

Note from the Editors

The five articles in this issue share an important common theme, namely effective public management of Australia's regions. However, the spatial scales of analysis differ considerably between the contributions. Shepherd and Dixon's article looks at the impact of macro-economic stabilisation policies pursued by the Federal Government's key economic agencies on aggregate output and employment across the eight States and Territories, and find important differences between them which could have policy implications. Buultjens and his colleagues, on the other hand focus on the task of creating vibrant and authoritative Regional Development Australia committees capable of energising the 55 sub-state regions over which they preside. Such a task requires high quality and collaborative local leadership able to decide effectively on local regional opportunities and strategy and creatively engage other responsible agencies. This difficult task is not made easier by insufficient funding. Dollery and his colleagues then turn to the metropolitan scale and the vexed issue of local governance structures. Their work critiques KPMG's recommendation for fewer Sydney LGAs and a body to oversee regional development. Such debates are potentially crucial for the efficient delivery of high quality infrastructure and public services ... and through them local employment opportunities. This brings us appropriately to Jain's article, which assesses the capacity of Victoria's approaches to local economic development – including private business associations – to develop dynamic and self-sustaining economic expansion in the City of Casey. If we take these four articles together one gets a clear insight into the difficulties public policy faces in delivering the kinds of sustainable and dynamic local economic growth the Australia's public craves. The task is made more complex by innumerable actors working across many different and intersecting tiers of government and often operating on different time horizons. Finally, Mardaneh provides us with something of an overview of how a large number of different towns and cities across Australia are faring in the race for development and what key variables appear to correlate best with local population growth. These are industry of employment, individual weekly income, age structure and education. So we can add another element into the regional development cocktail, which makes the task even more difficult. Regional communities come to the table with very different economic histories, current well-being, opportunity sets, and development prospects.

So this issue provides us with important insights into regional development processes, needs, opportunities, and governance. Regional Science is clearly alive and well in this country and has much to say about who should do what where and when – and about appropriate methods of analysis.

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