

## **Citation for Richard Le Heron: NZGS Distinguished New Zealand Geographer Medal**

In a 40 year geographical career, Professor Richard Le Heron has made multiple influential contributions to discipline, academy, and community. He has received many awards, including Fulbright and Claude McCarthy Fellowships, two Marsden Grants, and a Leverhulme Visiting Professorship. Richard is a fellow of the Royal Society of NZ and in 2003 was made an Honorary Life Member of the New Zealand Geographical Society. He is a leader in New Zealand social science, an internationally prominent scholar, a widely respected teacher, and a dedicated servant of domestic and international disciplinary bodies.

Richard is a leading international scholar in both rural and economic geography, especially at the point where these fields converge in scholarship on rural value chains. Over a publishing career of 37 years he has published 77 journal articles, one book, 53 book chapters, editorship of nine books, 24 papers in edited conference proceedings, and 23 significant other publications. Many of these works have appeared in leading international journals.

In the early 1980s Richard began to develop a distinctive theoretical and analytical approach to the study of agriculture and food. He researched the interactions between farms and processors in New Zealand's restructuring agro-commodity chains in a globalising world food economy. His 1993 book *Globalised Agriculture* set a benchmark for work in this field in the international literature. It also signalled Richard's emerging prominence as a theorist of globalisation in geography. His more recent work on political projects and new forms of governing through benchmarking and audit has introduced post-structural critiques into economic geography and rural studies. His current work involves applying his post-structural political economy lens to nature-society relations and questions of urban governance in an effort to equip geographers to play prominent roles in emerging fields of decision making.

As co-editor of the two *Changing Places* volumes, Richard led arguably the most influential project to emerge from academic geography in New Zealand in the last 25 years. The volumes demonstrated the quality and relevance of geographical scholarship. Richard has published eight papers in *The New Zealand Geographer* and three in *Asia/Pacific Viewpoint*, and served as Assistant Editor then and Editor of *The New Zealand Geographer* from 1991-1997. He has made over 50 presentations and keynote addresses to domestic audiences.

Richard is a stalwart of the NZGS. A committee member of local branches since 1976, he was Manawatu Branch Secretary from 1979-93 and Chairperson of the Auckland Branch from 1997-2005. He has served on the Executive of the NZGS since 1997 and has been its National Secretary since 2000. In recent years, he has worked energetically and creatively to stimulate activity and recruit a new generation of geographers to the society and its leadership.

In Australasia, Richard has worked to encourage greater cooperation among geographers. Further a-field, he has played a significant role in the International Geographical Union. He served first as Vice-Chair of its Commission on 'The Dynamics of Economic Space' and then as its Chair from 2004-2008.

Richard has also served other New Zealand communities. He was instrumental in establishing and managing the Building Research Capability in the Social Sciences network and ran its Auckland node. He ensured that geography was a major beneficiary. In 2009 he was a member of the first national social science delegation sent overseas by New Zealand.

Over his career, Richard has conducted research work for agencies as diverse as the New Zealand Racing Authority, the National Housing Commission, and Waitakere City Council. In his recent co-writing projects with professional geographers at Fonterra and in his work on the Sustainable Pathways for Auckland project he has sought to influence change through co-learning and performative engagements, an approach that he has theorised in his writing.

As an academic, Richard has served geography with distinction, first at Massey University and later at The University of Auckland where he headed the Geography Department from 1998 to 2001. He has supervised more than 85 Masters and PhD students, including seven who have gone on to work within the New Zealand academy. In 2005 he received a University of Auckland award for Teaching Excellence in Research Supervision. His innovations include Access Grid graduate seminars and workshops, and international residential workshops.

Many of Richard's recent publications are co-authored, attesting to his commitment to collegiality and to mentoring junior colleagues. There are few human geographers in New Zealand who haven't worked with Richard and benefited from doing so. Richard practices his commitment to building the connections across places, generations, and bodies of thought that will sustain geography through multiple challenges and position it for trans-disciplinary times.

In each of these many ways, Richard has become a tireless, imaginative and effective supporter of geography driven by a belief in its potential to contribute to better futures at all scales, and by intellectual and political commitments to the notion that the world gets made by how we know it and how we act upon those understandings.