

Editor's Notes

It is our great pleasure to present this issue of the *Australasian Journal of Regional Studies* (AJRS), our only issue for 2024. As reported in the editor's report to the ANZRS AI AGM in December, this past year has seen continuing change at the journal, as we embedded the new processes adopted in the previous year, and continued to develop the pipeline of articles under review, making the journal more sustainable. We also welcomed a new copy editor to our team, Nikki Crutchley of Crucial Corrections. We look forward to continuing to use her excellent services in future issues.

Similar to many other journals, we continue to experience difficulties with finding willing reviewers and the timeliness of reviews, as well as the responsiveness of some authors in attending to requested revisions. As a result, the release of this issue has been somewhat delayed. However, the papers that have been included are of a high standard. We continue to have a pipeline of papers at various stages of review, and the future of the journal looks more secure than it has over the last two years.

The four articles in this issue cover a variety of topics in regional science and regional studies. The first article, by Gul Rukh Shakir, also relates to house prices, analysing the impact of two housing programmes that aim to help low- and moderate-income families into homeownership in Australia. Using a housing microsimulation model for Queensland, the paper demonstrates that the "First home guarantee scheme" (FHGS) increases rates of home ownership by more than the "Help to buy scheme" (HTBS). The difference is attributed to the focus of the HTBS on younger and lower-income households. For its application of microsimulation to an important policy question that is likely of broad interest to policy-makers, this paper is a deserved winner of the John Dickinson Memorial Award for the best paper in AJRS for 2024.

The second article, by Vince Mangioni, Janet Ge, Song Shi, and Shanaka Herath, looks at how residential land values and housing prices across regional Australia have changed over the past five years. They also thematically analyse submissions to the NSW Regional Housing Taskforce 2022, identifying that a shift towards lifestyle living and second dwelling ownership, and a change in workforce demand have increased the demand for regional housing. Qualitative approaches, such as textual and narrative analysis, are a growing but still underappreciated tool for regional scientists, and this paper makes a welcome contribution in that space. It is

also important in explaining settlement and migration patterns on a regional/local level, which is an issue across Australia, New Zealand, and many other countries.

The third article, by Pinak Sarkar and Nutan Shashi Tigga, uses bootstrap data envelopment analysis to evaluate the efficiency of health expenditures in improving child mortality outcomes across 127 low- and middle-income countries (LMICs). They find that 45 percent of LMICs exhibit decreasing returns to scale, meaning that increases in health inputs will generate less than proportionate reductions in child mortality. The implication is that many governments in LMICs should be focusing on improving the efficiency of health expenditure, rather than simply increasing health expenditure, if child mortality is to be reduced.

The fourth and final article, by Huong Nguyen, looks at the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the financial services sector across four regions of the US. The paper shows that sector revenues were more greatly affected in larger regions. Then, using multiple discriminant analysis analysis, the paper finds that before the pandemic, labour determined the revenue differences between regions, while during the pandemic, local, state, and federal taxes played a greater role.

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Editors
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