

Review of Hugh Dickey's (2021) *The Changing face of rural New Zealand: A study of rural demographic changes over 170 years, and the story behind them.*

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Dickey's latest work on rural population change follows his earlier monograph 'The growth of New Zealand towns'. While this second monograph is an excellent addition to information about rural population change, it is a pity that what scarce academic analysis which has been published about rural population change (such as research by Brian Heenan, Garth Cant and Evelyn Stokes among others) isn't alluded to. Another frustration is again the paucity of attention to Māori (including a lack of references). The rather blithe comment that "a great migration of Māori took place into the cities, due to greater opportunity for work..." (p13), completely ignores the backstory. Having been dispossessed of their lands to enable colonial settlement, and government policies that effectively prevented Māori building houses on what little land remained, many Māori had no option but to move to urban places for work. A thorough editing would have linked the section on colonial attitudes (p18) to this earlier discussion, making it more meaningful.

Despite this, Dickey's monograph is a very useful compilation. The maps and graphs paint an evocative picture giving an immediately accessible portrait of population change in rural New Zealand. Unfortunately the maps for various time periods are not to the same scale so cannot be compared. There is no doubt a good reason for this, but it is not given. Another editing issue was the lack of dates on some of the maps and graphs (pp27-30).

I found explanations given for some of the changes somewhat misleading. For example, the rise of immigrant labour is explained by the statement: (p24) "as local people and even families of farmers *are less inclined to work on farms*, immigrant labour has been needed" (my emphasis). Less inclined to work, or a problem of pay rates? Without access to more in-depth analysis, Dickey would perhaps have been better to have just identified the trends – and these are fascinating.

Overall, Dickey has again achieved an exceptional outcome with a very frustrating data-set, given the myriad boundary changes. The six township and six district vignettes provide useful context for the changing population numbers.