

Book Review

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GROWING RURAL HEALTH / TIPU HAERE TUAWHENUA HAUORA:  
30 YEARS OF ADVOCACY AND SUPPORT IN AOTEAROA

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## GROWING RURAL HEALTH / TIPU HAERE TUAWHENUA HAUORA: 30 YEARS OF ADVOCACY AND SUPPORT IN AOTEAROA

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You might think that a history of the New Zealand Rural General Practice network would be a somewhat dry manuscript. You would be wrong; this is a passionate rollercoaster. Co-authored by rural health promoters Jean Ross, Tania Kemp, Martin London and Shelley Jones, the writing is complimented by multiple voices sharing historic ephemera, memories, challenges, triumphs, and visions for the future. Developed during the complexities and enforced isolations of COVID, the contents page helps to navigate within its pages. My copy came with a bookmark that helpfully explained the abbreviations used.

*Growing Rural Health Tipu Haere Tuawhenua Hauora: 30 years of advocacy and support in Aotearoa* is an inviting chat of a book, charting the journey of dedicated but disparate rural health organisations and providers, coming together like a braided river in their ongoing struggle to provide sustainable rural health care across the remote islands, corners and highways of Aotearoa/New Zealand. The newly formed collective network Tuawhenua Hauora unites the voices of rural general practitioners, allied health, rural hospitals, students' and nurses' partnering with Te Rōpū Ārahi to provide advocacy and support into the future, aiming to achieve rural health equity for all rural communities. The Mihi, Forewords and Preface/Whakatauki all attest to a shared determination to bridge inequities with rural and indigenous peoples.

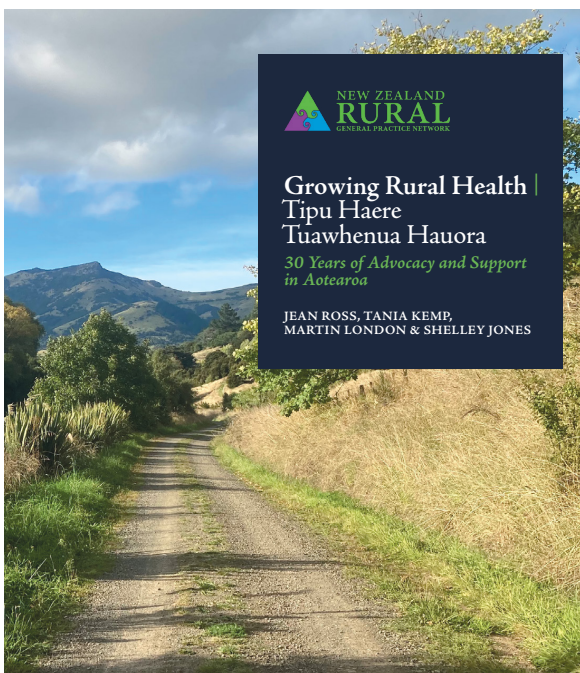
Rural communities and locations shine within the pages, assisted by Martin London's evocative photographs and other illustrations. Providing a lens that illustrates the special nature of rural: intriguing, challenging, unique, obstacles of distance, isolation and inequitable health and education opportunities. Through telling the history of the network, strategies that support rural health practitioners are uncovered.


The idiosyncratic funding and political decisions of government over the last three decades are translated into on the ground healthcare, the rural lens they are seen through make it very clear that one size does not fit all in Aotearoa/New Zealand. The realities of rural practice are not recognised outside of the practitioners', the network was formed so a rural voice could be heard, rural realities could be recognised, actively advocating for support for both the population, and health professionals serving them. I would have valued a timeline as a graphic addition, illustrating collective themes of ingenuity, collaboration and a deep passion to sustain and improve the provision of health services.

As a nurse educator, I have the pleasure of working with Rural Nurses stories. *Growing rural health* provides a background framework to the struggles and challenges rural nurses include within their everyday experience. Chapter four illustrates the on-going growing pains of the autonomous rural nurse role; to be recognised as their own speciality, to have support and education, to progress their scope of practice, to be funded to best meet the needs of their communities.

This book will be a resource for anyone who engaged with rural health, who wants to understand what makes rural health practitioners and their families tick. It provides a foundational blueprint for future action. At its heart it describes how a community can be grown and developed - how shared concerns and frustrations can result in connected fellowship, educational innovations and sometimes desperate action in the face of decades of constantly changing political background.

The New Zealand health and disability system is again in flux, having recognised the need to both listen to communities and respond in a way that reduces health inequities. The new health Act, Pae Ora offers both challenges and opportunities to the provision of rural health. The timely publication of this book suggests by highlighting the past, while resolutely facing the future the collective voice of Tuawhenua Ora will advocate passionately for the health of rural communities and the health practitioners within them into the decades to come.



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