

Does Telehealth Encourage “Lazy Medicine”? A Qualitative Study on the Unintended Consequences of Telehealth in Rural Australia Using Systems Archetypes

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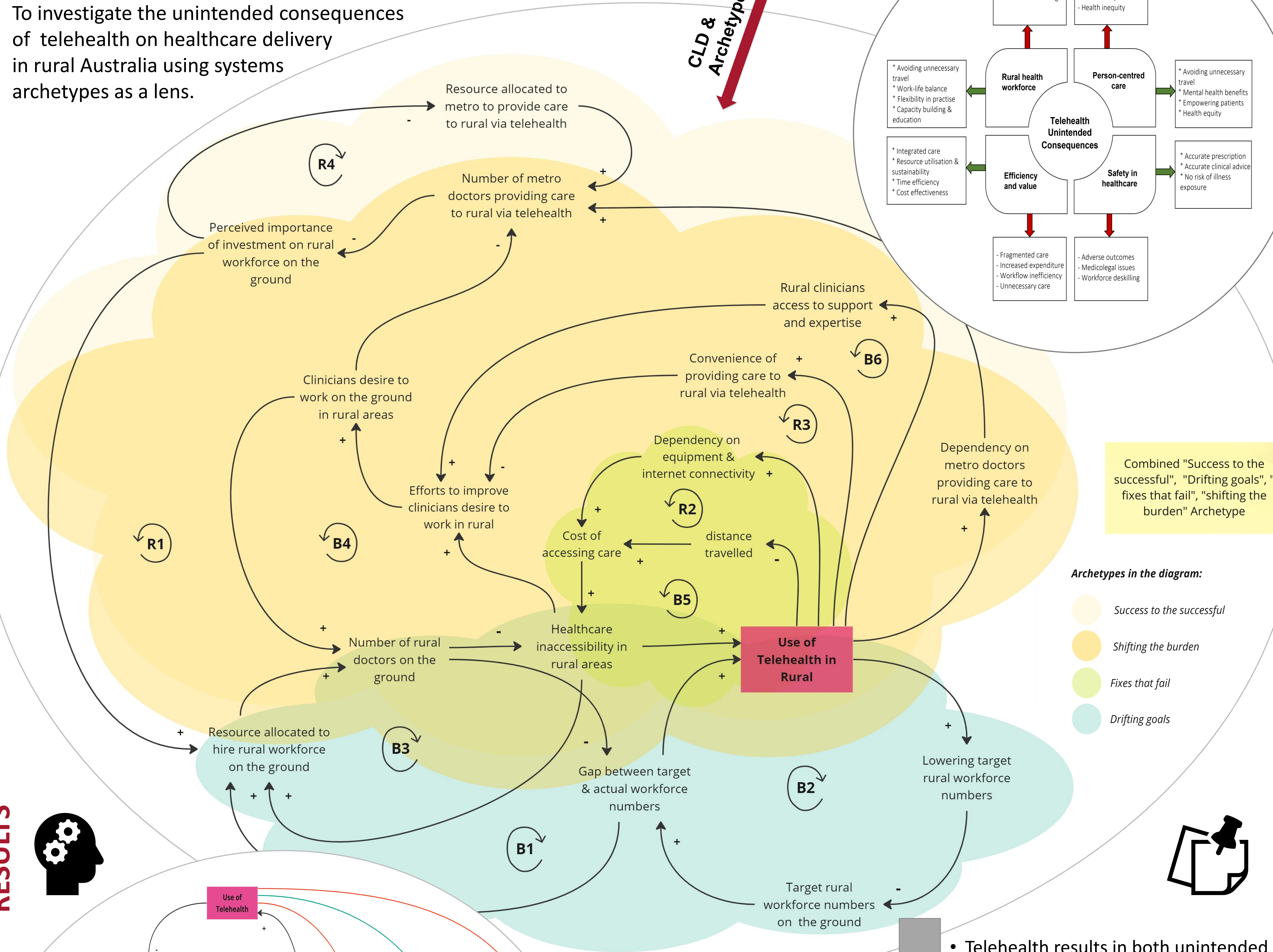
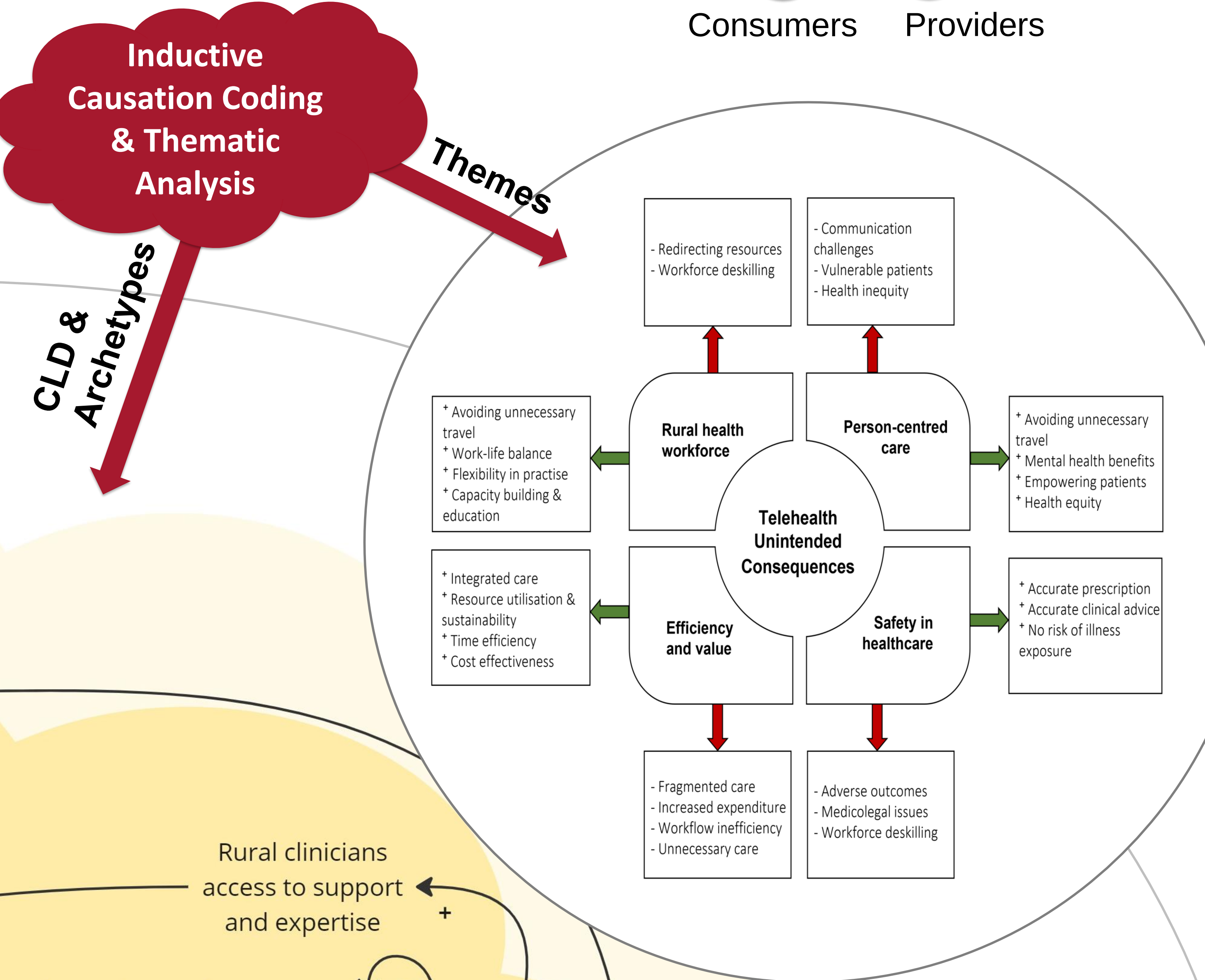
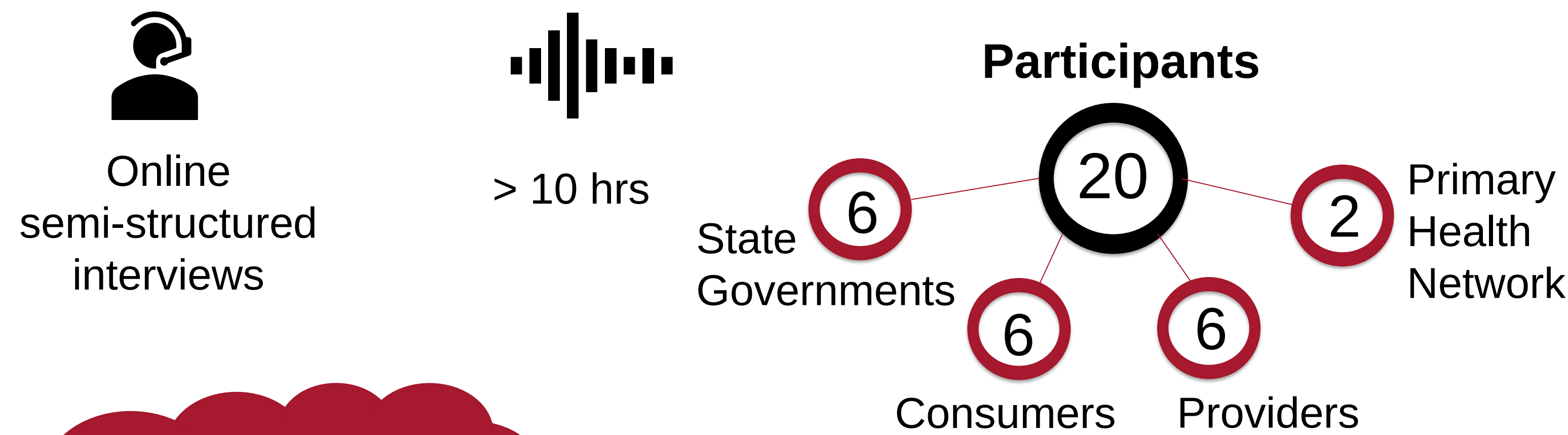
BACKGROUND

- There is a lack of empirical research that considers the unique social and health circumstances of rural Australian communities and the interplay between these factors when assessing the impact of telehealth on the rural Australian healthcare system in terms of unintended consequences. ¹
- By taking a systems-thinking approach and using an interactive conceptual tool such as **Systems Archetypes** ², this study aims to close this gap and contributes to our understanding of telehealth in rural Australia in terms of unintended consequences.

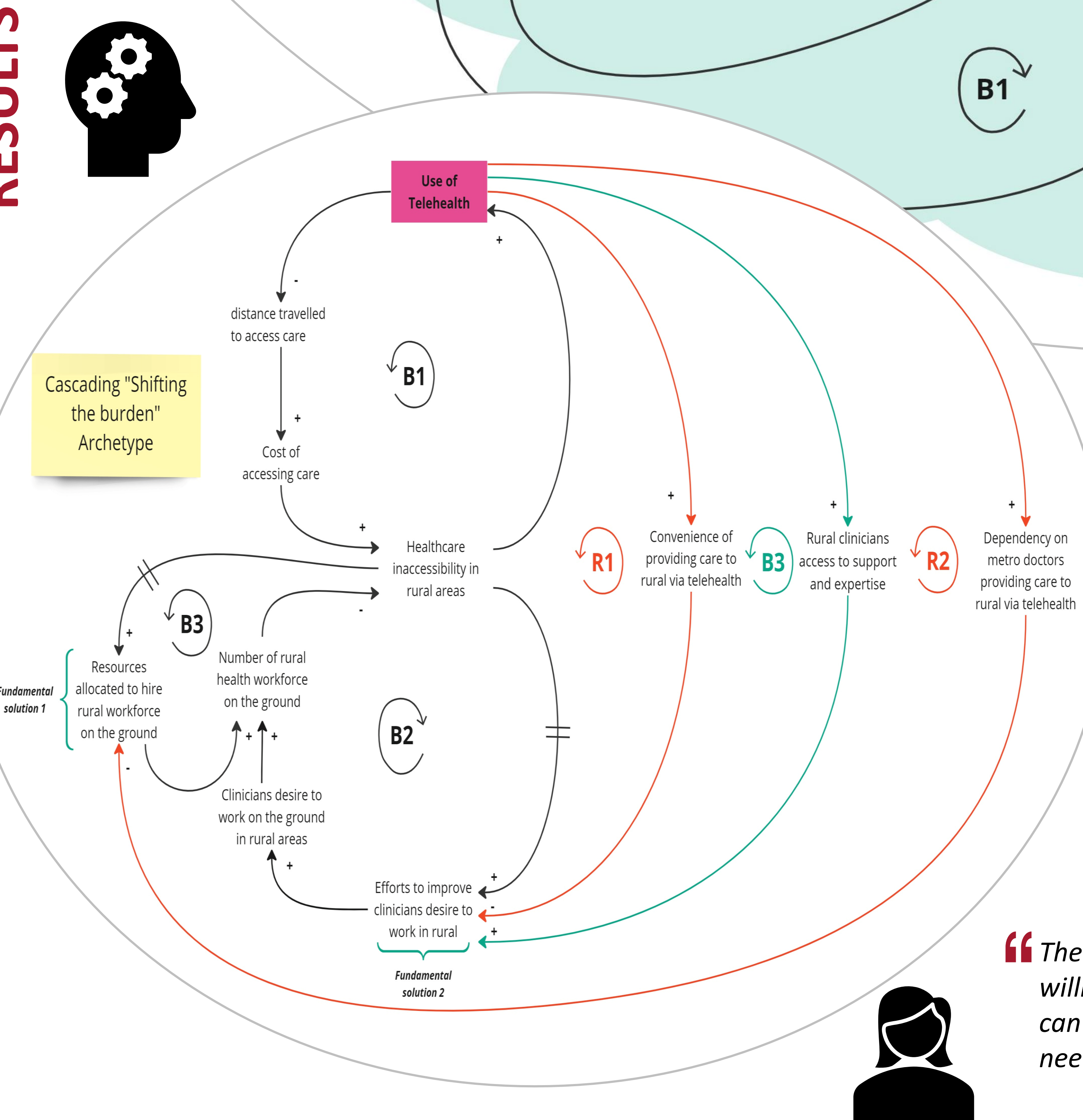
OBJECTIVE

To investigate the unintended consequences of telehealth on healthcare delivery in rural Australia using systems archetypes as a lens.

METHODS



RESULTS



“So there seem to be some people who set up to do these mass telehealth clinics and patients will come back and be given, you know, with those been given antibiotics. So, there are colds and things like that, and you are like, really! So, I do wonder whether it's has created "lazy medicine" in some people.”

“Increasingly, country towns don't have doctors. I suspect it would be tantalisingly attractive to increasingly switch to telehealth in regional and rural Australia because it would be cheaper. We already have increased medical problems in the bush. I think that will exacerbates the problem.”

“The positive maybe you might have more people willing to stay in regional rural areas if they know they can have that those links in and get the support they need when they need it.”

- ## CONCLUSION & IMPLICATIONS
- Telehealth results in both unintended benefits and unintended drawbacks.
 - To fully understand the impact of telehealth, we should consider the dynamic and complex relationships between the various interacting actors.
 - Due to these interactions, telehealth can impact a certain aspect of healthcare both positively and negatively.
 - More efforts should focus on fundamental solutions such as investment on rural workforce and initiatives to increase clinicians desire to practise rurally.
 - Telehealth can facilitate these initiatives by supporting rural clinicians in their day-to-day job which may improve retention.

REFERENCES

1. Baert, P. (1991). Unintended consequences: a typology and examples. *International Sociology*, 6(2), 201-210.
2. Senge, P. M. (2006). *The fifth discipline : the art and practice of the learning organization* (Rev. and updated ed.). Random House.

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