

Associate Professor Lex Chalmers

Distinguished New Zealand Geographer Award and Medal 2017

Nominated by Professor Robyn Longhurst and Dr Colin McLeay, Waikato Branch, and by NZBoGT Executive members Anna Wilson, Wellington East Girls College, and Nick Page, Otumoetai College.

Citation

Associate Professor Lex Chalmers's contribution to the New Zealand and international geographical community have been extraordinary. In fact, Lex's community-based work with organisations such as the New Zealand Geographical Society (NZGS), the New Zealand Board of Geography Teachers (NZBoGT), the International Geography Olympiad (iGeo), and the International Geographical Union (IGU) has been a hallmark of his career. He has worked selflessly supporting geography teachers and students in secondary schools including delivering workshops, organising events, and serving in numerous roles over a long period.

Lex has a strong academic career to back up the work he has done to support schools across New Zealand. His key research and teaching interests have been geographical education with an interest in communities of practice and rural studies, with an expertise in the demography of rural communities and in farmers' markets, remote sensing, GIS, and the rural transformation project. He published in an array of outlets and his publication list contains 141 entries, the first being from 1970 (Masters thesis), and the most recent from 2016. Of note in the list of work is joint publications in *Social Science and Medicine*, *Journal of Rural Studies*, *International Journal of Geographical Information Systems* and *International Research in Geographical and Environmental Education*. Many of Lex's other publications are in New Zealand journals including *New Zealand Journal of Geography*, *New Zealand Geographer* and *Social Policy Journal of New Zealand*. More than half of his listed publications, however, are conference papers delivered both in New Zealand and overseas. This is in keeping with his community focus.

In his career Lex has chosen to prioritised community-oriented service work over advancing his own academic career. His long-standing interest in geographical education, has seen him a keen supporter of Geography in School and has helped hundreds of teachers to make links with the tertiary sector through his work at Waikato University and his connections with the NZGS, NZBoGT, iGeo and the IGU. He is a tireless, selfless and tremendous advocate and champion for secondary school geography. He has helped to facilitate and host many workshops and professional learning sessions for teachers in the Waikato and Bay of Plenty region, including NCEA days, 2-day GIS workshops in 2010 and 2015, competitions including the Geographer's Cup (initially for mapping skills and orienteering but later for other events, and a photographic competition. For many years he has organised and delivered scholarship workshops to teachers and students preparing for this exam each year prior to the scholarship examination. He also hosted two Royal Society of New Zealand (RSNZ) Teacher Fellows events in 2003 (for Nick Page, Otumoetai College and Jennifer Thomas, Nelson College for Girls) and was the primary organiser of the combined NZGS tertiary and secondary conference hosted at Waikato University 19 - 22 January 2010 "*Positioning Geography*" with a significant focus on geographical education working with a range of organisations to support teachers to get to the conference in the Waikato from around New Zealand.

As a representative of the Waikato Branch of the NZGS he has been both the President and Chairperson for varying lengths and stints for the Waikato Branch and was also heavily involved in Geography Teachers Associations for at least 20 years if not more. Lex has had a lot of energy for this group over the years and this experience has put him

in a good position to working together with geographers from a range of sectors - a role model other regions should be inspired to follow. He has been the Tertiary Representative and Liaison Person for the NZBoGT up to end of 2012 which makes up to 16 years of service on the NZGS. He has been an advocate for school geography and a link to the tertiary sector, providing a lot of guidance. On the NZGS Executive and Council he has had a real understanding of and supported the NZBoGT and issues in secondary school education, acting as a conduit between the tertiary and secondary sectors.

Lex Chalmers has given many years of Service to the International Geography Olympiad (the iGeo). He has worked with teachers to have our first initial team at the competition and has been a champion for the group ever since. Lex's involvement has extended beyond New Zealand's own team to be the Chair of the iGeo. He has also played a pivotal role in working with host countries to produce accessible fieldwork exercises for the students at the iGeo. Spending many days and nights working hard to make sure tasks are to the highest level was not easy when working with a group of international geographers with many different ways of assessing. Lex has also been Co Chair for the iGeo Task Force 2014 - 2016, overseeing the organisation and running of the International Geography Olympiad competition. As part of his work in New Zealand with the iGeo Teams, Lex was instrumental in seeking funding with the Royal Society and the Todd Foundation, to form Science Olympiads New Zealand (SONZ). Without this relationship and financial backing our iGeo teams would not have had the chance to perform and succeed on the international stage as they have.

Without Lex Chalmers school geography in New Zealand and the iGeo would be in a completely different position. He has had a strong lasting positive influence and we thank him for all of the time, passion and energy he has given to the community.