Editorial

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This special issue of *Queensland Review* is focused on the long history of migration in regional Queensland. It integrates analysis by historians and social scientists to explore the continuities and changes that have characterised Queenslanders' lives outside the metropolitan centre of Brisbane. Together, the articles reveal how mobile populations and cultural belonging have been negotiated, and continue to be negotiated, in regional Queensland.

The issue was conceived in conversation with colleagues at the recently inaugurated Institute for Resilient Regions at the University of Southern Queensland. Many of us have been struck by the rapid growth in the visibility and topicality of migrants within regional Australia. Migrant workers in the agricultural, resource and construction sectors are employed in many regional centres, and thousands of refugees are settling in large numbers in cities outside the Greater Brisbane area. While many aspects of these people's experiences are new, regional Queensland has a long history of migration and movement through its landscape that offers an important historical context to these more recent developments.

A focus on these trends is particularly pertinent, as the Queensland government has recently launched its flagship Queensland Plan, which sets out its vision for the state over the next thirty years. Regional Queensland is central to the plan, and the desire to expand the number of Queenslanders living in regional areas underpins many of its aspirations.[1] The premier's emphasis on the strength of regional communities and industry reaffirms the importance of non-metropolitan Queensland to the state's future. More profoundly, it raises questions about how communities in the regions imagine themselves to be constituted, and how belonging is experienced by different groups within these communities. Recognising long-term historical patterns in relation to communities and migration deepens and strengthens our capacity to assess the significance of changes in contemporary regional life.

The collection recognises a historical preoccupation among scholars that has defined regional Queenslanders in contradistinction to Brisbane, and has emphasised an attachment to land and relationship with nature. Without denying this scholarship, contributors to this issue of *Queensland Review* reflect on new ways of conceptualising regional Queenslanders through the prism of mobile populations. The importance of locale and the situated nature of migrant identities are of particular interest throughout the articles. Balanced with this are the differing ways in which individuals experience connectivity with the state capital, as well as with their former homes, communities and jobs.

As Regina Ganter notes in her article, migration was a characteristic of Queensland's landscape long before the state existed on any map. In a major research

project that investigates German missions and Indigenous Australians, she explores the changing dynamics of race relations and notions of humanitarianism. The precarious nature of the families' settlement on the fringes of urban life highlights shifting definitions of centre and periphery. Ganter's work similarly draws attention to the spaces within which groups claim agency and negotiate their interaction with authorities. Taking up a theme that is threaded throughout this special issue, the article also demonstrates the centrality of industry to personal identities, the location of settlement and the moral construct of the migrants in wider society.

Anne Monsour's article draws on her extensive body of research into Lebanese migration in Australia. In addition to showing industry as central to the migrants and their position in local communities, her contribution makes the gendered nature of migration clear. As well as the women's own migration experiences, the presence of women and children was central to how the wider community perceived migrants and their capacity to assimilate to dominant British norms. The theme of visible difference appears in all of the articles of this special issue, and Monsour's essay reveals the complex spaces between legal frameworks and community norms in which race continues to be constructed in the regions.

Sophie Loy-Wilson's contribution explores how the commercial lives of Chinese Australians can be used to interrogate cross-cultural interaction and exchange in regional Queensland history. Commerce has long connected regional Queensland with Australian capitals, as well as with cities across the world. As Loy-Wilson notes, 'Chinese shopkeepers sat at the centre of a racial and economic border seepage, providing visual proof that Australian nation-building was entwined with Asian markets'. While fluid populations remained closely connected with their former home regions, the migrants were able to use commerce as a tool to achieve permanence in the face of hostile laws. Despite this, their work has often been seen as disconnected from the wider community and construed as a threat in terms of reversing the civilising effects of white industry and development.

Francesco Ricatti's article foregrounds the emotional intensity of Italian migrants' experiences in the post-war era. Rather than emphasise the fluidity of migration, he points to the complexity of social relations in local places that incorporate trans-national and trans-local ties. Ricatti explores the experiential intensity of feeling 'out of place'. This process of meaning-making and emplacement draws attention to the centrality of Queensland's natural environment in migrants' memories. In this manner, the article challenges scholars' tendency to foreground the urban landscape in studies of mobile populations. Instead, Ricatti shows how engagement with the natural environment can help to provide an understanding of, and mitigate, loneliness and isolation across generations, genders and migrant groups.

Richard Gehrmann continues the theme of landscape and environment with his discussion of white South Africans in the Darling Downs. His article explores how gardens and the region's sense of cultivated agrarianism helped migrants to place themselves in local communities. A 'shared heritage of transposed Britishness' enabled and transformed the emotional connections between migrants and the communities they had left behind. The article also explores questions of visible difference, arguing that 'lifestyle migrants', such as white South Africans, have a unique capacity to engage with the high levels of sociality he identifies in regional communities.

The contribution by Dianne Jones and myself explores differing notions of inclusion within the Indian Australian community in the regional city of Toowoomba. The article explores regional responses to the violence against Indian students that recently occurred in metropolitan centres. It looks at connectivity between regional residents and their acquaintances in India and metropolitan Australia. We identify the importance to regional social inclusion of multiple, intersecting constructs of community. This includes connectivity between Indian Australians and the wider community, but also differences between temporary international students and longer-term residents. Rather than focus solely on the role of local regional spaces, the article explores how the mediatisation of events connects regions to communities throughout the country and the world.

In the final article, by Jill Lawrence, the experiences of international students are considered within the particular cultural settings of regional universities. She explores not only how the students perceive regional Australia, but also how they seek to navigate this at the level of interpersonal communication. The students' surprise at the diversity of regional society reinforces the hidden assumptions that communities outside the metropolitan centres are culturally homogenous. The multiplicity of cultures presents temporary migrants, such as international students, with tangible difficulties that must be overcome with complex strategies to make meaning in their new homes. The fluidity and interconnectivity of experiences echoes many of the other contributions in the special issue.

The drawing together of a special issue is necessarily a collaborative process between the authors, guest editor and series editors, for which I am very grateful. This issue demonstrates the great changes that have occurred in the ways mobile populations have engaged with the landscape and regional communities in Queensland over more than a century. At the same time, the articles point to themes of visible difference, intercultural meaning-making and belonging that continue across time and place. In this manner, the issue reaffirms the centrality of migration both now and for Queensland's future.

Endnote

1 State of Queensland, *The Queensland plan* (Brisbane: Government of Queensland, 2014).