Tahu Kukutai and Richard Bedford

The Future is Already Here

adapting to population change in Aotearoa

Abstract

The primary purpose of this introduction is to set the scene for the seven articles which follow in this special issue of *Policy Quarterly*, all of which address aspects of long-run population change in Aotearoa New Zealand. Several important features of two key components of such change – falling fertility and population ageing – are introduced before we outline a series of activities over the past two years that have sought to put population change on the policy and political agenda in Aotearoa. These activities generated the momentum for the articles in this issue, and we conclude with a brief summary of their content.

Keywords falling fertility, structural change, population strategy, census, demographic dividend

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'Ka pū te ruha, ka hao te rangatahi' is a well-known whakataukīī (proverb) about renewal. Often translated as 'As the old net withers, the new net goes fishing', the saying carries several layers of meaning: as one generation passes, the next takes its place; each generation is responsible for carrying on the legacy it inherits; fresh perspectives help a community adapt and endure.

Beneath these readings is the shared assumption that, despite change, continuity across generations persists. This assumption captures something essential about demography. Vanhuysse & Goerres (2021, p. 5) describe populations as resembling 'massive, slow-moving elephants'. Population change is structural and gradual, so its potential outcomes and, to some extent, its impacts can often be anticipated long in advance. Indeed, the United Nations issued a prescient warning 70 years ago that falling fertility and population ageing would have dramatic impacts on labour supply and public

transfers to older people in high-income economies (United Nations, 1956). Demographic shocks, such as pandemic-related mortality, still occur, along with unpredictable volatile migration. But these do not change the elephant's pace and direction of travel. The core trends of falling fertility and population ageing unfold over decades and, to date, have proved largely irreversible (Max Planck Institute for Demographic Research, 2025).

Being visible in advance does not mean governments use that runway to plan wisely. In the articles in this special issue of *Policy Quarterly,* the respective authors argue in their own way that opportunities have been missed and that population planning needs to move onto the government's policy agenda with urgency. There is a clear sense that Aotearoa New Zealand is coming late to the game when designing policies to address the complex, multifaceted dimensions of an ageing population. As Cameron and Spoonley (in this volume) argue, 'we need to develop a more nuanced and detailed understanding of what is happening to Aotearoa New Zealand in a demographic sense and to invite a discussion about the appropriate policy framework that responds to new demographic realities'.

Elsewhere, across the world's most advanced economies, policy responses to demographic challenges are well established. Population contraction, very low fertility and rapid ageing are no longer confined to a few outliers. Population size has peaked in more than 60 countries and areas, including China, Germany, Japan and the Russian Federation (United Nations, 2024). Much of Europe now has populations that are in natural decline, with deaths outnumbering births (European Union, 2025). In these settings, migration is the main remaining lever for sustaining population size, yet it is politically contested and entangled with debates about national identity and social cohesion.

The implications of demographic change are profound. Labour supply, healthcare costs and geopolitical influence all depend on the size and age structure of a population. Ageing enlarges fiscal obligations for pensions and care while shrinking the working-age base that funds them. Countries with smaller, older populations, that are growing slowly, compete harder for skilled migrants, with consequences for national influence. Each of these trends is now shifting. Aotearoa is part of this global story rather than apart from it, and its policy choices are being made in a world where most comparable countries face similar pressures.

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Putting population on the policy and political agenda

This special issue is the latest in a range of efforts seeking to put population on the policy and political agenda in Aotearoa. The first was a series of expert perspectives assembled by the Royal Society Te Apārangi reflecting on how shifts in age and ethnic identity could affect the country's future.[1]

Victoria University of Wellington's Policy Hub hosted a series of expert-led population seminars earlier this year with support from the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment, the Treasury and the Population Association of New Zealand, among others. The series covered a wide range of topics, including the international drivers of migration, the conditions for good social outcomes, and population growth and infrastructure.[2]

In April 2026, Koi Tū Centre for Informed Futures published the report *People, Place and Prosperity: the case for a population strategy* (Lala et al., 2026). An independent think tank, Koi Tū focuses on long-term complex challenges, including social cohesion and social resilience, sustainability and the societal impacts of new technologies.

Koi Tū's report identified three key challenges linked with the country's rapidly changing demography. The first is labour shortages and skills gaps brought about by the combined effects of declining fertility and retirement from the workforce at a time when there is growing global competition for migrants to bolster growth in the domestic labour force. The second is the changing ratios of dependents to workers found in ageing populations, which place additional pressure on public finances when labour forces are shrinking. The third is taking advantage of the unique opportunities for innovation, creativity and problem-solving that come with greater ethnic diversity, at a time when underlying anxieties about this diversity are threatening social cohesion.

The report also made a persuasive argument for a 'coherent, consistent and bipartisan population strategy' (ibid., p. 4). Such a strategy would ensure alignment between workforce, infrastructure, public services, regional development, migration settings and the country's evolving population. The report generated significant media interest and commentary (see, e.g., RNZ, 2026; Newstalk ZB, 2026; Kukutai et al., 2026).

More recently, Te Ngira Institute for Population Research hosted a webinar series exploring the future of the census in Aotearoa (Te Ngira Institute for Population Research, 2026). The census is critical to conversations about demographic change, providing a key plank of the evidence base underpinning it, and the essential data needed to allocate resources, plan public services and infrastructure, and ensure equitable democratic representation. Experts were invited to explore the future of the census in Aotearoa from technical, constitutional, ethical, equity and te Tiriti o Waitangi perspectives.

In different ways, all these initiatives reflect a growing recognition that population change is a long-term strategic issue, one that needs sustained attention,

sound evidence and coordinated action across government, research, iwi and communities.

In addition to advocating for a population strategy, the Koi Tū report proposed that an independent population commission be established to develop it (Lala et al., 2026, pp. 25–26). The commission would operate with bipartisan support and commitment beyond three-year election cycles to help policymakers consider these interrelated issues as a whole rather than in isolation, as is happening currently. The proposal received strong support in a poll of 145 participants in the Policy Hub's seminar series.

This is not the first time the government has been called upon to take population seriously. In 1986 the New Zealand Planning Council published a report that raised many of the same issues, flagging the combined effects of slowing population growth, falling birth rates, net emigration loss of New Zealand citizens, and a dramatically changing population composition (Population Monitoring Group, 1986). That report went largely unheeded. In 1990 the Department of Statistics published *The Human Face of New Zealand: a context for population policy into the twenty-first century* as a key background document for population and social planning (Department of Statistics, 1990). This is yet another report that has had no lasting impact.

In 2003 the Ministry of Economic Development, Ministry of Social Development, the Department of Labour and Statistics New Zealand published *Population and Sustainable Development* as part of the government's Sustainable Development Strategy. 'The government's contribution to sustainable development is about making good policy decisions that anticipate future population changes', it stated (Ministry of Economic Development, 2003, p. 9). Whether and how that has translated into specific policy responses remains unclear.

This history suggests that a good dose of realism is essential when advocating government-led responses to long-term demographic change. Population trends respond to a wide range of factors, including economic conditions, housing costs, cultural norms and global migration patterns, which governments can influence only at the margins. Fertility in particular has proven stubbornly resistant to direct policy intervention. Migration offers more tractable levers, but with considerable uncertainty: governments can set immigration policy, but they cannot reliably predict how prospective migrants will respond (Kukutai et al., 2026).

A credible population strategy therefore needs to distinguish clearly between what can be shaped and what must simply be adapted to. The Treasury's periodic long-term fiscal statements already model population-related pressures, such as ageing, labour force participation and health expenditure, over a 40-year horizon. A population commission should build on this work rather than duplicate it, focusing on where intervention is genuinely feasible and where evidence-based adaptation is likely to be more fruitful (Kukutai et al., 2026).

Many countries have a long-term demographic view embedded in their policy machinery. Australia's Treasury has produced an *Intergenerational Report* at least once every five years since 2002, projecting the budgetary effects of ageing and population change over 40 years.[3] Singapore has a dedicated National Population and Talent Division within the Prime Minister's Office.[4] Established in 2011, it drives the formulation, coordination and review of government policies in support of its sustainable population objectives. South Korea has a standing Presidential Committee on Population (formerly the Presidential Committee on Ageing Society and Population Policy), and its law requires successive five-year basic plans. The government's new population strategy marks a radical shift from unsuccessful efforts to lift birth rates to a more holistic approach to demographic adaptation, including labour, welfare, employment, housing and education policy. These sorts of arrangements do not remove uncertainty, but they do put demographic trends on the agenda of whichever government is in power.

As is happening currently in Aotearoa, there is a tendency for public debate to focus on the immediate effects of low fertility, such as an older population, while the longer-term effects get far less attention. One poorly understood example is negative population momentum (Morse, 2024). A population shrinking by just 1% a year will halve in about 70 years. And once very low fertility has persisted long enough, the age structure itself becomes the main challenge, because there are too few people at reproductive ages; even a return to two children per woman would not stop the shrinkage for another 60 years. Decline is built into age structures, yet this is easy to overlook when attention is fixed on annual birth numbers.

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The longer fertility stays well below replacement, the more severe and harder to reverse the consequences become. Recent projections from Eurostat, the EU's statistical agency, suggest that the bloc's population will be 11.7% smaller by 2100 on current trends, including ongoing immigration, falling to 399 million from 452 million today. That decline is modest compared with Eurostat's scenario without immigration, in which the population falls by more than a third, to 295 million, by 2100.[5]

Growing politial awareness of population challenges in Aotearoa

The various activities led by the Royal Society Te Apārangi, the Policy Hub, Koi Tū and Te Ngira, coupled with the efforts by participants to raise the profile of the issues in the public and political domain, have proved to be timely and highly relevant for several political debates that have gained momentum in the lead-up to the general election in November 2026. These debates are on population issues that have been attracting the attention of politicians for some time.

A major one concerns the fiscal implications of cohorts born during Aotearoa's prolonged post-war baby boom leaving the workforce and gaining eligibility for national superannuation at a time when Aotearoa-born labour force entrant cohorts are becoming smaller because of declining fertility since the 1970s. This has been an issue of concern at various levels of government since a compulsory national superannuation saving scheme was abandoned in the early 1970s.

It was not until the 2000s that the costs of that decision to future generations of taxpayers began to be fully appreciated by politicians and the wider public, despite considerable readily available evidence from demographers and economists. How to meet the cost of a national retirement income has become one of the most widely debated 'wicked problems' associated with population change in the 21st century and it is a problem that is referred to in all of the articles in this issue of *Policy Quarterly*.

A second long-standing issue of political debate and division relates to the volume and composition of international migration flows into and out of the country. Since the 1980s there has been a significant shift away from a focus on welcoming migrants as potential settlers in Aotearoa to seeking people on various types of temporary visas to meet specific business development needs. Various criteria-based selection systems have been used to screen potential migrants and, in some cases, quotas have been set to regulate the magnitude of the flows.

There continues to be broad public support for an immigration policy that places emphasis on temporary movement of people to fill particular gaps and needs in the labour market and economy, rather than encouraging large numbers of new settlers as a means of achieving population growth per se. That said, temporary as well as long-term migration from selected countries in Asia especially has been a source of political discord and debate since the 1990s. Given the role net international migration is assuming as the primary driver of population growth in Aotearoa, there needs to be a reassessment of the role and objectives of immigration policy in an era of sustained low fertility and eventual population decline.

A third contentious issue concerns persistent and, in some cases, widening gaps in incomes, health status, including life expectancy at birth, educational achievement, access to affordable housing, and general living standards of different groups in the population. Reducing the incidence of poverty in Aotearoa has proved to be a particularly challenging 'wicked problem' for successive governments.

Given the many dimensions to poverty, and the much greater incidence of material hardship in Māori and Pacific households, reducing poverty must be a core component of any long-term population strategy. Because of their much younger age structures, Māori and Pacific labour force entrant cohorts will become increasingly significant components of the country's workforce as the impacts of sub-replacement fertility progressively reduce the sizes of birth cohorts in other segments of the population.

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The issues outlined above have tended to be addressed in isolation in both media commentary and political debate. Aside from passing acknowledgement of the country's changing demography, there has not been much reference to either the complex interdependence of the underlying drivers of fertility, mortality and migration in the dynamics of population change, or the reality of quite different demographic histories, contemporary situations and futures for some major subgroups within the population. It is these interdependencies and differences that need to be addressed and accommodated in any long-term strategy for Aotearoa's population in an era of low demographic and economic growth

Senior reporters working for major national and regional media outlets have picked up on the need for a coherent, consistent population strategy given rapidly changing demographic contexts at regional, national and international levels. The contemporary public debate about the country's demographic future in 2026 is richer, better informed and more sophisticated than it has been in the past. But this greater public awareness and commentary has yet to have much impact at a political level, at least as far as evidenced by the different parties' statements of priorities for action and investment over the next three years.

Two contributors to this special issue, Paul Spoonley and Len Cook, have been particularly active in drawing media attention to population issues. Spoonley, a sociologist with specialist expertise in

international migration and its impacts on social cohesion, is widely regarded amongst journalists in the print and broadcast media as a willing expert commentator on issues to do with a range of dimensions of demographic change, including impacts of declining fertility on the labour force and on the ageing of the population.

A senior fellow in Koi Tū, Spoonley has contributed extensively to a wide range of media-led debates on population issues, as well as to business and community events, over the past two years, emphasising the very different demographic context within which our economy and society will be evolving over the coming decades. Addressing the challenges of this changed demographic reality requires a much sharper focus on how economic and social policies will ensure prosperity for both current and future generations.

Cook, a former government statistician in Aotearoa and the UK, has consistently challenged proposals by Statistics New Zealand to progressively withdraw from census enumerations of the population and rely increasingly on administrative sources of data. He is adamant that we cannot afford to abandon our regular quinquennial census enumerations at a time of significant change in the age and ethnic composition of the country's population, and the increasing diversity of local and regional populations in an era of slow demographic and economic growth. He is not alone in his concerns: Polly Atatoa Carr (represented in this volume) has also been very vocal about the demise of the census and its implications for Māori and Pacific health equity.

The census is a critically important source of information for Māori and iwi, and for the Crown to meet its te Tiriti o Waitangi responsibilities (Kukutai & Cormack, 2020). It also serves members of numerous small ethnic and language groups, as well as the widely dispersed rural communities and small towns that are integral components of the national population.

The era of sustained long-run population growth is over and this reality, coupled with associated changes in age composition occurring at variable rates for population subgroups, calls for different strategies from those that rely heavily on continued expansion of the labour market and its contributions to economic growth and tax revenue. Developing these strategies requires reliable fine-grained census data to monitor and plan for an increasingly diverse mix of demographic trajectories for subgroups in the population.

Demographic change remains very much part of a wider context in terms of its implications for economic productivity and societal resilience rather than an explicit focus of attention in its own right. The articles in this issue of *Policy Quarterly* have been prepared to draw out policy implications of contemporary and future demographic trends with a view to ensuring that the case for a long-term population strategy for Aotearoa continues to be promoted and developed at a time of global economic, social and political tension and uncertainty.

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The articles in this special issue

Cameron and Spoonley open the special issue by setting out the demographic changes reshaping Aotearoa: population ageing, declining fertility, immigration, and increasingly divergent regional trajectories and profiles. These shifts are not experienced evenly. Regions, as well as major subgroups within the national population, are on different paths, and so face different investment and funding challenges. They argue that maintaining economic and social wellbeing in a context of low rates of population growth or, in places, absolute population decline will require revisiting the mid-20th-century social contract. That means placing greater emphasis on productivity growth, broader labour force participation and public services adapted to changing local needs, rather than relying on continued population growth.

While acknowledging that population ageing and low fertility are becoming demographic norms internationally, they note that the policy challenge for Aotearoa is distinctive due to a combination of volatile international migration, divergent regional trends and the relatively youthful Māori and Pacific populations. The latter especially offer opportunities for future workforce development provided significant inequalities in health status are removed and education and employment pathways are strengthened.

If major subgroups in the population, as well as regions, are on divergent demographic paths and policy must be tailored to local needs, then the capacity to measure population change by subgroup and place becomes critical. Len Cook takes up this challenge, arguing that demographic changes demand evidence-driven policy, and that such policy depends on comprehensive, reliable population statistics. His central case is for retaining a periodic national census of population and dwellings. A census captures not only individuals but also the dwellings in which families and community groups live. Without this, researchers and policymakers cannot reliably connect people to the places, institutions and other people that matter to them. Administrative records, even when linked by a common personal identifier, offer only limited information on place and community structure unless a field-based census provides the backbone.

Cook notes the uncertainty surrounding the 2028 census, given the Justice Committee's conclusion that Parliament is unlikely to support the legislation needed to proceed with the planned transition to an annual administrative census. He stresses that these demographic shifts were foreseen well before this century, so the evidence base should not be allowed to erode now. He warns that discontinuing the census would seriously compromise population estimates, projections and other studies on which prudent policymaking relies. Finally, Cook calls for a rethink of traditional population measurement, including the capacity to integrate measures for any locality of differing granularity, frequency and quality.

Māori population futures is therefore central to the country's long-term social, economic and demographic wellbeing.

If Māori population futures are central to national prosperity, then the health of that population, and of Aotearoa as a whole, becomes a pressing test of whether policy can deliver on the opportunity. Polly Atatoa Carr and colleagues take up this theme, arguing that an effective future health system must prepare for an ageing population, ethnic diversification, volatile migration and environmental disruption. Meeting these needs requires action well beyond the health sector, anchored in prevention, health equity and accountability to te Tiriti o Waitangi. Such action would ease pressure on the health system, improve societal and economic outcomes, and build a resilient next generation. By contrast, policy that prioritises short-term administrative targets over the structural drivers of poor health will not reduce chronic disease or improve wellbeing and equity, and unaddressed inequities carry severe societal and fiscal costs.

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Demographer Moana Rarere argues that Māori population futures are increasingly bound up with the future prosperity of Aotearoa. As the population ages, Māori are projected to make up a growing share of the country's children, young adults and working-age people. Drawing on Natalie Jackson's (2011) concept of the 'collateral demographic dividend', Rarere argues that a benefit can arise not from change within a single population, as in the classical demographic dividend model, but from populations at different stages of demographic transition living side by side. The youthful Māori population is an advantage that few other countries can draw upon, but is underplayed in modelling focused on the fiscal costs of ageing. She argues that investment in Māori educational achievement, health and wellbeing, and economic participation yields benefits well beyond Māori communities. Supporting

The authors argue that analysing structural change through the lens of prevention, equity and trusted population data is more useful for planning than focusing narrowly on service demand. Age shapes health need, but an age-based aged care system lacking Māori- and Pacific-led evidence and culturally safe models of care will fail those populations. Ethnicity is a stronger marker of health need than age, sex, rurality or area deprivation. Future outcomes will depend less on individual care, demographic change or environmental impacts in isolation, and more on whether Aotearoa can create conditions for lifelong health equity. The authors read recent legislative amendments as a move away from Māori decision-making, prevention-focused resourcing and equity accountability, and conclude that prevention must become the guiding principle of health system planning, starting with the determinants outside the health sector.

If equity in health depends on action beyond the health sector, the question becomes how the public purse can sustain that action, and the wider costs of ageing, over the long term. McKenzie and colleagues ask how public policy can sustainably support an ageing population, focusing on fiscal sustainability, the economic consequences of policy responses, and intergenerational equity. Under current settings, spending grows faster than revenue. Treasury projects that, without policy change, net public debt will rise from around 40% of GDP in 2025 to approximately 200% by 2065. This gap is predictable, since lower fertility, rising longevity and population ageing are well documented. Closing it requires lower expenditure, higher taxation or both.

Using Treasury's overlapping generations (OLG) model, which captures both aggregate fiscal effects and the behavioural responses of individuals and firms, the authors assess alternative expenditure and tax options. Higher migration, improved fertility, or migration targeted at high-productivity individuals can ease the adjustment but cannot fully offset long-term pressures. Timing matters, as early action spreads the burden across more generations and avoids abrupt tax rises or spending cuts. Relying on a single policy lever would usually demand very large adjustments, so a combination of revenue, expenditure restraint, growth and migration measures is likely needed. Because fiscal policy is inherently intergenerational, the authors argue that gradual, signalled adjustments can balance sustainability with fair burden sharing across cohorts. Delay does not remove the need to adjust. Rather, it shifts the cost to later generations.

If fiscal sustainability requires deliberate adjustment, the next question is how that adjustment should be made, and

who bears its costs. Patrick Nolan and Michelle Reyers take up this question of 'how', arguing that retirement income reform should be judged not only by its preferred end state but by the transition path used to reach it. Timing and sequencing can matter as much as the policy settings ultimately chosen, because different policies reach people at different life stages and offer different opportunities to adjust. KiwiSaver reforms build private savings gradually, while changes to New Zealand Superannuation affect incomes more immediately. Policies that look similar in long-run fiscal terms can therefore have very different effects across cohorts and income groups. The challenge is not simply choosing a future system but building a credible pathway to it.

The authors argue that the key questions are not only how much a reform saves but who bears the cost, how behaviour may change, and whether people have a realistic chance to adjust. Aggregate figures can understate the exposure of some groups to transition costs, including many Māori, Pacific peoples and women. NZ Super will continue to be the system's principal income floor since stronger private saving is unlikely to displace it. Because KiwiSaver contributions track income, and earnings and paid-work patterns differ by gender, identical KiwiSaver settings can produce very different retirement outcomes. Finally, some options, such as pre-funding or gradual changes to indexation, lose effectiveness the longer decisions are deferred.

Having examined how Aotearoa might sustain an ageing, changing population, the issue closes by looking outwards, to a global force that could reshape who comes here and why. James Renwick and Kate McMillan connect climate change, global migration and the country's future population. They do this at a time when a series of changes to Aotearoa's responses to climate change under the current government have earned the country the unenviable reputation of being the winner, yet again, of the 'Fossil of the Day' award from Climate Action Network International at the COP31 climate conference in Türkiye in November 2026 (Newton, 2026).

Renwick and McMillan first review the state of the climate, what is needed to hold global warming within the Paris Agreement range, and the likely consequences for communities worldwide. Climate change has already eroded food and water security, and the effects are uneven. The tropics, especially tropical Africa and south Asia, face the sharpest loss of liveability, which can displace people from vulnerable places.

The authors then examine how climate change may shape global population movements. They stress that the relationship is highly complex, so estimating who will move, why, where, when and for how long poses serious methodological challenges. They argue that state and non-state actors should develop policies that help people in climate-vulnerable areas stay where that is viable and preferred, and move in a planned, lawful and rights-consistent way when it is not. They point out that mobility linked to climate change is happening as the post-Cold War geopolitical order gives way to tighter borders and more sophisticated enforcement technology.

Finally, they ask what climate migration means for population strategy, including growth, immigration and social cohesion. A key question is whether Aotearoa can, and should, treat exposure to climate vulnerability when choosing which migrants to accept to help address ageing, low fertility and weak productivity, particularly given its close ties to the Pacific. They suggest that those developing strategies for Aotearoa's future population and infrastructure might find it prudent to put climate change and its implications firmly at the centre of their planning.

Where to from here?

Demography does not simply respond to politics; it also shapes it. Attention tends to go to how policy responds to demographic change, rather than to population structure and change as a driver of politics in its own right (Vanhuysse & Goerres, 2021). In fact, the relationship runs both ways. As Robbins and Smith (2017) observe, counting births, deaths and fertility has always been closely tied to the urge to govern them, which makes population research a form of political research. Demographic problems cannot be solved by demographic means alone. The evidence shows that pronatalism or migration targets, pursued in isolation, will fail. Sustainable population development needs a holistic approach, grounded in an honest understanding of how numbers, politics and institutions interact.

Given the very tight fiscal parameters both major parties are proposing for the next three-year term of government, it is probably unrealistic to expect that there will be enthusiasm within an incoming government led by either major party for investing in an independent body to undertake the kinds of investigations that will be required to develop, implement and evaluate a coherent population strategy. What might be possible in the short term, however, to further the development of the evidence base for such a strategy and to ensure effective engagement by research institutions and civil society organisations in its development, is to have a high-level conference on our future population in 2027. The aim of such a conference, which would require support by parties in government as well as in opposition, would be to take the discussion about a national population strategy to the next level and to provide a broad framework for ensuring that the country's evolving demography is

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at the centre of all major policy initiatives taken during the next three years.

There are precedents for such actions at times of economic, social and political uncertainty in Aotearoa. In 1997, at the time of the Asian financial crisis and following a contentious debate in 1996 about Asian migration to Aotearoa, the National government sponsored the country's first national population conference (Bedford and Ho, 1998). Many of the demographic issues that are currently posing significant challenges for planners, policymakers and politicians 30 years later were foreshadowed during this conference.

The biggest changes that came after the 1997 conference were in immigration policy, especially with regard to selection processes and the balance between settlers and temporary migrants in the flows of people into Aotearoa, and the establishment of the New Zealand Superannuation Fund in 2001 to assist in addressing the absence of a national superannuation saving scheme. Both have generally had broad bipartisan support over the past three decades. National population conferences can be more than talkfests. A lot of the groundwork for a very productive national event in 2027 that addresses a population strategy has already been completed by the activities sponsored by the Royal Society Te Apārangi, the Policy Hub at Te Herenga Waka Victoria University of Wellington, and in the articles prepared for this issue of *Policy Quarterly.*

1 Contributed by Professor Tahu Kukutai, Emeritus Professor Edwina Pio, Dr Samantha Heath, Distinguished Emeritus Professor Paul Spoonley, Len Cook and Emeritus Professor Murray Thomson, these expert perspectives can be accessed at: https://www.royalsociety.org.nz/expert-perspectives/changing-demographics/murray-thomson.

2 The four seminars covered: 1) Exploring New Zealand's future population: numbers, demographics, and location (Michael Cameron, Kate McMillan and Paul Spoonley); 2) Ensuring the wellbeing of New Zealand's future population (Jacques Poot, Dr Maja Krtalic' and James Renwick); 3) Affording and investing in New Zealand's future population (Julie Fry, Polly Atatoa Carr, Peter Nunns); 4) Future-proofing Aotearoa: preparing for the population changes ahead (Paul Spoonley and Maja Krtalić). Recordings of the seminars and copies of the Powerpoint presentations can be accessed at: https://www.wgtn.ac.nz/policy-hub/projects/current-projects/exploring-new-zealands-future-population-seminars.

3 https://treasury.gov.au/intergenerational-report.

4 https://www.population.gov.sg/.

5 https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/population-demography/population-projections/database

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