

Editor's Notes

It is my great pleasure to present this issue of the *Australasian Journal of Regional Studies* (AJRS), my first since taking over as Managing Editor in January 2023. As I reported in my editor's report to the ANZRS AI AGM in November, this past year has been a period of substantial change at the journal, as we not only saw changes in the editorial and support team, but adopted new processes that will hopefully ensure a more consistent, transparent and positive experience for authors and reviewers.

Similar to many other journals, we have experienced difficulties with finding willing reviewers and the timeliness of reviews since the COVID-19 pandemic. This has somewhat delayed the release of this issue, and the issue contains fewer articles than is the norm for AJRS. However, the papers that have been included are of a high standard. We now also have a pipeline of papers at various stages of review, and the future of the journal looks more secure than it was a year ago.

The four articles in this issue cover a variety of topics in regional science and regional studies. The first article, by William Cochrane, Jacques Poot, and Matthew Roskrige, looks at how the uptake of social security benefits varies spatially, following a large negative shock to the economy. The paper specifically focuses on the effects of the Global Financial Crisis and the COVID-19 pandemic in New Zealand. This paper is notable in applying a variety of traditional and machine-learning approaches in the estimation of its spatial econometric models. They use these models to point to the factors that contribute to regional resilience to negative shocks: (1) a low unemployment rate; and (2) a large public sector. For its novel application of spatial econometrics and machine learning techniques, this paper is a deserved winner of the John Dickinson Memorial Award for the best paper.

The second article, by Phuong Ho, investigates the relationship between the rural-urban wage gap and skills differences in Australia, using HILDA data. In concordance with international literature, they find a wage premium for major urban areas of around 19.3 per cent. However, an interesting aspect is that migrants from rural to major urban areas do not experience a wage increase of 19.3 per cent, but rather a much smaller increase of 7.5 per cent. This suggests that rural-urban migrants may be initially selected into urban jobs below their skill level. Some useful follow-up work here could be to look at long-run wage changes for these migrants, to see if there is any catch-up effect.

The third article, by Yogi Vidyattama, Muhammad Halley Yudhistira, and Meila Husna, looks at the regional economies of Eastern Indonesia,

and the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. While mostly descriptive, this study provides a window into a region that in my view is underexplored in economic research. They find that, while many activities such as retail and recreation decreased in Eastern Indonesia similar to the rest of the country, workplace activity decreased by far less. This resulted in a decreased economic impact of the pandemic in Eastern Indonesia, although I note that this benefit needs to be carefully weighed against greater health impacts.

The fourth and final article, by Andrew Parkin and Leonie Hardcastle, explores population change and regional strategic governance in the Limestone Coast region of South Australia. Like many non-urban regions in developed countries, the COVID-19 pandemic induced significant net in-migration to the Limestone Coast, a rapid and unexpected reversal of decades of net migration loss. The questions at heart for regional government are therefore, is this change in population trajectory sustainable, and what challenges does it bring? The authors outline the strategic challenges and the responses of regional government, which may provide a lesson for other regional centres that are grappling with similar issues.

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Managing Editor
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