

Foreword

The twelve essays in this volume were originally delivered as contributions to a public lecture series on Tax and Tax Reform offered by the Victoria University of Wellington Law Faculty in July and August 1982. It is appropriate at the outset to record the Faculty's thanks to the authors of these papers for the considerable time and effort they invested in preparing and delivering their contributions and for agreeing to their publication.

The twelve essays cover many different aspects of taxation. There is throughout them, however, a recurring theme: that the taxation system is in need of substantial and thoroughgoing reform of a conceptual character. In that context, these essays take their place as contributions to the broader debate on taxation presently being conducted at the political and other levels within New Zealand.

While united by that common theme, the essays approach issues of reform from a number of different perspectives. Some examine the substantive rules relating to the definition of income and the individual and corporate tax base. Some highlight the need for reform in the administration of the tax system, an area largely ignored in most analyses of tax reform. Some examine critically the equity of the present taxation structure and the impact of tax avoidance practices that have developed within it. Others examine the role of the tax power as an instrument of broader economic policy and analyse current reform proposals in that light. And others again discuss the process of tax reform itself, most significantly that of the recent studies of the Task Force on Tax Reform, and address the difficulties of effecting reform in present economic conditions.

The inclusion of these various perspectives in a single volume of essays is intended to recognise a further theme of many of the individual papers themselves: that no aspect of tax reform can be considered in isolation from other aspects and that the objective of tax reform is one of accommodating often competing criteria in a package which represents the most satisfactory combination of various imperatives. Our hope is that the essays in this volume and the variety of perspectives that they offer will assist in that difficult, though vitally significant, task.

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