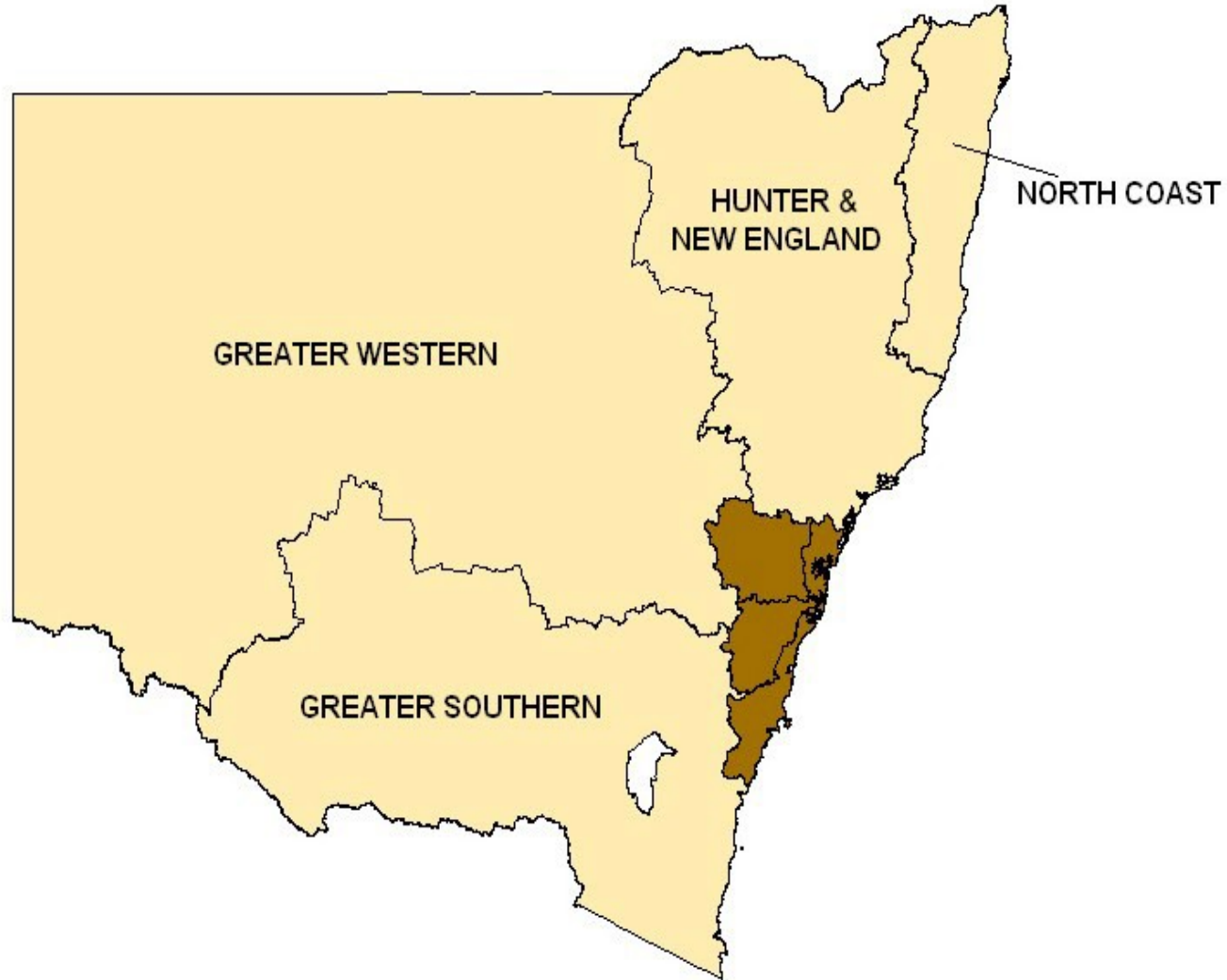


Hearty Health for Rural Women

An examination of issues identified by women with heart disease living in Greater Southern Area Health Service NSW

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Greater Southern Area Health Service



The Study

- **Ten women participated in the study, ages ranged from 52 years to 83 years**
- **A qualitative methodology was used to provide a social framework and an increased understanding of the diversity of women's experiences**

Victim Blaming



Main Messages

- **Heart disease is a women's health issue (one in five women die from heart disease)**
- **Early identification of heart disease in women will improve long term outcomes (particularly important because women are living longer but frequently in poorer health)**

Main Messages (cont)

- **Family history of heart disease is common in women (all the participants had a father < 55 yrs or mother < 65 yrs with heart disease) good early indicator of potential risk**
- **Women have uncharacteristic symptoms of heart disease which are sometimes mistaken for other illnesses or old age**

Main Messages (cont)

- **Women are concerned about the impact of their heart disease on family and the community (Davidson/Hancock 2003 Dietary Changes Women's Cardiac Rehabilitation Program)**
- **Women's inability to fulfill usual roles and responsibilities adds to the distress of not only having a serious illness but not being able to stay involved in routine daily activities (volunteering, child care, church, cleaning)**

Key Findings

- **The impact of gender (caring roles, family burden)**
- **The lack of evidence about women and heart disease (women are not subjects in research studies)**
- **Atypical signs and symptoms experienced by women (tiredness, shortness of breath, breast pain, reflux)**

Next Steps

- **Heart health screening by women's health nurses**
- **GP education promotion of 50+ check**
- **Cardiac rehabilitation programs for women**
- **Include women in research studies**

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