Stay</th>
<th>Left</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stay</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>22</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leave</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Classifications are derived using a cut-off probability of 0.5 for probabilities of leaving generated from the model. Under model 4521, the percentage of
participants indicating that they intended to leave their position within one year was:

- highest for workers who believed they would not be working in Charleville in five years (62% of respondents), decreasing steeply to less than 10% among other respondents (assuming average responses to part.cha, job.clr and prom.in5);
- lower for workers whose partners had been in Charleville longer, nineteen per cent of respondents who had a newly-arrived partner said they intended leaving within one year, while among those whose partner had been in Charleville five or more years only 1% or less intended leaving within 12 months (assuming average responses to wk.in5, job.clr and prom.in5);
- highest for workers reporting lower job clarity (approximately 85% for respondents with no job clarity down to approximately 1% for respondents with definite job clarity (assuming average responses to wk.in5, part.cha, and prom.in5); and
- highest (~30%) for workers who believe that promotion within five years was not likely compared with those who were unsure (~2%) or certain (~1%) of promotion in that time (assuming average responses to wk.in5, part.cha, and job.clr).

4.1.2.2 Test 2 – Worker Turnover

Table 4.5 summarises the final ten models of turnover identified by the model-selection process. Although these models all had relatively good fit to their parent data, they showed a range of AIC values and also fit to independent data (fitted deviance to the final 25 respondents’ data).
Table 4.5 The ten best models of turnover identified in the model selection process, ranked by average Z values.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Terms</th>
<th>AIC</th>
<th>Fitted deviance</th>
<th>Average Z</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4521</td>
<td>yrs.char, prom.in5, prom.in5.sq, total.sat</td>
<td>74.00</td>
<td>20.64</td>
<td>1.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>126</td>
<td>ed.level, part.cha</td>
<td>73.2</td>
<td>20.85</td>
<td>1.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>113</td>
<td>yrs.char, ed. level</td>
<td>76.7</td>
<td>18.51</td>
<td>0.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>88</td>
<td>when.lev, ed. level</td>
<td>77.6</td>
<td>17.26</td>
<td>0.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>121</td>
<td>yrs.char, total.sat</td>
<td>76.7</td>
<td>19.35</td>
<td>0.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>87</td>
<td>when.lev, yrs.char</td>
<td>75.9</td>
<td>20.56</td>
<td>0.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>61</td>
<td>wk.in.5, part.cha</td>
<td>77.03</td>
<td>19.44</td>
<td>0.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>201</td>
<td>allagain, total.comm.. rurlwk..5yr</td>
<td>80.56</td>
<td>33.99</td>
<td>0.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45</td>
<td>total.comm., part.cha</td>
<td>73.60</td>
<td>24.98</td>
<td>0.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2421</td>
<td>total.comm., yrs.char, prom.in5, prom.in5.sq</td>
<td>74.46</td>
<td>24.12</td>
<td>0.74</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Average Z values are derived from the average Z transformations of AIC and fitted deviance scores. The model ultimately selected from the turnover modelling was turnover model 4521. This model included four terms, years spent in Charleville, a second-order polynomial of likelihood of promotion and score for total satisfaction (Table 4.6). The model showed good predictive capacity correctly classifying 49/64 and 21/25 participants in the rounds one and two data respectively (Table 4.7).

Table 4.6 Selected final logistic regression model (No. 4521) for predicting worker turnover one year after the survey date.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Beta</th>
<th>SE</th>
<th>Z</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intercept</td>
<td>22.198</td>
<td>7.965</td>
<td>2.787</td>
<td>0.005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>yrs.char</td>
<td>-1.290</td>
<td>0.435</td>
<td>-2.966</td>
<td>0.003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>prom.in5</td>
<td>-7.275</td>
<td>3.079</td>
<td>-2.363</td>
<td>0.018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>prom.in5.sq</td>
<td>22.198</td>
<td>0.770</td>
<td>2.368</td>
<td>0.018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>total.sat</td>
<td>-1.290</td>
<td>2.037</td>
<td>-2.229</td>
<td>0.026</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In this model both yrs.char and total.sat are log transformed (log(x+1)) from their raw forms, while prom.in5 is untransformed and prom.in5sq the square of prom.in5. The model is highly significant (G=23.15, df=4, p<0.001).
Table 4.7 Classifications of turnover model 4521 for participants in round one (bold) and two (italicised) of the survey.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Predicted turnover</th>
<th>Observed turnover</th>
<th>Stayed</th>
<th>Left</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stay</td>
<td></td>
<td>29</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>20</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leave</td>
<td></td>
<td>8</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Classifications are derived using a cut-off probability of 0.5 for probabilities of leaving generated from the model. Under this model, the predicted likelihood of participants leaving within a year:

- declined as time spent in Charleville increased, from about 50% for new arrivals, through to approximately 10% after five years' stay and 2% after 25 years' stay for participants with approximately average scores for yrs.char and total.sat;
- was lowest for workers uncertain of the likelihood of promotion in the next five years (~7%) as compared to those believing either that promotion would (~32%) or would not (~33%) occur within five years, for participants with approximately average scores for yrs.char and total.sat; and
- declined as total satisfaction score increased, from about 40% for participants with low satisfaction (total.sat=15) to approximately 2% for very high satisfaction (total.sat=35), among participants with average yrs.char and prom.in5 scores.

4.1.2.3 Test 3 – Worker Turnover Predicted from Intent to Leave

After investigating a variety of parameterisations of intent from which to predict turnover, the model finally selected was parameterised intent as a simple binary, whether or not respondents intended to leave within the year (see table 4.8). This model correctly predicted 44/64 and 23/25 responses in the rounds one and two data respectively (table 4.9).
Table 4.8 Logistic regression for predicting worker turnover one year after the survey date from intent to leave position within one year of the survey date.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Beta</th>
<th>SE</th>
<th>Z</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intercept</td>
<td>-0.7577</td>
<td>0.313</td>
<td>-2.421</td>
<td>0.015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>yrs.char</td>
<td>1.633</td>
<td>0.618</td>
<td>2.645</td>
<td>0.008</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The model is very significant (G=9.69, df=1, p<0.002).

Table 4.9 Classifications of turnover from intent model (Table 4.8) for participants in round one (bold) and round two (italicised) of the survey.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Observed turnover</th>
<th>Stay</th>
<th>Left</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>32</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>22</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>15</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Classifications are derived using a cut-off probability of 0.5 for probabilities of leaving generated from the model. Under this model (4521), respondents who indicated that they wished to leave their current position either now or within a year had a 71% probability of leaving compared with only 31% for other respondents.

4.2 Qualitative Results

4.2.1 Results from the Surveys

Of the 89 surveys from the both rounds, 56 respondents from the first round of 64, and 24 from the second round of 25 respondents provided qualitative information. Hence, the total number of surveys containing qualitative data was 80. Firstly, the amount of qualitative data from the various groups was categorized according to when the worker intended to leave (see Table 4.10). All categories had similar amounts of data, except for community, which had a predominantly smaller amount. Also noted here are the job and organizational categories, as opposed to the previously mentioned professional category. The data was very distinct in its separation of the professional components of the qualitative responses; hence the divide is representative of this.
Table 4.10 Intent to leave and magnitude of personal, professional, organizational and community influences.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INTENT</th>
<th>Personal Factors</th>
<th>Job Factors</th>
<th>Organizational Factors</th>
<th>Community Factors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Now</td>
<td>n.=10 (19%)</td>
<td>n.=10 (19%)</td>
<td>n. = 8 (15%)</td>
<td>n. = 4 (7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 – 3 yrs</td>
<td>n.=17 (31%)</td>
<td>n.=17 (31%)</td>
<td>n. = 19 (35%)</td>
<td>n. = 8 (15%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 – 5 yrs</td>
<td>n. = 8 (15%)</td>
<td>n = 5 (9%)</td>
<td>n. = 4 (7%)</td>
<td>n. = 2 (4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not in the foreseeable future</td>
<td>n. = 6 (11%)</td>
<td>n = 4 (7%)</td>
<td>n. = 2 (4%)</td>
<td>n. = 2 (4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>n.=41 (76%)</td>
<td>n.=26 (48%)</td>
<td>n. = 33 (61%)</td>
<td>n. = 16 (30%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The qualitative data was summed to indicate the importance of each category. Personal factors were the most commonly cited determinants of intent to leave, with 76% of respondents choosing them. Organizational (61%), professional (48%) and finally community factors (30%) follow this. The predominant personal elements included lack of family and friends, the need for a change and isolation from facilities such as medical, recreational, educational. The predominant organizational factors included the lack of professional opportunities, lack of resources and workplace conditions. The main professional reasons cited for intending to leave included lack of support in the workplace, being overworked, and job dissatisfaction. Finally, the most commonly identified community factors were remote location, lack of facilities, services and opportunities.

4.2.2 Results from the Observations
Eighty-six observations were taken from the beginning of 2003 to the end of 2004. Observations were taken in town, at workplaces, at social events, through casual conversations, at farewell parties, in departmental newsletters and in news releases. Firstly, the data pertaining to why the leavers left are presented (4.2.2.1). This is followed by the observational results of leavers and stayers, and the positive and the negative qualitative data and presents the data from a different viewpoint.
4.2.2.1 Observations regarding why leavers leave

In the speeches made by departing workers, many stated personal or positive work-related reasons for leaving rather than negative organizational or job related factors. The reasons given included:

- it was time in their careers to move on,
- they wanted to be closer to their families, and/or
- they had received a promotion

Community was the other major factor frequently given in relation to worker rationales for attrition. These included

- a lack of schooling opportunities for their children, or
- a lack of work opportunities for the spouses.

A number of observations also suggested that intention was influenced by personal factors such as self-efficacy, personal orientation and rural background. For example, one worker who had low self-efficacy and an introverted orientation seemed constantly unhappy with the organization and community, and left after an 18-month period. In discussions with me, he stated that he was very happy to be returning to Brisbane but still a little sad to leave Charleville because he had made some good friendships. He stated that his happiness about returning to Brisbane far outweighed his sadness.

Another worker who had a predominantly rural background who led a fairly private life and had limited involvement with community or work groups, left after five years, stating that he really liked Charleville but wanted to go to an even more remote region. He said he ‘preferred the geographic region of NW Western Australia to SW Queensland’. Two other workers with strong links to their workplaces and the community, including one who grew up in the region and the other with 20 years living in Charleville stated that they were leaving for larger centres to give their children better educational opportunities.
The managers of some departments commented that they ‘could almost pick who was going to stay and leave by personal characteristics, and the worker’s level of involvement in the workplace and community’ (anon. pers. comm. 18/12/03). They stated that those who were socially active in the workplace and/or community had higher levels of intention to stay. Another manager commented that one of her workers never changed his car’s number plates to Queensland plates, and stated that she would be surprised if the worker stayed for more than a year. She was relatively accurate with her judgement; the worker left after 16 months. Some managers also said those who were more likely to leave were constantly looking for alternative work or were actively applying for other work, and usually held the belief that Charleville was only a stepping stone in their career.

I also observed organizational, personal and community traits interacting with levels of stress, job satisfaction and organizational commitment and turnover intentions, particularly in accordance in Lonne’s (2001) U-shaped curve of worker adjustment. One of the main observations I noted showed that when a worker first arrived they were slightly uncomfortable with the change to a new environment. The worker then became more relaxed and confident with their home and work life and seemed to enjoy their life in Charleville. This was often followed by frustration and annoyance caused by the organization’s policies and practices, by the community’s lack of facilities and the workplace’s lack of professional opportunities. These elements of the workers’ work and personal lives influenced their levels of satisfaction or dissatisfaction, stress and organizational commitment with home and work lives, which ultimately affected their turnover intentions and eventually behaviour.

Finally, I noticed that promotions defused the negative effects that some workers experienced after being in Charleville for some time. For example, one worker who was quite unhappy with the workplace conditions and the organization had indicated that he was prepared to leave in the near future, was given a promotion to team leader when his supervisor left. Following his promotion he reported that he planned to stay on for a few more years. He
stated he had ‘new fears and frustrations’, however said he was looking forward to knowing the job better and felt confident that he would like the challenge it would provide.

Positive Comments
Positive observational data was comprised mostly of observations from leaving parties or end-of-year presentations. The letters to the editor in the local paper supported these observations. Leavers’ letters were frequently published, usually with expressions of appreciation to the community, and of positive experiences of the uniqueness of the town and memories that would never be forgotten. One example is a paragraph from a farewell letter published in the local newspaper, the Western Times, on 18 March 2004.

‘On behalf of my wife and myself I would like to thank the people of Charleville for their friendship and support in the past two and a half years. Our time here has been most enjoyable and eye opening. The way of life in the country is one built on friendship and trust and the many people we have come into contact with will not be forgotten. All have left lasting impressions on us that we will remember forever. It is a sad time for us to have to leave such a great and caring community’, p. 7.

Sentiments such as these were common. Very positive comments were also made about workplaces, supervisors, workplace collegiality, and the community, and the generally high level of enjoyment they got from their work and the community. The leavers often stated that they were very ‘grateful for the time and experience’ they had in Charleville; that they ‘had learnt a lot’; and were on the whole ‘disappointed to be leaving Charleville and its ‘unique’ community and work environment’. There was also an extremely high proportion of leavers who stated they would ‘miss their colleagues and friends’ (see Appendix 6 for more examples).

Negative Comments
There were some negative comments that were predominantly based on frustrations with the work, due for example, to dissatisfaction with supervision,
lack of professional development and promotional opportunities; and with dissatisfaction about the community, for example, distance and lack of opportunities and the availability of facilities were also observed. Frustrations with job or organizational elements included supervisors in Brisbane or Toowoomba ‘not having any real understanding’ of the Charleville work contexts and giving bad advice. Frustrations were expressed about:

- ‘travelling long distances for work and for pleasure’
- ‘lack of promotional opportunities and professional development opportunities’
- ‘access to high quality educational facilities for our children’
- ‘being away from our families’
- the ‘difficulty of hours driving or high costs flying’ when needing to get to family in a hurry.

### 4.2.2.2 Observations regarding why stayers stay

The long stayers, those who came to Charleville and have stayed five or more years, often could not imagine themselves living and working anywhere else. They stated that they enjoyed the aspects of small community town living, such as being safe, relaxed, friendly and stress free. There is a five-minute or less commute to work for everyone in the town, car parks are easy to come by, and the shops and service industries in town consistently offer friendly, helpful service. Those surveyed said they enjoyed fishing, riding motor bikes or horses on weekends, and said most things can be easily sought in town with several major shops such as Mitre 10, Target etc. The long stayers also stated that they often did not like the larger centres like Brisbane or Toowoomba, primarily because these places were too busy and too big, that they got lost frequently, and felt stressed and uncomfortable with the pace of the larger towns and cities.

### Positive Comments

Positive comments by long stayers regarding the turnover phenomenon were rare, and usually revolved around being happy for the person departing,
particularly if they had been a great worker or had put in a moderate to high number or years working in Charleville. They included comments such as:

- ‘That person has been here for ten years, and it is good that they are moving on to somewhere closer to their family/where they want to be/to a better job’
- ‘That person has done some great work and they deserve to move up the ladder’.

**Negative Comments**

Negative comments from the stayers regarding the turnover phenomenon commonly centred on regret and frustration that the high turnover rate existed, and general confusion and sadness created by this. Comments included:

- ‘There goes another great worker/community member/friend’,
- ‘We’ve just finished training him/her to do the job thoroughly and now they are leaving’
- ‘Now we have to go through the recruitment process again, so soon’
- ‘Why doesn’t the recruitment process involve asking them how long they would like to stay’
- ‘Why doesn’t the department make them sign a contract to stay for three years?’
- ‘This is a great town/place to work, I don’t understand why they don’t want to stay?’

On occasion a long stayer would also say something such as:

- ‘I can understand why they want to go, there’s not much here for them’

In conclusion, the observations showed that the most important factors identified in the turnover phenomenon were the conditions of the work and community. For most leavers the observations showed that working and living in Charleville was a bipolar experience, one they enjoyed and yet were frustrated with. On a number of occasions, workers expressed sadness about leaving, being clearly frustrated with long distances from family, friends and
services and looking forward to being closer to these. These factors were further explored in the interviews and are discussed in the following section.

4.2.3 Results from the Interviews
As previously mentioned, there were three questions that influenced the directions of the interviews.

Question One asked the workers if they ‘were planning on leaving sometime in the near future’, and if so what were the major factors in their decision to leave? There was a wide array of reasons given for considering leaving Charleville and these can be categorized into four groups: 1) recreational opportunities 2) family and friends 3) career opportunities and 4) the remote location. These are discussed further in the next section.

The primary reason given for wanting to leave Charleville was the lack of sport and recreational opportunities and this led to comments such as ‘I’m bored with my life outside of my work’.

The second reason has two parts, firstly it refers to family and friends not being within close proximity and missing these close relationships. Secondly those workers who had families in Charleville with them pointed to the lack of educational and employment opportunities for their children and spouses, and a lack of general services such as medical, recreational and sporting facilities.

There was some disparity in the third category that pertained to the career opportunities available. Some workers said these were good and that they were able to develop some high-level skills which would be very useful when they moved closer to their family, whilst others said there was a distinct lack of career opportunities such as professional development, promotional opportunities and opportunities for increased pay.

Finally the fourth category related to the remoteness of Charleville’s location and the negative impact this had on their lives. For example, some
respondents pointed to the long travelling time needed to get to outlying communities for work, and to attend social events.

The themes and comments are illustrated further in table 4.11 below.

Table 4.11 Major themes and comments related to why respondents were considering leaving Charleville.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme 1: Lack of sport and recreational opportunities</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>‘I am bored with my life outside of work’ (male 34 yo)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘There is nothing to do on weekends’ (female 22 yo)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme 2: Family and Friends</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>‘All my friends have moved or are moving’ (female 25yo)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘I will move when my spouse is ready to move too’ (male 37yo)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘There is a real lack of employment opportunities for my children’ (male 48yo)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘The educational facilities don’t offer enough for my sons’ (male 37yo)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme 3: Career Opportunities</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>‘I have learnt a lot here and this will put me in good stead for future career choices’ (male 24yo)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘I have gone as far as I can professionally go in Charleville. I now need to go to another centre to continue the upward climb’ (female 25yo)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘I want to move on because I need bigger and better things in my career… this was just a learning experience’ (male 23yo)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme 4: Remoteness of location</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>‘I’m tired of living in a remote area’ (female 24yo)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘The distance to see family and friends is far. It is expensive to fly and takes two days to drive home’ (male 34yo)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Some one-off comments referred to a worker desiring a ‘change of scenery’. Another commented on high levels of job satisfaction, which had ultimately kept them in Charleville for as long as they had, although this was fading and they had started to search for other jobs.

Question two asked the interviewees to make a ‘wish list’ of factors that would make them stay in Charleville, and identify the ‘necessities’ and the ‘desirables’. The necessities identified by the group tended to revolve around their work and family needs, for example:

- more work challenges
- better job, pay and career opportunities
- better child care educational facilities
- good job opportunities for spouses.
The most predominantly stated wishes were for better sporting and recreational facilities and opportunities’ including

- ‘better shops’
- ‘a cinema’
- ‘a fully equipped sporting complex’
- ‘a large body of water for water skiing and beach type activities’.

Others stated they wanted –

- ‘more friends’
- ‘less travel time to visit family and friends’
- ‘more community services such as increased police presence, better educational facilities’
- ‘more representative local council’
- ‘a kinder climate’.

Table 4.12 below gives more examples of comments and aligns them with the themes.
Table 4.12 Wish lists divided into ‘necessities’ and ‘desirables’, and associated comments.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Necessities</th>
<th>Desirables</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Family Needs - ‘less time to get to family’ (female 24yo)</td>
<td>‘Nicer house’ (male 37yo)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Quality educational facilities’ (male 37yo)</td>
<td>‘More basic community services for example, more police, mental health workers, teachers’ (male 48yo)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Better job opportunities for my spouse’ (male 37yo)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Cheaper child care’ (male 34yo)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work Needs – ‘better job and promotional opportunities’ (male 24yo)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘less time spent travelling for work’ (male 34yo)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘further challenges at work’ (female 24yo)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘more pay’ (male 25yo)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recreational opportunities and facilities – ‘better sport and recreational opportunities’ (female 25yo; female 23yo, male 24yo)</td>
<td>‘Quality family entertainment’ (male 48yo)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location and Environment - ‘Move Charleville 700 kms east’ (female 25yo)</td>
<td>‘Equestrian centre, sporting complex, cinema, dam for water skiing’ (female 22yo)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Less travel time to get places’ (male 34yo)</td>
<td>‘Better shopping, nice shops, more shops’ (female 24yo, female 22 yo, female 25yo)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘More regular and cheaper flights’ (female 25yo)</td>
<td>‘Would like to be closer to a larger centre’ (male 23yo)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘would like a kinder climate’ (male 24yo)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘Would like cooler temperatures and more rainfall’ (male 34yo)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This data indicated that the necessities rural workers require revolve around work and family needs, whilst the desirables revolve around factors of the community, town facilities and services, and geographic location.

The third question asked of the workers was ‘What elements of your job, home and community life would you like to get rid of, and how would you do this?’ Interestingly, this question tended to bring out responses that were more about community factors than organizational ones. For example, the
major themes were remote location, lack of anonymity, the council not having a real understanding of community needs, the high levels of small mindedness, cynicism, apathy and negativity, and the poor race relations of the general community. There were a few comments that related to the workplaces, including inequitable staff incentive packages across and within departments, and departments being under-resourced and over-stretched with work commitments. Table 4.13 (below) depicts these themes and the associated comments.

Table 4.13 Major themes and comments related to what and how people would eliminate negative elements impacting on their satisfaction.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme 1: Remote location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>‘I would reduce the geographic isolation but I have no real solution besides moving’ (male 34yo)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Reduce the time spent travelling to get to places for work, the government should get a plane and a pilot and fly us around this enormous region’ (female 22yo)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme 2: Lack of anonymity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>‘I don’t want to see the clients outside of the workplace and I see them all the time. There is probably no solution as the town is small’ (female 24yo)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘There is no privacy from the clients, keep running into them on weekends. One solution could be to have a space/pub where the newcomers can mix and make new friends’ (female 22yo)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme 3: Negative Community Environment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>‘There seems to be a high number of people who are apathetic and yet cynical towards new initiatives. They could be shown that new initiatives don’t have to be a negative thing or they could be asked for their input more’ (female 25yo)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘The council doesn’t seem to provide real and relevant community support, they don’t seem to have a real understanding of the community needs. We need some community assessments done to direct the council’s activities’ (male 48yo)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘There are poor race relations between the Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities and it comes from both groups. I would like to see better representation of the Indigenous group on influential committees and the council’ (male 37yo)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Here, the interviewees made comments based around the community rather than organizational factors, for example, the major themes were 1) the remote location, 2) lack of anonymity, 3) the high levels of small mindedness, cynicism, apathy and negativity of the community members, 4) poor race relations and 5) a council not having an understanding of community needs. There were only limited comments regarding the workplaces and
organizations, and these were primarily regarding interviewees being overworked and departments being under resourced.

In conclusion the interview data collected a wide array of themes yet fairly consistent views of why workers consider leaving Charleville, and what they would like to alter about Charleville to make them stay. If we triangulate the qualitative data from the surveys, the observations and the interviews there is an amount of overlap and some strong themes emerge. Primarily these themes were difficulties like access to basic community services, quality educational facilities and medical services and issues with performing their job, for example, long hours spent travelling, supervision from afar, the lack of resources, poor access to professional development and promotional opportunities and boredom due to the lack of recreational activities and facilities. These are discussed further below.

4.3 Triangulations
4.3.1 Triangulating Qualitative and Quantitative Research Methods
Firstly I triangulated the themes according to research method. We see some overlap of the findings, even to the extent that personal, professional and community variables are significant in both quantitative and qualitative parts of the research. More specifically, however, strong themes that emerged from the survey data were related to personal elements, whilst work and community factors emerged primarily from the observational and interview data. We can see this in table 4.14.
Table 4.14 Major themes emerging from associated research methods.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Research Method</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Personal</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing family and friends</td>
<td>Interviews and Observations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of opportunities for family</td>
<td>Interviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years spent in Charleville</td>
<td>Survey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years partner has spent in Charleville</td>
<td>Survey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of promotional opportunities</td>
<td>Interviews, observations and Survey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Likelihood of promotion in next few years</td>
<td>Survey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Likelihood of working in Charleville in 5 years</td>
<td>Survey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job role (priorities, expectations and evaluations) clear</td>
<td>Survey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall job satisfaction</td>
<td>Survey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor workplace conditions</td>
<td>Observations and interviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of services and facilities</td>
<td>Interviews and Observations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remoteness of the town</td>
<td>Interviews and Observations</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.3.2 Triangulating Long Stayers and Short Stayers

I also triangulated the data according to the workers’ length of stay in Charleville, and here we see a different emerging view of the results. Table 4.15 (below) clearly shows that the short stayers have very different needs and wants from the longer stayers. The most desired needs/wants as identified by short stayers are personal and community focussed, for example, proximity to family and friends, whilst the major themes emerging from the long stayers are organizationally focussed such as lack of promotional opportunities and issues with having a supervisor in another region.
Table 4.15 Short stayers and long stayers and their needs and wants as identified in this study.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Short stayers</th>
<th>Long stayers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Miss family and friends</td>
<td>Lack of opportunities available for family members (spouses and children – educational, employment, recreational)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dislike the long distances needed to travel to see family and friends</td>
<td>Lack of basic community services (educational, medical)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dislike the lack of promotional opportunities</td>
<td>Issues with workplace conditions particularly supervision from Brisbane or Toowoomba (supervisors having no real understanding of the work and work environment).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dislike the lack of social and recreational facilities and opportunities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.4 Results and Research Questions

The qualitative and quantitative findings of this study have revealed that holistically, personal, professional and community factors influence turnover intentions and actual turnover. This result is in direct accord with the research hypotheses. This section relates the findings of this research project to the research questions. They are presented below in Table 4.16.
Table 4.16 Research Questions and Results.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Results</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Do personal, professional, community, stress, social support, job satisfaction, organizational commitment and intent variables influence rural government worker turnover in Charleville?</td>
<td>All factors, except stress, influenced rural government worker turnover.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do personal, professional, community, stress, social support, job satisfaction and organizational commitment influence intent levels of rural government workers in Charleville?</td>
<td>All factors, except stress, influenced rural government worker turnover intentions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does intent influence the actual turnover of rural government workers in Charleville?</td>
<td>Yes intent influences actual rural government worker turnover.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can rural worker turnover be predicted by some or all of the personal, professional, community, stress, social support, job satisfaction, organizational commitment and intent variables?</td>
<td>Yes, but only some professional (job role clear, job satisfaction and promotional opportunities), some personal (living with partner), and some intent (likelihood of working in Charleville in 5 years and when are you leaving) factors.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can rural worker intent be predicted by some or all of the personal, professional, community, stress, social support, job satisfaction, organizational commitment and intent variables?</td>
<td>Yes, but only some professional (job role clear, job satisfaction and promotional opportunities), some personal (living with partner) factors.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can intent predict a rural worker’s actual leaving or staying?</td>
<td>Yes but stronger results found in models 1 and 2.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This research project attempted to establish if attrition could be explained and predicted, and to what extent intent was a reliable predictor of rural government worker turnover. The results here show that the phenomenon of state government worker turnover in Charleville is a complex one where personal, professional, and community elements, social support, job satisfaction and organizational commitment levels all interact to influence turnover intentions and behaviours.

Significant variables identified as influencing turnover intentions and behaviours through quantitative and qualitative research methods include:
• Personal factors such as years spent in Charleville by the worker and their partner, the desire to be closer to family and friends, and improved medical, educational and recreational facilities

• Professional factors including work conditions, overall job satisfaction, clarity of job role and evaluation criteria, support in the workplace, a lack of resources, and available professional opportunities

• Community factors included harsh climate, lack of recreational activities and facilities, the townsfolk, and the lack of anonymity

• Intent factors significant in being linked to turnover were – likelihood of working in Charleville in five years, and the likelihood of promotion in the near future.

This study also found that it was possible to explain and predict turnover through a variety of personal, professional and community factors in a rural service town in Queensland, and did this successfully through adopting a holistic perspective of the employee.
CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter discusses the research results and provides meaning for the findings and compares these to the literature. Section 5.1 provides a brief background to this research. Section 5.2 discusses the application of this study’s research findings by explaining turnover intentions and behaviours in comparison with the literature. Section 5.3 discusses predicting turnover intentions and behaviour, whilst Section 5.4 reviews the limitations of the study. Recommendations are made in Section 5.5.

This study is useful in improving our understanding of influences on rural worker turnover, which can ultimately affect change in the workplace. This information may enable organizations to better cater to worker needs and desires, and positively influence the high attrition rates which occur not just in Charleville and rural areas, but in other rural locations worldwide, and even impact on urban populations. There are, however, some issues with the research that impact on its applicability to other communities. These include the issues of generalizability, validity and reliability, and are discussed further in Section 5.5. The following section sets the scene by discussing the research background.

5.1 Research Background and Findings

The notion of developing strategies to retain employees is a relatively new concern for organizations today. As recently as 1994, Dinham (1994) reported that ‘in the educational system under study, little was being done to prevent teacher resignation or alleviate teacher stress, a significant contributing factor to resignation’ (p.4). Now, organizations and human resource departments are seeing the importance of managing turnover, even though it is commonly seen as an expensive exercise disadvantaging their operations. That aside, more recent genuine attempts are being made to reduce the attrition rates and retain staff (Department of Families 2003). This
study attempted to explain the turnover phenomenon and even attempted to predict its occurrence in rural government workers in Charleville, South West Queensland, Australia.

There is increased recognition of the need for workers to achieve a balance between their work and personal life (Grierson 2002; Boxall 2003). Once achieved, this can create a happier and more effective workforce. This recognition has emerged out of changes currently taking place in Australian society and the profound effect these changes are having on our families and workplaces. The most important of these changes include:

- greater diversity in family structures and an increasingly multicultural population
- a growing diversity of attitudes and expectations about the roles of men and women in both work and personal life
- higher participation of women in the workforce, education and training
- the ageing of the population
- an emerging skills shortage.

With Australia having its lowest unemployment rate (4.3%) in 28 years (ABS September 2007), a national shortage of skilled workers, and an increasingly ageing population, all of which contribute to a reducing pool of employees, recruiting and retaining the right employee is crucial. Effective recruitment and retention can maintain workforce stability as well as reduce hiring and training costs.

This study has aimed to provide a better understanding of rural government worker turnover in Charleville with broader applications to rural human resources Australia and worldwide. This project also aimed to find out whether attrition could be explained and predicted, and if intent was a reliable predictor of rural government worker turnover. This research found that government worker turnover and turnover intentions are complex phenomena and are a function of a number of variables that interact with one another.
Statistically significant variables influencing turnover intentions and behaviours were identified, including:

- years spent in Charleville
- partner’s years in Charleville
- overall job satisfaction
- likelihood of working in Charleville in five years
- the likelihood of promotion in the near future
- clarity of job priorities, expectations and evaluation criteria.

The qualitative research found the importance of two main personal elements, namely the desire to be closer to family and friends, and improved medical, educational and recreational facilities. Professional elements were divided into two distinct groups: the work and the organization. Two main work elements were important. These were the job satisfaction and support in the workplace. Three main elements of the organizational factors were identified: a lack of professional opportunities, a lack of resources and workplace conditions. Community factors included a harsh climate, a lack of recreational activities and facilities, the townsfolk, and the lack of anonymity.

I observed that the Charleville group of rural government workers was diverse, yet can be divided into two distinct groups. Firstly, those who have been in Charleville for many years, or grew up in Charleville, and have families that are settled into the community. Secondly, those who were single, young and seeing their work in Charleville as a temporary event, often saw this as a stepping stone to getting further in their career or a job in a more desired location. This finding gave a starting point for categorizing the qualitative research data.

On the whole, the sample group was very similar. However, primary differences were identified in the following areas. There was a good spread across age groups, and proportions of single and married respondents, professional, trade and administration workers, school and university educated workers, on a pay range from $25 000 to $65 000. Whilst
representative of the community’s population, there are some areas where the sample and general population lack diversity. For example, 99% were of Australian nationality, 62% had some sort of rural schooling and hence had a significant rural background, and more than 80% of the respondents expected to work outside of the state’s capital or another large city. The respondents experienced moderate to high levels of job satisfaction and rated this as important to them. The uniqueness of this group limits the applicability of the study to populations with greater levels of diversity, such as urban populations. Therefore, these research findings may generalize better across other rural communities where diversity tends to be less than in other communities, those communities with a strong government worker presence. For example, towns such as Longreach and Walgett have been mentioned in table 3.2 and have similar populations, environments, and facilities characteristics to Charleville.

5.2 Application of the Findings to the Research Literature: Explaining Turnover Intentions and Behaviours

5.2.1 Personal Factors

5.2.1.1 Demographics

When comparing the two sample groups, however, there were some notable differences. For example, the second group was older, more were married, and there were more males. Moreover, they had longer work histories, more were extroverts, they had lower education levels, fewer held professional jobs, they had lived in Charleville longer, considered themselves less stressed, better at coping and dealing with stress, and fewer said they were overworked. Higher numbers of participants in this group could be referred to as ‘long stayers’, and had greater investments in Charleville. This supports the work of Hall et al 2007 who found that this was a key element in the long-staying dental professionals’ decision to remain working in the Northern Territory, Australia. This has potential consequences for this study’s findings.

Gender, age, nationality, education level, marital status, job level, pay level, expectations on place of employment and rural and work background were all tested in this section. The only statistically significant variable was years
spent in Charleville. This could imply that with the increased number of years one spends in Charleville comes an increased amount of investment into the workplace and community, and an increased number of ‘side bets’ are made with the workplace and the community. Or as it is more commonly expressed, ‘roots are put down’ making it less likely that the person will leave. With increased time in Charleville, more friendships are made, routines are developed, knowledge of the job, workplace, organization, community builds, and the strengths and limitations of each of these are understood, hence an individual’s comfort levels are increased.

This suggestion supports Becker’s (1960) and Blau’s (1967) theories of investment and exchange. Blau’s Exchange theory sees individuals satisfying their personal and professional needs and desires, whilst using or exchanging their skills in the work environment, which leads to the development of attachment and commitment to the organization (Steers 1977; Somers 1996; Seijts 1998; Mitchell et al 2001; Boxall 2003; Robinson & Pillemer 2007; Gow et al 2008). This process operates in a cyclic manner. As their skills develop, employees have higher knowledge and skills to offer, and they expect to be receiving higher benefits.

A worker’s capital, that is, their knowledge, skills and contacts relevant to their occupation and institution, and attachment to location, for example owning a home in the town, develop by staying in a position or place for a number of years. It is therefore argued that the worker has develops more commitment to the organization and community as more time passes and has more invested in the organization and community and hence, is less likely to leave (Becker 1964; Somers 1996; MacDonald 1999; Maertz & Griffith 2004; Gow et al 2008).

The other variable from this section that was statistically significant in the intent model was the number of years the employee’s partner had spent in Charleville. This also supports the notions of investment theory because the partner’s career plan is another important variable which influences worker turnover, particularly if the partner has been in Charleville for a number of
years. This indicates that the partner also has built a connection and may not want to leave. Here we see acknowledgement of the partner as a very important factor in the worker's decision to stay or leave. This is an important research finding which breaks new ground. The turnover literature lacks evaluation of the importance of the partner in attrition and retention, with the exception of Blau's (1998) study that recognized the importance of the spouse in retirees' behaviour.

The importance of the partner in the worker's decision to leave or stay was seen strongly in the research. Several participants stated that they would only be planning to leave Charleville if their spouse was transferred. Others stated they planned on leaving Charleville when their spouse was ready to leave, whilst some participants were observed actually leaving along with their spouse or intending to leave soon after their spouse. On the whole, these findings demonstrate the importance of the spouse in turnover intentions and behaviours.

Other notable findings included several consistently identified characteristics of the demographics that make up a typical rural government workforce, including age, gender, length of service, job security and previous rural experience. They are discussed further in the following section. On the whole, rural government workforces are young, female, lack rural and work experience, and job security. This was not the case entirely in Charleville, where there are more men than women, as demonstrated in the ABS (2007a) data and through the gender proportions participating in this research project. This finding may be due to this study not including the Department of Education, a large, female-dominated department. It may also be due to the low numbers participating from the Department of Health, another female-dominated department.

With regard to the literature, there has also been some evidence that some demographic data can be used to predict worker success. Biographical data, such as age and education level, as collected from professional graduate entrants' job application forms and resumes, has been shown to predict future
performance at professional level more reliably than current selection procedures (Harvey-Cook & Taffler 2000; Boxall et al 2003; McNearney et al 2008). In conclusion, turnover research has shown that an organization has a variety of methods that can be used to predict the performance and/or success of a potential worker.

5.2.1.2 Personal Orientations and Worker Perceptions

This section analyses the employee’s self-efficacy, coping ability and personal orientation and the relationship between these qualities and the employee’s intention to leave their employment. More specifically it evaluated workers' extroversion/introversion, general ability to cope, ability to perform successfully at work, whether they considered themselves good at work and their feelings about their work. It also researched their abilities to learn from feedback and role models, their job knowledge and skills, their ability to cope with stress, and their ability to persist when work was difficult. It was found in this study that not one of these factors was statistically significant with respect to either turnover intentions or behaviours.

The role of personal orientation has recently emerged as a topic of interest in the field of turnover research (Parks & Waldo 1999; Hoover 2000; Deary et al 2003; Bakker et al 2006). One researcher even put the role of personality as high as 25% of the selection process, and stated that modern selection tests that include a personality component are able to successfully predict an applicant’s behaviour once they are employed (Hoover 2000).

Furthermore, some aspects of personality, for example, a person’s degree of extroversion or introversion seem to fit various types of jobs better than others (Parks & Waldo 1999; Deary et al 2003; Eggerth 2008). However, this is no guarantee that the person will be successful at all aspects of that job. In fact, there may be elements of the job which the person just can not do well because of their personality type. For example, managers who know and can act on organizational procedures are an asset to the organization, but so are the managers who are innovative and creative. Here we have two different
personality types and both are considered important in the organization structure, particularly at a management level.

Moreover, Strauser, Ketz and Keim (2002) found that different personalities predicted an internal locus of control and higher job-related self-efficacy. Whilst the number of jobs a person had held correlated with work personality, work persistence was correlated with education. These are important findings when we consider that higher self-efficacy and personality traits have been shown to influence work performance and success.

Other personality traits that have proven to influence work performance are the need for achievement and the ability to cope. It is said that individuals with a higher than average need for achievement work longer and harder than others to accomplish a job and are less concerned with socializing with others than more socially-oriented individuals. But this only applies to tasks that will give them a feeling of accomplishment, and such tasks tend to be those of intermediate difficulty or of moderate risk (McClelland 1961).

5.2.1.3 Adjusting and Coping
This study demonstrated that the relocation away from family and friends can cause some workers to leave their jobs. With some workers, this is related to their ability to cope and adjust to a new and different environment. For example, I observed organizational, personal and community traits interacting with levels of stress, job satisfaction, organizational commitment and turnover intentions. One of the main observations of these interactions was that the employees' levels of comfort or coping fluctuated. That is, I have observed over time that when a worker first arrives they are slightly uncomfortable with the new environment. As they become more comfortable with their environment, their satisfaction increases. However, as they became familiar with their surroundings at work and the community, their frustrations with the limitations of the organization and the community increase. These factors lead to increased stress levels, decreased job satisfaction and organizational commitment and ultimately affect their intent, which often led to attrition.
This finding supports Lonne’s (2001) work that showed a u-shaped curve of adjustment of rural social workers. Lonne and Cheers (2000) studied social workers’ adjustment to rural life by studying 11 criteria including satisfaction with rural lifestyle, satisfaction with current rural community, satisfaction with job, perceived well being, perceived degree of coping, productivity level, belongingness to community, anxiety level, strain and stressfulness of life stress events and perceived level of depression. Their work found there was some support for the theory that there was a process of adjustment that social workers either successfully went through or did not. Their success, or failure, was related to the amount of change they went through and a perceived decrease in their wellbeing. It was suggested the degree of change the worker experienced was related to their fit into the community.

The fit of newly-appointed rural teachers has been a commonly researched topic. On the whole, there seems to be a real mismatch between the rural community values and new employees (Matheson 1986; Alexander & Bandy 1989; Boylan & Bandy 1994; Sercombe 2006), with some reporting a ‘culture shock’ (Crowther et al. 1991; Sercombe 2006). However, there are exceptions, and some recent studies (Boylan 1986; Geraets 1986; Watson et al. 1989) have noted some positive engagement between the teachers and communities. Several reasons are put forward including a change in disposition with new teachers today.

Crowther et al. (1991) attest to this change in attitude, and put it down to an increasing understanding that rural appointments can offer real and positive experiences and opportunities, particularly in the area of personal discovery and growth. Secondly, the values and lifestyles of the residents in small, isolated locations have become more open and accommodating of a variety of personal orientations. Furthermore, they found that ‘the vast majority seem to find that their personal philosophies quickly adapt to, and integrate with, the overt values of their new environments’ (Crowther et al. 1991 p. 27).

In conclusion, there has been some opposition to the notion that appropriate qualities of personality and attitude are sufficient in themselves to ensure top
performance and retention of staff (Lunn 1997; Umiker 1999; Lonne & Cheers 2000; Boxall 2003; Maertz & Griffin 2004; Gow et al 2008). Moreover, it has been suggested that some of the factors related to turnover, for example job satisfaction and intent, are difficult to assess in the workplace, whilst others such as age and gender are inappropriate for use in employee selection (Parks & Waldo 1999).

5.2.2 Professional Factors

5.2.2.1 Work and Charleville Experience

The variable ‘work and Charleville experience’ encompassed the numbers of years spent in Charleville, years in the workforce, the number of previous jobs, years spent in their current position, size of their work team, the amount of work, and their reason for doing their current job. Whilst not statistically significant with turnover intentions or behaviours, the qualitative aspects of the research found these factors were to be important influences. In particular, workplace conditions were identified as significant determinants. These included having supervision from Toowoomba, Roma or Brisbane. In such cases, it was sometimes perceived that the supervisor had no real understanding of the work, conditions and environment in Charleville. Other issues identified were being overworked and not having the resources to do the job properly. This included issues with a lack of work vehicles, lack of funds to purchase equipment and supporting materials, and being overworked because of lack of staff and commonly having to drive long distances to perform work duties or attend departmental training and meetings.

Other work characteristics were studied. Praise, feedback and encouragement given, tone of work and work team, compatibility of job demands, personal abilities and workplace resources, work completion levels, clarity of job priorities, expectations and evaluations were all tested in this section of the statistical analysis. Of these, the only factor that was statistically significant in the intent model was the clarity of the job’s priorities, expectations and evaluation criteria. This factor was not significant in the turnover model.
This partly supports the literature regarding the important place role ambiguity (Rahim & Psenicka 1996; Tasake et al 2008) has in influencing worker turnover. This study suggests that role ambiguity influences turnover intention but not behaviour. This suggests that workers like to have clear guidelines and role descriptors, with role ambiguity negatively influencing retention. None of the other factors were found to be statistically significant with either turnover intentions or behaviours. However, there are some important elements that may impact on this result. For example, the sample group had high levels of organizational commitment, moderate to high levels of support from supervisors and colleagues, and liked their work. Consequently, the finding was statistically significant in the intent model but not the turnover behaviour model.

Professional factors rated highly in the qualitative results as well, particularly concerns with the lack of opportunities for promotion and poor workplace conditions. The lack of opportunities for promotion arises from having most of the senior workers as long stayers, which translates to most of the leavers being the short stayers because it is rare for a long stayer to leave. The genuine lack of promotional opportunities for the younger workers has developed a mentality that sees Charleville as a ‘stepping stone’ to climbing the career ladder. Workers recognize and appreciate their opportunities for learning and skill development but without the opportunities to further develop professionally they are stagnant, and consequently, many workers leave.

### 5.2.2.2 Workplace Characteristics
The findings from the descriptive analyses found that workplace characteristics were a ‘mixed bag’. For example, most workers felt they were praised and encouraged, felt calm about their work, believed they worked in a positive climate, were able to complete work assignments and believed that the priorities, expectations and evaluations of the job were clear. Opposing this they felt that their jobs often exceeded their personal and workplace resources, particularly, their workplace resources.
The regression analysis, however found one workplace variable to be significant. Namely, clarity of the job’s priorities, expectations and evaluation criteria was found to be significant in the turnover model. This indicate that professional factors do play a part in a worker’s intent to stay or leave but that this effect is limited and the result inconclusive as only one component of the wider measure of the job role was significant. This finding supports the notion that workers desire clear guidelines and that role ambiguity has a negative effect on retention, as argued by Rahim and Psenicka (1996) and Tasake et al (2008). It seems like common sense, since clear guidelines and role descriptors enable a person to perform their job properly and consequently feel that they have done the job well (job satisfaction), which as previously mentioned influences their turnover intentions and behaviours.

5.2.3 Community Factors

The qualitative results also indicated that community factors were a great source of dissatisfaction for many of the workers. I also observed over time that when a worker first arrived in the community it took them time to adjust and become comfortable with the change to a new environment. Once they became more relaxed and confident with their home and role in the community they seemed to enjoy their life in Charleville more. However, this was usually followed by an increasing frustration with the lack of services and opportunities the community had to offer and the workers became unhappy with the community. This influenced workers’ levels of dis/satisfaction, stress and organizational commitment with their personal lives, which ultimately affected their intent, and often led to attrition.

There was a strong indication that workers wanted access to better services and facilities in Charleville, particularly educational, medical, occupational and recreational services. However, there was a variation in the requirements of those studied according to age. The older, predominantly family-orientated, long-staying workers desired more or better educational, medical and occupational opportunities. The younger, predominantly single, short-staying workers wanted better sporting and recreational facilities.
The distinction could also be related to expectations. For example, the long stayers may not expect as much as the younger ones and/or have resolved to accept the limitations the community has, for example, the long distances, and the lack of quality medical and educational facilities. Again, this supports Hall et al. (2007), who found that the short-stayers had expectations of excitement which just could not realistically be met, at least not in a manner which would retain them.

5.2.4 Stress
Stress levels and the effects of stress experienced, and the use of relaxation techniques were tested and measured. None of the stress factors studied were found to be statistically significant with either turnover intentions or behaviours, and nor were they found to be significant in any of the qualitative results. However, it is important to note that the data showed extremely low levels of stress in the workers studied. More than 70% did not practice any sort of relaxation technique, whilst 76% stated that they had the ability to cope with stressful situations. This could be the rationale behind stress not being identified as a significant contributor to turnover. With such low stress rates in this study, it is difficult to assess its impact on turnover and intent. The research data did not relate stress to either turnover intentions or behaviours.

5.2.5 Job Satisfaction
Smith-Mikes and Hulin’s (1969) job satisfaction test was used to measure workers’ satisfaction with their job, organization, team, supervision, promotional opportunities and pay. These scores were calculated individually and totalled to give an ‘overall satisfaction’ score. This was the only factor found to be statistically significant with turnover, and none of the satisfaction components were significant with intention. However, in the qualitative data, satisfaction featured strongly in the results of both the leavers and the stayers. Many leavers stated that they enjoyed their work and were very satisfied with the type of work they did, and with the workplace conditions. For many though, this satisfaction with work and the organization was not enough to retain them. They gave stronger, more personally important reasons for why they should move on to another place, for example,
promotional opportunities elsewhere, and educational facilities for their children.

Supporting the finding in the literature, levels of satisfaction with pay did not feature in the either the qualitative data or regression analysis or in the ‘greatest satisfaction or dissatisfaction’ section. It did, however, come up very strongly in the descriptive statistics as a variable influencing the worker’s decision to remain. It is the top component of the ‘benefits’ group of factors which respondents had to identify as variables influencing their intent to leave. Pay, therefore, is not seen in this study as a major contributor to attrition but is seen as a variable influencing retention. This gives some support to studies which found that pay is an important factor in turnover decisions (Salmon 1988; Han 1994; Wallace 1995; Lunn 1997; Boxall et al 2003; Gow et al 2008; McNearney et al 2008).

Job satisfaction also figured prominently in the descriptive statistics, however whilst generally very high, there were some notable differences when comparing the two groups in the study. It was found that the second group had increased levels of job satisfaction, that is, 92% compared to 64% in the first group said the job was their greatest source of satisfaction, and 100% of the second group liked their job ‘a bit’ or ‘a lot’ compared to 72% of the first group. The second group also had notably higher levels of satisfaction with their promotional opportunities and their supervision. Despite these differences, the use of the second group for validation is justified, since no subject in the second group recorded a value for any predictor outside the range observed in the original group. As such, the model was not used to extrapolate outside the range of the original data.

Dissatisfaction with work was a major factor in the descriptive statistics. For example, nearly half the respondents stated that the major sources of dissatisfaction were the job and the organization. Whilst the job component is missing from Vandenberg and Nelson’s (1999) study and its applicability to this study is limited, there are still links between this finding and their study
which identified organizational disaffection as the only significant motivator of actual turnover.

However, the qualitative results tended to indicate that the community was also a great source of dissatisfaction for many of the workers. The effect of such dissatisfaction is illustrated in Abraham’s (1999b) work. She states that emotional dissonance occurs when expressed emotions conform to organizational norms but clash with true feelings (Rafaeli & Sutton 1987), and such conflict may threaten psychological wellbeing (Abraham 1999a). This finding is supported by this study where 62% of the workers stated that they neither agreed nor disagreed with the employing organization’s policies, or that they often found it difficult to agree with the organization’s policies. This emotional dissonance contributed to feelings of job dissatisfaction and led to decreases in organizational commitment. Abraham (1999a) suggests it is this reduction of commitment that directly brings on intentions to quit.

There has also been some research which has found that the notions of work satisfaction and dissatisfaction may not lie at opposite ends of a continuum but are two distinct outcomes caused by a variety of discrete factors (Herzberg 1968; Zhao et al. 1999). This was only partly supported in this study, which found that the job was the major source of satisfaction and dissatisfaction. The respondents did, however, nominate other sources of satisfaction and dissatisfaction, for example, ‘colleagues’ was given as the third major source of satisfaction whilst ‘clients’ was given the third major source of dissatisfaction.

5.2.6 Organizational Commitment
Organizational commitment was shown to be strong amongst both groups surveyed in the descriptive statistics. It was however not proven to be statistically significant and hence, not validly linked to turnover behaviour or intentions. However this relationship is still unclear. This supports Vandenberg and Nelson (1999) who also found no strong statistically significant link between organizational commitment and turnover. The present study did however find that a natural divide between job commitment and
organizational commitment could be made. This supports the work of Reichers (1985) and Abraham (1999b) who found that a worker could be committed to a variety of facets of the work, workplace and organization.

Although organizational commitment was shown not to be statistically significant in the quantitative part of this study, it does feature in the ‘picture’ of the sample and in the qualitative part. It was found that the respondents, on the whole, was highly committed to the job, with less than 5% of the group seeing their organizational commitment as low, and nearly 80% being willing to put in extra effort. Fewer figures were given pertaining to commitment to the organization. For example, around 35% agreed with the organizational policies, and 15% indicated that they would do any job to stay with the organization.

Qualitatively, the long stayers frequently indicated that they were highly committed to their job, to the work they did, and to the clients they served and that their work made them feel as though they had purpose. Numerous comments pertained to helping and serving the community or clients through their work role. Others said they felt as if they did some good in the world by the type of work they did. Results show that the workers felt committed to their job rather than to the organization.

This distinct dichotomy between commitment to the job and commitment to the organization could in part explain the fact that organizational commitment had no statistically significant effect on turnover intentions or behaviours, and could be the reason for the consistent but not strong relationships found in the literature.

The more recent literature has begun to recognize Reichers’s (1985) suggestion that there are different types of worker commitments (Abraham 1999b; Mitchell et al 2001; Maertz & Griffith 2004; Gow et al 2008). This incongruity may lie in the nature of organizational commitment. For example, Reichers (1985) conceptualised commitment to the organization as distinct from commitment to the work group, supervisors, and top management. In
two studies by Abraham (1998; 1999b) social support was found to be provided by co-workers and seemed to increase satisfaction with the job and commitment to the work group. However this had little, if any, impact on commitment to the organization.

Reichers (1986) provided empirical support for this argument when he observed that work-group commitment was not correlated with organizational commitment. This study's findings support the notion that there are different types of commitment, and found that for its respondents, commitment was towards the job rather than work group.

Commitment has not been defined as a simple emotional attachment to a job and/or organization since the 1970s when Mowday et al. (1979) found that organizational commitment 'involves an active relationship with the organization such that individuals are willing to give something of themselves in order to contribute to the organization's well-being' (p. 226). Consequently, organizational commitment has been defined as an attitudinal and behavioural characteristic. Duval and Carlson's (1993) study of outstanding rural teachers illustrates this point. They found that the most committed teachers have a 'calling to the job'. Some of the traits and behaviours identified include continuing to be committed to the job whilst resources diminish, expending significant amounts of time and even their own money doing their job, and enthusiasm and devotion to the job in the face of adversity. This has been supported more recently by research by Somers (1996; Seijts (1998) and Robinson & Pillemer (2997).

Organizational commitment has long been referred to as an important ingredient required in a rural worker (Boylan et al. 1993; Duval & Carlson 1993; Green & Lonne 2005) particularly if an organization is operating under difficult living conditions and the professional environment is lacking in professional and personal opportunities that can be gained elsewhere. Duval and Carlson argue that 'due to the scarcity of resources including a lower pay scale, rural systems might, in particular, be looking for signs of commitment and dedication in prospective teachers’ (Duval & Carlson 1993, p. 2).
This high level of dedication and commitment could be due to the work culture, not the workplace. That is, teaching has historically offered a real lack of external rewards, as have lower-level jobs in the health and environment industries. They tend to have lower pay levels when compared to other professions with equivalent education levels. Consequently, the culture surrounding such occupations dedicated to serving, protecting and bettering people and the environment, requires workers who appreciate intrinsic rewards, such as job satisfaction.

5.2.7 Social Support
Data pertaining to social support levels from supervisors, colleagues, partners, friends and relatives was collected. In each of these categories a total was calculated regarding who gave the support and what sort of support was received. None of these variables was statistically significant with respect to either turnover intentions or behaviours. However, importantly, there was a strong positive relationship to partner, as mentioned in the personal variables section. This indicates that the employee’s partner has an influence on turnover intentions, but defining this influence was not possible here due to the boundaries of the data collected in this study. Consequently, further research is needed into this topic.

The descriptive statistics and the qualitative research also found that family and friends were one of the primary reasons why workers left Charleville. Firstly, nearly all of the respondents indicated that they missed their family and friends. This indicates that family and friends play an important part in the turnover process. The only participants who did not indicate that they missed family and friends were those who grew up in Charleville or the South West Queensland region. Secondly, there was a strong indication that the workers wanted better services and facilities (for example, educational, medical, occupational and recreational) in Charleville for their families and spouses. This latter result was a primary finding in the qualitative research. However, there was a distinction between the two groups. The short stayers required more recreational facilities and the longer stayers required improved
medical, occupational and educational facilities. This difference could however, be related to age and family needs and desires.

This distinction based on age differences seems to reflect the changing needs as one grows older. For example, it might be that a 22 year-old will not care greatly about the lack of quality educational facilities, whilst a 42 year-old worker with a family might. It could also be, however, an attitudinal response, that is, that the longer stayers may not expect as much as the younger ones and/or may have resolved to accept the limitations of the community such as long distances, lack of quality educational and medical facilities.

The observations and descriptive statistics also showed that family and friends are a strong influence on both intent and turnover. Many of the participants indicated in farewell speeches that they either missed their family and friends or just desired to be closer to them. Moreover, the social support measure showed the primary support giver to be the partner followed by relatives, followed by friends. Employees did not attach a great deal of significance to support from colleagues and supervisors.

5.2.8 Intent to Leave
This section examines:

- why workers remained in their jobs (due to personal, professional, and community benefits)
- their future intentions (their plans to leave or stay in their job, organization and/or community)
- their plans for where to go next and in the long term
- their reasons, if they are thinking about leaving their jobs, for wanting to do so.

Intent features strongly in the turnover intentions model, with the variable ‘likelihood of working in Charleville in five years’ being one of the four statistically-significant variables. This variable was also found to be important in the descriptive statistics and qualitative data. This is not surprising since it
is a question directly related to a person’s intent to stay or leave. This is in line with the criticisms Porter et al. received regarding organizational commitment linked to intent. That is, it is a basic and simplistic link (Mobley 1978).

Furthermore, it was observed that intentions frequently led to behaviours. Employees often had a perceived career plan and associated indicators were observed. For example, a point at which the decision to leave was made could be noted. This meant that at some stage the threshold for leaving was passed. This was also explored in the interviews and created a basis for the interview questions.

The qualitative results indicated that, on occasion, workers’ intent does not always convert to behaviour; other factors can and do come into the plan. For example, several of the long stayers, said something similar to ‘I thought I’d only be here for a few years, but I have been here for 19 years’ (05/01/2004). Other observations include one staff member who arrived in 2003 who was asked why she had not changed her interstate number plates over to Queensland ones, and commented that she was intending going back there in a year or so. Another example is from a principal who left town to take a temporary promotion as acting principal closer to the coast and in a bigger school. His comment to the local newspaper was ‘I really like it here but for my future career choices it was an opportunity I could not pass up’ (Western Times December 2003, p. 4).

From this is clear that workers come with a career plan which for some does come to fruition, but for others it does not. It is also apparent that some workers have a level of tolerance, or a threshold, regarding what they are prepared to trade. We see this in the case of the leaving principal, who whilst enjoying the work and town was not prepared to sacrifice his career goals by rejecting a temporary promotion. Consequently, the importance of workers being able to control their own career destiny and the relationship between turnover intentions and behaviours features strongly in this study in both the qualitative and quantitative analyses. This finding supports the literature,
which consistently and convincingly links a worker’s intention to quit to actual turnover (Mobley et al. 1978; Hom et al. 1979; Welsch & La Van 1981; Cross & Billingsley 1994; Wong & Li 1995; Somers 1996; Maertz & Griffith 2004; Robinson & Pillemem 2007).

The other sections of the intent measurements included an analysis of why workers remain or leave, the likelihood of promotion and where the workers intended to go if they were considering leaving Charleville. The descriptive statistics found that pay and job satisfaction were the top two reasons why the workers remained. Good social relations and good knowledge of the job also rated highly. The organization, however, did not feature strongly in worker thinking about why they remained. Moreover, job satisfaction and pay were the two most important reasons for remaining. This demonstrates that, whilst not statistically significant, pay has the potential to influence turnover, supporting some literature and contrasting with others. In this study, pay, whilst not a strong indicator, was shown to influence turnover, and more specifically intentions to remain.

This study also found that there is a large number (~60%) of workers who are intending on leaving, the majority within three years, and whilst the organization does not necessarily feature strongly in the worker’s thinking as previously shown in this study, nearly half plan on continuing working for the same organization. Interestingly, of those who plan on leaving only 18% want to move to Brisbane (the state’s capital city), with around half of the workers wanting to continue working in regional Queensland.

The variable ‘likelihood of promotion in the next few years’ was a statistically significant variable in both the intent and turnover models. Moreover, in the turnover model it was a two-level polynomial, indicating that the opportunity for promotion was a reason for workers to leave and a reason for workers to stay. This could suggest that those who think they will get a promotion in the next few years will probably leave town to take this promotion, whilst others who think they will get a promotion in the next few years anticipate that they will get this promotion in Charleville. The results in this study indicate that
promotional opportunities are important to those workers who intend to stay and to those who intend to leave.

Moreover, the results could also suggest that since there were high numbers of extroverts in both groups, and extroverts tend to be linked to achievement-oriented work behaviours, the importance of promotional opportunities were significant to both stayers and leavers, young and old, male and female.

The qualitative results show that leavers (and potential leavers) have frustrations with lack of promotional opportunities, whilst the stayers (and potential stayers) have received adequate promotional opportunities and have no intention of leaving. This could be the cause of the potential leavers’ concerns, that is, there are no promotional opportunities as they have already been taken and there is no indication that they will be available in the near future. Consequently, many workers viewed their time in Charleville as a stepping stone, either to a better job within a different department in Charleville, or elsewhere.

Professional development has been an extremely well-researched area of organizational and worker behaviour and the desire for professional development has consistently been linked with turnover (Lunn 1997; Proenca & Shewchuk’s 1997; Boylan 1997; Umiker 1999; Boxall et al 2003; Morgan 2008). It has been, shown to be an important facet of the worker’s needs and desires, a finding which this study confirms. The importance of professional development is acknowledged by Umiker who states ‘to attract and retain competent workers, managers must provide growth opportunities’ (1999 p. 61).

Moreover, it is said that those workers who have high-level needs and desires engage more positively with their work when it is enriched by e.g. professional development opportunities (Mathieu & Hamel 1989). Umiker also states that ‘the employees that managers want on board usually are interested in professional growth and/or promotional opportunities. Managers should provide this even when they know that they are increasing the employee’s
Finally, the leavers, all acknowledged that they learnt a great deal from working in Charleville, improving their knowledge and skills dramatically, and many of them said they were able to experience some aspects of rural life they would never have been able to find anywhere else. For example, one young male worker, with a city background, tried and enjoyed polocrosse. He now owns several horses and has immersed himself in the polocrosse sport and culture. Although he left Charleville, he did go to another rural centre. Another female who grew up in Charleville has recently left the town for a rural New South Wales centre where she can continue and further develop her primary recreational activity, dressage. This indicates that some of the workers appreciate the rural lifestyle. Moreover, the results regarding where the workers want to go next and where they want to go in the long term, also indicates that the move away from rural centres may not necessarily be towards the large city centres as indicated in the literature (Boylan et al. 1993), but towards other rural and regional centres.

The respondents indicated that family and friends, a spouse who has a transfer to another town/job, and the lack of available social and recreational opportunities were the primary factors identified by participants when asked why they were thinking about leaving. The majority of participants had a desire to leave as opposed to considering they may be ‘forced’ to. This result again is inconclusive because of the low numbers of respondents (~ half of the group).

5.3 Predicting Turnover from Intent
The findings that pertained to predicting intent and turnover were also significant. We see from the intention and turnover models that turnover intentions and behaviour are both predictable; however it is easier to predict intent. The intent model correctly predicted the intentions of 58 of the 64 first-round participants and 24 of the 25 second-round participants (total 82 of 89). The turnover model also correctly predicted 49 out of the 64 first round
participants and 21 of the 25 second round participants (70 of the 89 total participants).

This research suggests that by proactively working with the variables in each model, an organization may be able to influence turnover. That is, if an organization ensures promotional opportunities and promotes high levels of job satisfaction, it may actually reduce attrition rates. With regard to reducing workers’ intentions to leave, an organization can provide clarity of job roles, and offer promotional opportunities. From a personal perspective, a worker’s intentions to leave could be reduced if the worker had a partner in Charleville and if they were intending to stay working in Charleville for the next five years.

The final variable in the intention model, ‘likelihood of working in Charleville in five years’, suggests that an organization could ask a worker how long they intended to stay. Consequently a worker’s intent might be measured simply by asking the worker when they intend to leave, although it is recognized this may be difficult and uncomfortable for supervisors and/or organizations. It is however, suggested that many workers come with a loose career plan and knows how long they will probably stay; hence this assessment of intent could be done through formal performance review processes or informal conversation. That said, this might be a difficult task, with some workers unwilling to share such information for fear of hurting their careers.

Test Three saw the variable ‘when would you like to leave’ significantly correlate with actual attrition. This demonstrates that workers have a career plan they are actively trying to realize. However, the results were not as strong as the models derived from tests one and two. Consequently, it is seen as a link that is too simplistic, and organizations would do better to use a combination of measures such as those suggested in models one and two.

Moreover, operationalizing the variables in the turnover model is more applicable to the efforts of organizations than to the community. That is, organizations should be ensuring that local promotional opportunities are available to their workers, and that worker job satisfaction is high. The final
variable ‘years spent in Charleville’ has consequences at the recruitment stage. Consequently this suggests an organization can reduce attrition by hiring a ‘local’ person. Again, this poses problems for an organization if the skill base of a community is not of an appropriately high level. This, consequently, suggests that providing professional development and promotional opportunities to existing staff may reduce attrition rates.

With regard to recruitment, this study and the literature suggests that predicting turnover may be possible at this early stage. It is suggested here and in the recent literature that organizations need to be proactive in recruiting, selecting and retaining the ‘right’ workers, and one way of doing this is through recruitment and selection tests. Such tests have recently proven to be effective in recruitment with these tests receiving very positive reviews, with one researcher stating that such tests are able to successfully predict an applicant’s behaviour once they are employed (Hoover 2000). Older assessment tools have been criticised for lacking the reliability needed for critical hiring and assigning decisions (Umiker 1999). However, tests today use software programs which are flexible, reliable, inexpensive and quick.

Moreover, these software programs allow human resources departments to design job/organization specific selection tools to ensure that the best worker is hired. Such programs can make a profile of the workers’ knowledge, skills and personality traits, and form pictures of the work teams. They might measure certain personality traits, such as creativity, compliance, ability to adjust to change, and discipline. From this study the variables such as ‘years spent in Charleville’, ‘years partner spent in Charleville’, ‘family and friends nearby’ could potentially be brought into the recruitment process.

However there are limitations to applying such tests. For example, they can only test accurately if the applicant answers truthfully. It has been stated that personality profiles cannot be 100 per cent accurate, taking into consideration falsified answers or a stressed applicant. Hence, Hoover (2000) suggested that it be weighted at no more 25% of the selection decision, along with the
applicant’s knowledge, skills, work experience, interview performance and references.

Evaluating a worker’s career plan is another way of predicting work performance and employee turnover. Jessup and Jessup (1975) state that, ‘in order to predict how hard people will work or how well they will perform, it is first necessary to know what their goals are’ (p. 51). This is supported by Hom et al.’s (1979) study of national guards, which found that attrition was predictable by factors such as organizational commitment, intent and turnover behaviours. This suggests that the notion of workers coming to a job or organization with a career plan is possible through understanding their goals, be they career goals and intentions. It could also apply to the workers’ personal goals, as the worker may actually be motivated by lifestyle or work conditions rather than career or pay. Hence this supports the value of adopting a holistic view to worker turnover.

Applying this strategy could have benefits to organizations, particularly those with high levels of turnover. One of the reasons why Hom et al.’s (1979) study was successful was the unique makeup of the sample population. That is, they were National Guards who at some point during their tenure were asked to make a decision to stay or leave their position. Consequently, they were ‘locked in’ to a timeframe that potentially could be applied to rural situations. If workers come with certain work goals and intentions, they can be asked to indicate how long they would like to stay and procedures can be implemented to work with their needs and requirements.

5.4 Summary of the Results
The results of this study show that personal characteristics, professional considerations, community, levels of stress, job satisfaction, organizational commitment and intent do work in a synthesis to influence employee turnover in state government departments in Charleville. Furthermore, this turnover can be explained and predicted. In Table (5.1) below, we can see that all six research questions were answered by testing three models, and it was found that all six hypotheses were true.
The results show that government worker turnover in Charleville is complex, with job satisfaction, intent, personal, professional and community elements all playing a part in the workers’ decisions to leave or remain working for the government in Charleville. On the whole, the results support the hypotheses that these elements do influence intent and turnover, but there were some
variables that showed an inconclusive contribution. These were stress, the organization, the community, social support, job satisfaction and organizational commitment. The table (5.2) below sets out the variables and their association with turnover and/or intent.

Table 5.2 Variable, significance and supporting explanation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Significant</th>
<th>Explanation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Personal</td>
<td>Yes – qualitative and quantitative support</td>
<td>The number of years spent in Charleville was statistically significant in the turnover model, and the number of years the partner has spent in Charleville was significant in the intent model. Qualitative results also supported this notion, particularly that family and friends played a major part in influencing their decisions to stay or leave.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional</td>
<td>Yes – quantitative and qualitative support</td>
<td>The workplace plays a major part in the worker’s decision to stay or leave, particularly promotional opportunities, and the job itself.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community</td>
<td>Yes – strong qualitative support</td>
<td>The qualitative results show that the community plays a major part in the worker’s decision to stay or leave particularly good social relations, and facilities and opportunities such as healthcare, educational, occupational and recreational.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stress</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>The descriptive statistics showed that the workers had extremely low levels of stress and tended not to use (or need to use) relaxation techniques.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Support</td>
<td>Yes – strong qualitative support</td>
<td>Family and friends was particularly important to the group. Supervision which was real and relevant was identified strongly as an issue influencing attrition intentions and behaviour.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job Satisfaction</td>
<td>Yes – Qualitative and quantitative support</td>
<td>Overall satisfaction was deemed statistically significant in turnover model, and important in the qualitative results, particularly with regard to the job itself.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organizational Commitment</td>
<td>Yes quantitative and qualitative support</td>
<td>The descriptive statistics showed that the groups were highly committed to their jobs primarily, and secondarily to their organizations, however it was not statistically significant.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intent</td>
<td>Yes – Qualitative and quantitative support</td>
<td>Likelihood of working in Charleville in 5 years, and when leave were statistically significant in both turnover and intent models. Likelihood of a promotion in the next few years was also statistically significant in the turnover model for both leavers and stayers. Qualitatively, the group wanted to stay in regional areas but not Charleville.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Finally by synthesising the above quantitative and qualitative results this study finds the following variables significant:

- Personal factors such as years spent in Charleville by the worker and their partner, the desire to be closer to family and friends, and improved medical, educational and recreational facilities
- Professional factors including work conditions, overall job satisfaction, clarity of job role and evaluation criteria, support in the workplace, a lack of resources, and available professional opportunities, and the likelihood of promotion in the near future
- Community factors including harsh climate, lack of recreational activities and facilities, the townsfolk, and the lack of anonymity
- Intent factors significant in being linked to turnover were - likelihood of working in Charleville in five years, ideally when would you like to leave your current position.

5.5 Research Limitations and Strengths

Some of the results in this study are inconclusive, particularly when only parts of the hypotheses are supported. For example, the significance of role ambiguity, as opposed to all elements of the person’s job, could be due to the research limitations. Such limitations include the small sample size, particularly with regard to the interviews. Because of the limited sample size less significant effects may not have been detected.

The snapshot effect of this research is also a limitation. For example, complaints about the council will no longer stand with a newly-elected progressive and open mayor. This type of research is, however, limited in its applicability to other situations. A longitudinal study could be conducted to complement this research, using a broader sample across rural Queensland and Australia. This would provide a fuller analysis of the turnover phenomenon in rural areas. As it stands now, the generalizability of this research project is limited, and one can only surmise that similar phenomena are occurring elsewhere in Queensland, Australia and worldwide in rural communities. Further studies are needed to examine the relationships
between rural workers and organizations in multiple settings and to compare the actual rates of turnover, perhaps regionally or by state.

A major issue with regard to measuring organizational commitment is the time interval between 1) the dates at which workers’ organizational commitment is measured and 2) the date for actual termination of employment. In Porter et al.’s (1974) study, organizational commitment was measured over four time periods. Statistically significant relationships were found in the latter two time periods only, suggesting that the relationship between turnover and several attitudes is strongest at points in time closest to the point of leaving.

Commitments may, therefore, develop over time and with some level of expense; consequently structural antecedents to organizational commitment may not develop until late on a worker’s career. Thus Reichers (1986) states that organizational commitment research should study the same populations over time, or should investigate correlates of commitment among relatively ‘young’, ‘intermediate’, and ‘older’ samples of employees. This notion is supported by later work by Somers (1996), Boxall et al (2003) and Gow et al (2008).

With organizational commitment being fluid over a period of time, and job satisfaction associated with specific and tangible aspects of work and the organization, organizational commitment could be seen as a more stable and enduring measure of turnover and hence, the best measure of intent (Porter et al. 1974). However, it must be noted that Marsh and Mannari (1977) found that neither lifetime commitment nor other variables measured were better predictors of who would leave when the turnover interval was short. This suggests that opportunities to leave have a more important effect on turnover than any changes over time in one’s commitment to the organization.

Using this data as a way of predicting whether or not a person will stay always provides a problem. Predicting behaviour is difficult, and whilst measuring attitudes and tendencies to perform in certain ways can predict other behaviours, this is not a consistent relationship. The findings in this study
should be considered preliminary. Methodological issues include the small sample for the qualitative research (<10% of those surveyed); the self-selected nature of the data collection, and the absence of multiple sites. These issues mean the study’s validity, reliability and generalizability are potentially limiting. However the limitations of the study can be compensated for by its strengths, including the high response rate (40%), and the use of triangulation. The triangulation of the different sample groups, research methods and the division into long and short stayers enhance the validity of the conclusions (Mathieson 1988), and these conclusions were on the whole in accord with the broader literature (Boylan et al. 1993; Igbaria & Guimaraes 1993; Boylan 1997; Lunn 1997; Abraham 1998; Church & Waclawski 1998; Harrison & Hubbard 1998; Montgomery 1999; Parks & Waldo 1999; Swanson & Fouad 1999; Lonne 2001; Day & Jreige 2002; Boxall 2003).

Finally, people’s definitions of rural may be very different. These differences have repercussions for a worker’s expectations and appreciation of the community, the work and the workplace. Attitudes influence behaviours and consequently, a worker who has a love of rural areas and enjoys what rural communities offer will make their decision to leave or stay in a very different way to someone from the city with their very different expectations and ideals of rural work and life.

Whilst this study was able to identify those with rural backgrounds and those who came to Charleville with positive preconceptions of rural life, it did not analyse the different perceptions of rurality held by the workers. This has implications for analysing the workers’ issues and concerns of rural work and life, particularly with regard to gaining a true meaning from the data. That said, the data collected were presented back to participants to ensure that their information was understood and portrayed in this thesis correctly. The unclear results on some of the variables analysed could be due to the research limitations, however these may be compensated by the strengths of this study.
The strengths of this study include firstly, the very strong survey response (40%). This relatively large and representative sample of state government workers has enhanced the validity of this study. Moreover, the sample was a diverse group of workers, particularly in terms of age, education, work experience and background. Even variables without much diversity, for example nationality and job level were representative of the government workers in Charleville, where there is a lack of diversity of nationalities and state government departments that do employ high levels of professional workers.

Another strength of the study is the deliberate adoption of previously used and well-regarded instruments throughout this study. Moreover, past studies haven’t used such a diverse range of measures to attempt to provide a complete explanation of the turnover process.

Third, the use of triangulation with the multiple research methods and long-short stayers, enhances the results by providing a fuller picture of state government worker departments and their workers.

In conclusion, this study revealed important issues in the personal, professional and community domains of a government worker’s life in Charleville. These findings expand upon earlier findings of the existence of links between personal characteristics, professional qualities, community, job satisfaction, stress, social support, organizational commitment and attrition and retention. The findings of this study can provide direction for governments and organizations with regard to information that may improve their ability to ensure that work environments are satisfying and that valuable workers are retained. The benefits of measures undertaken to enhance rural worker retention may include not only happier workers and lower turnover but enhanced quality of care for rural populations from stronger professional work teams, and decreased recruitment, training and transfer costs.

The results of this study support the hypothesis that turnover can be explained and predicted. It recognizes that turnover is a complex process
involving personal, professional and community elements interacting with stress, job satisfaction and organizational commitment levels, which impact on turnover intentions and behaviours. All three models in this study were tested and found to be correct. However, whilst the hypotheses put forward were found to be correct, in some cases this was only in part. For example, the role of the work didn’t relate to turnover but the clarity of the job’s priorities, expectations and evaluation criteria did, whilst the examination of other possible determinants was not conclusive. This could have been due to the snapshot research method, and other research limitations including the relatively low number of participants. However there are strengths in this study including the use of a homogenous sample group and the use of a variety of triangulations, which offset some of these limitations. These limitations and strengths also impact on the validity and reliability of the study. This is discussed in the section below.

**Validity and Reliability**

This research project was guided strongly by its requirements to be valid and reliable. Its methodology steered the research direction, the research actions and the project’s transparency. The epistemological, ontological and methodological assumptions of this study were outlined above in Section 3.1.2. The research was primarily concerned with finding meaning in the data, creating knowledge and portraying reality.

Meaning was derived from language and behaviour, that is, collecting data from a survey, observations and interviews, and observing employees’ behaviours. Insights into the employees’ constructs of themselves, their jobs, organizations and community were gathered. The research was carried out from an active learning platform, and was particularly effective due to the ‘trawling’ nature of the study and the use of semi-structured interviews and ad-hoc observations.

From a research methods perspective, the study has some strengths and limitations. Its findings could possibly be generalised to some rural communities, especially if they are similar to the Charleville population, but
certainly not to rural communities without a strong government worker presence not to urban populations. And whilst the sample was not overly diverse in some elements, for example, nationality, the sample was in accord with Charleville’s demographics. Consequently, it can be said that the research was done in a realistic field setting and was representative of the community. Finally, the sample was self-selected and this in itself raises issues. For example, there may be a certain personality type more prone to participating in such studies. This selection bias threatens the validity of the research.

The study used numerous well-known, popular and validated tests as part of the data collection, for example, Smith’s Job Description Index, Porter and Steer’s Organizational Commitment Questionnaire, and Caplan et al.’s Social Support Scale, to measure the factors influencing turnover intentions and behaviours. This eliminated much of the potential issues with internal validity.

It has, however, been noted that the OCQ, whilst commonly used and possessing a strong internal consistency and test-retest reliability, has acceptable but not strong levels of convergent, discriminant and predictive validity (Mowday et al. 1979; Kraut 1975; Igbaria & Guimaraes 1993; Maertz & Griffith 2004; Gow et al 2008). Furthermore, Caplan, et al’s (1975) Social Support Scale, which is also commonly used, has had a number of studies report on its satisfactory levels of internal reliability and the criterion-related validity of the scale (Rahim 1990; Abraham 1998).

The questions that were added or adopted from other studies may have created validity problems within the study, however, the use of triangulation of research methods and long-short stayers, reduced these effects on the findings.

Furthermore, the research was successful in eliminating confounding variables within the study; for example, all participants were given the same instructions and information. There was also repetition of questions of a similar nature throughout the survey to ensure accurate data was gathered.
For example, some of the questions about job satisfaction and the organizational climate were asked up to three times. This reduced inconsistencies in operationalizing the research process and increased the reliability of the measurement tools and procedures.

There were also issues with the small sample size. A small sample size may have insufficient power to detect a real effect even if does exist. As a result, the findings may have missed picking up a significant relationship. The final models were built on a small number of variables. Consequently, many variables were not significant, but those that were gave an explanation for turnover intentions and behaviours, and they were valid.

Moreover, the small sample and the nature of the study made the test-retest process difficult, thereby impacting on the validity of the findings. Unfortunately, the Charleville community is researched regularly. This made it difficult to encourage research participants especially in the second round.

There was also a significant level of convergence, or triangulation, of data from the research methods employed and the several departments selected, which reduced the limitations and/or biases involved when relying on one particular method (Jick 1983; Mathieson 1988). The synthesis of data and research methods improved the reliability of the data (Jick 1983; Mathieson 1988; Boxall et al 2003; Maertz & Griffith 2004; Gow et al 2008). Moreover, the qualitative research methods were used in an attempt to reduce the effects of the lack of a test-retest process, and to strengthen the quantitative findings.

There were however, some disadvantages of the qualitative methods, and these should be noted, particularly with regard to the interviews. These disadvantages include their potential low reliability due to interviewer response error and bias and low validity. In an attempt to overcome these problems, I presented a summary of the survey results to each interviewee. This enabled them to agree or disagree with their profile. Notably, no one disagreed with his or her summary of survey data. Finally, when gathering
the qualitative data I would frequently ‘replay’ what they had stated. This was in an attempt to capture accurate data, and increase the internal validity of the study. Another disadvantage was the difficulty recording responses. I overcame this by developing a proforma to allow me to take notes easily.

Furthermore, the observations and interviews share the limitation of being difficult to replicate. Reliability, like validity, was influenced by the nature of the research and was strengthened and assessed by clear descriptions of the research methods and context. I observed events as a non-participant to minimize the level of control and thus enhance the reliability of the data (Cavanagh 1984; Stenhouse 1988). Furthermore, generalizability is an issue because the findings are to be viewed with consideration of a specific timeframe and place.

Ultimately, the aim of the study was to define, interpret and understand a particular situation and portray an understanding of the observed phenomena. The findings converged on several models for explaining and predicting turnover intentions and behaviours. Through triangulation of research methods, work groups, and participants’ length of stay, these results were broadened and strengthened. The research findings may be generalized to other rural communities with similar characteristics.

However, predicting whether a person will stay in a job is problematic. Predicting behaviour is difficult, and whilst measuring attitudes and tendencies to perform in certain ways can predict other behaviours, this is not a consistent relationship. In conclusion, the findings in this study should be considered preliminary. The limitations of this study are however offset in part by a number of strengths.

The strengths of this study include firstly, the very strong survey response (40%) rate. This relatively large and representative sample of State Government workers has enhanced the external validity of this study. Moreover, the sample was a diverse group of workers, particularly in terms of age, education, work experiences and background. Even variables without
much diversity for example, nationality and job level were representative of the government workers in Charleville, where there is a lack of diversity of nationalities and State Government departments that do employ high levels of professional workers.

This study and its findings have demonstrated that a more holistic perspective of employee turnover may be successful in understanding workers’ relationships with their organization and their community and this information may lead to the implementation of strategies to increase retention. This holistic view, whilst only in its early stages of development, has been effective in enabling a broad and deep understanding of rural government workers. In the following section some recommendations and suggestions for further research are made. However, when we compare the results here to the literature some interesting comparisons emerge, including a growing level of support for the more holistic perspective when analysing turnover, and increasingly urgent need for organizations to better accommodate their workers’ personal needs and wants. These are all discussed further in the next section.

5.6 Recommendations and Further Research

This research project is able recommend that employers should:

- manage retention proactively
- recognize recruitment and retention as two distinct elements
- encourage work and personal life balance
- adopt a holistic view of the worker and their needs.

It is recommended that these four factors be implemented into organizations under the human resources management umbrella. The following section, 5.6.1, discusses these recommendations in more detail. Suggestions on further research are made in Section 5.6.2, and a concluding statement is made in Section 5.6.3.
5.6.1 Recommendations

5.6.1.1 Proactively Manage Retention

It is strongly asserted (Lunn 1997; Umiker 1999; Lonne 2001; Gilmour et al 2005; Robinson & Pillemer 2007; Taplin & Winterton 2007; Morgan 2008) that organizations should be proactively managing staff turnover, and that thinking that turnover is simply driven by pay is incorrect and antiquated, hence a more relevant and measured approach to understanding an organization’s turnover should be adopted. This new way of thinking encourages organizations to be proactive in reviewing their staff opportunities, conditions, and management with the aim of reducing attrition, retaining valuable workers and building a productive and stable workforce. This study supports this notion of strategically and creatively recruiting, selecting and retaining workers.

Moreover, some human resources departments have implemented other practices into the workplace to improve retention. These include increasing employee communication, offering more training and career development opportunities, increasing employee recognition, offering additional compensation, providing mentoring or executive coaching, introducing flexible staffing options, and changing promotional criteria. Some organizations use more than one of these methods to increase employee retention.

Some comments regarding these new approaches to retention include one from Thomas Davenport, Towers Perrin’s Human Resources Manager who says, ‘Pay and benefits will get people to continue to show up for work. But without the attitudinal commitments of job fulfilment, growth opportunities and recognition they won’t stay long’ (http:ww.octanner.com/news/Feb1998.html). Jeffrey Mount, president of Wright’s Gourmet House states ‘to get turnover to a liveable level, we must hire right, manage wisely and reward well’. (http://www.octanner.com/news/Feb1998.html). And comments by Weiss (1999) that ‘schools should be redesigning schools according to teacher needs, not increasing incentives’ (p. 871), demonstrate the notion of strategic
recruitment and retention is gaining recognition and becoming an organizational priority.

Moreover, Umiker (1999) says, ‘A major concern for today’s employees is personal and professional growth. Employees today and tomorrow seek a greater sense of control over their career destiny. Give them more and managers will see results in performance and stability’ (p. 64). This takes the organization’s support role one step further by acknowledging personal facets of the worker, particularly with regard to their family. An important element identified in this study and the need to find the balance of work and family is further discussed in the next section.

5.6.1.2 Recognizing and Working with Recruitment and Retention as Two Distinct Elements

The variables identified in this study as important in workers intentions and behaviours to stay or leave can be divided into recruitment and retention categories, which are therefore able to be operationalized and may lead to reducing attrition. This is seen more clearly in Table 5.3 below.
Table 5.3 Recruitment and retention variables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recruitment</th>
<th>Retention</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Employ workers who have family nearby</td>
<td>Increase promotional opportunities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employ workers who are locals</td>
<td>Increase workplace conditions, particularly supervision</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improve access to sport and recreational facilities</td>
<td>Ensure clear job role, that is, priorities, expectations and evaluation criteria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employ workers who have a partner who lives in Charleville</td>
<td>Provide better educational, medical and occupational facilities and opportunities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Provide better sport and recreational facilities and opportunities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ensure cheaper, faster ways of travelling long distances</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reduce travelling long distances for work purposes, improve videolink facilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ensure there is high job satisfaction (includes supervision, pay, amount of work, teamwork, organization, type of work and promotional opportunities)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Too often, organizations group recruitment and retention together. When viewed separately, organizations can work towards more precise, valid strategies, ones that specifically address the needs of the worker when attempting to improve retention.

5.6.1.3 Balancing Work and Personal Life

The concept of having to balance work and home life is not new and indeed many workplaces have for some time had flexible work practices to assist employees to balance work and family commitments. What is new is the realisation that to retain skilled staff, organizations must find ways to better utilise flexible work practices that take the worker’s family into consideration and incorporate them into organizational practices. The urgency of the situation is also beginning to emerge. Research by major international recruitment firm, Drake International, states that by 2010 Australia will face a permanent shortage of labour across a number of industry sectors. They are urging companies to start planning for an older work population beginning with
increasing skills of their existing workers (Drake International 2005). And a recent Queensland Government marketing campaign to encourage mature age workers, the Australian Government’s recent introduction of a bonus to retired workers who return to work. They also encourage employers to build up a more diverse workforce, including assisting organizations to recruit those with disabilities or from overseas.

Dr Rolland from Swinburne University suggests companies look at their organization to promote family-friendly work environments by offering such things as flexible work hours, good corporate culture, work/life balance, education programs and child-minding facilities. These factors are all highly regarded by candidates, even when compared to non-monetary rewards for staff. This is important when we note that wages aren’t the only factor employees consider when making work decisions. Dr Rolland also states that research shows that ‘the best paying companies don’t always get the best staff, and organisations that can offer employees more family-friendly workplaces will be more competitive as the labour market tightens and will be far less exposed to wage pressures’ (Google Business News article 11/2/5 ‘Australia would face a permanent labour shortage’ http://www.thematuremarket.com/SeniorStrategic/dossier.php?numtxt=4172&idrb=5&titre=Australia%20would%20face%20a%20permanent%20labour%20shortage).

By utilising family-friendly work practices, organizations can address their goals and support the employee’s family responsibilities and personal aspirations. This acknowledgment of the worker’s outside life can help organizations build better relations with their staff. Benefits of better staff relations include lower attrition, reduced absenteeism, lower training costs, lower recruitment costs, increased productivity and higher staff morale. These benefits are powerful reasons for organizations to become more family friendly. This study supports the notion that life outside the workplace is important to workers and influences retention and attrition.
The task of putting such strategies into practice, however, is complex and full of subtleties. For example it could mean that a department’s executive staff release a policy regarding retention identifying it as an organizational priority, followed by genuine action to recognize and reward workers, which has the potential to build loyalty and develop organizational commitment. These bonds will be further strengthened when supervisors listen and act on their workers’ needs and wants. Human resource departments with the finances and personnel required to implement high-level worker support, and executives who can operate within a genuine and flexible management mode, can lead these initiatives. Consequently, for future studies on turnover to be effective, researchers must widen the scope of their research and include a wide array of variables including personal, professional and community factors, along with analysis of levels of stress, job satisfaction, social support, organizational commitment and intent. Such a holistic approach will give the truest picture of worker turnover intentions and behaviours and could lead to improved retention strategies and practices.

5.6.1.4 Adopting a Holistic View of the Worker and Turnover

There have been suggestions that there is a series of affective, cognitive and behavioural stages, or steps, which a person goes through prior to actually leaving a job. For example, Mobley (1977) found a positive relationship between dissatisfaction and frequency of thinking about quitting, whilst Atkinson and Lefferts (1972) found there was a significant positive relationship between the frequency with which people thought about leaving their job and actual attrition. Moreover, Kraut (1975) found significant relationships between workers’ high job satisfaction, intent and retention, whilst Armknecht and Early’s (1972) study linked the cost of quitting and the expected outcomes of searching for alternative employment, and actual turnover. Mobley et al. (1978) added cognitive and demographic components to their notion of the turnover process by including the probability of finding an appropriate job after intent to leave, and considering age and tenure in their study.
Each of these studies, however, still fails to research turnover as a complete process of withdrawal. In the 1970s a more complex view of turnover was emerging. For example, more recent studies of attrition have included McNearney et al (2008) found that age, job role, work load and success increased job satisfaction, whilst Gilmour et al assess dental practitioners job satisfaction across their career and Somers (1996) modelled employee withdrawal behaviours over a career span.

These studies however have since been criticised as still being disjointed and over-simplified. Some lacked intermediate linkages in the withdrawal decision process, and their failure to include some major components, for example, organizational commitment, however, these limitations are now being overcome by more holistic research (Lunn 1997; Boylan & McSwan 1998; Lonne 2001; Boxall et al 2003; Maertz & Griffith 2004) and researchers and organizations are viewing the decision process as dynamic, and are taking into account workers’ attitudes, thoughts, feelings and behaviours.

Methodological limitations and strengths aside, this research project provides a significant contribution to understanding rural employee turnover in a holistic or ecological manner. Firstly it examines the interrelationships between personal, professional, community, elements and stress, job satisfaction, social support, organizational commitment, and intent and turnover, which have not previously been analysed at this level of complexity, particularly in a rural setting. Moreover, the results extend previous research findings in the employee turnover literature and provide initial support for a holistic model of understanding and predicting intent and turnover of rural government workers. Since these findings show that all these variables influence intent and turnover to some extent, further analysis is needed to examine this more closely (see Section 5.6.2).

Furthermore, this study is one of the few that has found support for a multitude of aspects within a worker’s work and home life that influence their turnover intentions and behaviours. As previously mentioned, years spent in the community, likelihood of promotion in the near future and overall
satisfaction reduced turnover. The likelihood of working in Charleville in the next five years, years their partners had spent in the community, clarity of job priorities, expectations and evaluation criteria and likelihood of promotion in the near future were important considerations in understanding intent. Given the environment in which rural government workers live and work, the finding that both personal and professional variables are statistically relevant is representative of their unique and complex personal and professional needs.

5.6.2 Further Research
This research project provides the impetus for five future research projects.

Firstly, this research found that many leavers left Charleville but rather than go to cities, they tended to either retire to, or accept positions in other rural areas of Queensland. Future research could identify rural workers’ career paths, and provide information to organizations for supporting workers retention to rural areas, not necessarily retention to a particular community.

Secondly, a future study could test the impact of social support on emotional dissonance, with commitment to the work group, supervisors, and senior management as separate criteria. This research found that the work group featured strongly in the work lives of rural workers. Work group commitment may be the sole focus that is strengthened by social support, and consequently retention may be increased, but this needs further analysis.

Thirdly, further research into commitment is warranted. The dichotomous finding in this study with regard to commitment to the job versus commitment to the organization supports Reichers’ (1985) work, and highlights the fact that a failure to make this distinction may be the cause of the generally inconclusive organizational commitment results found in the literature. Hence, a distinct division should be made between the job and organizational commitment and they should be further researched with regard to rural workers.
Fourthly, observations and feedback from the interviews indicated that workers could identify a threshold beyond which they would not stay in their jobs even if all aid was given to them to overcome their frustrations with a variety of work and community problems. Consequently, future research could investigate thresholds and rural worker retention and attrition.

Finally, analysis of the variables influencing rural attrition indicates that the worker takes a path to decide whether to stay or leave. Should someone wish to further research the path that is taken by a worker in his or her decision to stay or leave, a potential model has been proposed (figure 5.1)
Figure 5.1 A model of worker turnover that could influence further research.
5.6.3 Concluding Statement

At this time, organizations need to be concerned about retaining their workers. Currently low unemployment rates, negative population growth rates and an ageing population will see a dire shortage of skilled workers in Australia in the next decade. Organizations that can implement effective recruitment and retention strategies now will benefit in the future. For organizations with rural offices, overcoming the issue of attrition will be even more difficult, as they are already experiencing great difficulties in recruiting and retaining workers.

This study aimed to explain and predict the turnover phenomenon by measuring the effects of antecedents of turnover intentions and behaviours. It also aimed to provide a better understanding of rural government worker turnover in Charleville, with potentially broader applications to rural human resources in the rest of Australia and worldwide. This project attempted to find out whether attrition could be explained and predicted, and if intent was a reliable predictor of rural government worker turnover. This research found that government worker turnover and turnover intentions is a complex phenomenon and is a function of a number of variables that interact with one another. Significant variables influencing turnover intentions and behaviours were identified quantitatively and qualitatively and include:

- personal factors such as years spent in Charleville by the worker and their partner, the desire to be closer to family and friends, and improved medical, educational and recreational facilities
- professional factors such as work conditions, overall job satisfaction, clarity of job role and evaluation criteria, support in the workplace, a lack of resources, and available professional opportunities
- community factors such as harsh climate, lack of recreational activities and facilities, the townsfolk, and the lack of anonymity
- intent factors such as the likelihood of working in Charleville in five years, and the likelihood of promotion in the near future.

This research has provided information to better understand the rural government worker turnover phenomenon. This study found that it was...
possible to explain and even predict turnover through a variety of personal, professional and community factors in a rural service town in Queensland. However, further research is needed. It is suggested that future research examine the variables influencing career decisions of rural workers, and it is suggested that this be done in a holistic manner. Without this view of the worker as an individual balancing work and personal elements, organizations will not be able to gather an accurate understanding of worker attrition and retention. This holistic view gives the most valid and reliable view of worker turnover intentions and behaviours and will ultimately lead to effective retention strategies and practices.
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