

## **EDITORS' NOTES**

The Australasian Journal of Regional Studies is one of the really important contributions that ANZRSAI makes to regional studies in Australia and its region. In resuming the editorship of this journal, we would like to thank and acknowledge the work and leadership of the editorial team, led by Bligh Grant, that has produced the journal for the past two years.

In line with the journal's role and objectives, this issue presents six quite diverse papers, again reflecting the nature of regional studies and its 'broad church'. The papers encompass both quantitative and qualitative research and include one international paper.

Research themes linking a number of papers are certain aspects of housing and, secondly, issues relating to the programs and funding provided by the third tier of government – local authorities.

Martin *et al.*'s paper, in fact, combines both of these common themes. It concludes that even though the role of Local Government in the provision of housing in Australia is historically far less than other branches of government, there are important opportunities in rural areas for local government to play a supporting and innovative role in addressing this most basic of community needs.

The paper by Vij *et al.* continues the housing theme, this time investigating the very sensitive and controversial issue of Australian housing affordability. It links that issue with the urban agglomeration/densification that has characterised much of the urban development of the country in recent decades, particularly in the capital cities.

Another ongoing issue in regional studies in Australia relates to the funding and expenditures undertaken at the local government level. This has become increasingly important as local governments are asked to undertake wider functions with the backdrop of changing population, household and business characteristics. The paper by Tran *et al.* examines

this using an empirical approach that draws on a case study from the South Australian local government.

Also timely is the paper by Dyason *et al.*, which considers the effect on retail expenditure of the Covid-19 pandemic to date and focused on the Canterbury region of New Zealand. Clearly, the full impacts of Covid-19 may not be known for some years, and yet the immediate impact on certain sectors, such as retailing, seems to be considerable. More detailed data will become available in the future, but we considered it important to publish one of the very earliest analyses in the sub-sector. It is hoped that it would provide a basis or reference point for further research work elsewhere in Australasia.

A paper by Labas *et al.* highlights a matter of current controversy in the interface between government and regions and the businesses located within them. Australian Governments at all levels dispense considerable public funds into the support of industry and wider industry development. Using recent regional and Victorian examples, this paper investigates the real value or otherwise of such programs and suggests implications for further policy development.

In most editions, we attempt to include an international paper to widen the journal's scope and context. In this case, we have chosen a paper from Karlsson, which reflects on the characteristics of and interrelationship between certain towns in Iceland. Obviously, that context is vastly different from Australasian regions and experience; however, the paper provides interesting and uniquely presented observations on various communities and their development in remote and sparsely populated areas. Some parallels with Australian geographic regional characteristics can be observed.

From time to time, this journal provides a literature review which the editors believe would be of interest and should be drawn to the attention of our readership. Normally that is an academic text but, in this case, we have included a review of the quite excellent 2021 work by Simon Winchester, *Land ... How the Hunger for Ownership Shaped the Modern World*. While writing for a general audience, Winchester is well known

for the depth of his research. In this case, he recognises how the characteristics of land tenure exploration and development have driven wealth creation in regions. It includes interesting and important observations on both Australia and New Zealand.

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