

Distinguished New Zealand Geographer Award 2007
Professor Richard Bedford

Professor Richard Bedford is a specialist in migration studies. Since the mid-1960s he has researched processes of population movement in the Asia-Pacific region and is one of the world's foremost authorities in this field. Professor Bedford is also Aotearoa/New Zealand's most prominent geographer in public policy networks and at the interface of geographic knowledge and policy making. In both capacities he has made a sustained and influential contribution to New Zealand society and international geographic knowledge.

His Masterate (at the University of Auckland), doctorate (from the Australian National University in 1971) and early career research focused on the dynamics of Pacific peoples and populations, especially their interrelations with Australia and New Zealand. His findings rewrote understandings in this area.

By the 1980s his research had made Professor Bedford a prominent commentator on migration and mobility issues in New Zealand. He became immersed in the policy world of New Zealand central government. He was a very active researcher for the former New Zealand Planning Council, serving as convenor of the Population Monitoring Group of the Council. It was from this platform that he developed his formidable presence in the field of New Zealand population studies.

Between 1993 and 2004 Professor Bedford co-led with Professor Ian Pool the Foundation of Research Science and Technology (FoRST) -funded "Demographic Directions Programme". More recently he has been co-ordinator of the FRST-funded "Strangers in Town Programme" and a member of a team of researchers, supported by the Marsden Fund, examining the international movements of New Zealanders living in Australia. Over these years he worked with Ian Pool to develop the Population Studies Centre (PSC), and its affiliate, the Migration Research Group, at the University of Waikato into internationally recognised and nationally pre-eminent research institutions.

Two things are particularly striking about Dick - the way he can read changing institutional landscapes, and the way that he has been able to sustain his scholarship as he has navigated through these landscapes to more and more central positions. His understanding of the possibilities of

situations is quite extraordinary. New Zealand Geography has benefited immeasurably from the application of his insight and skills.

Four missions stand out: the Society, New Zealand institutions, the international academy, and career building for emerging researchers.

During several periods as National Treasurer he guided several phases of Society reorganisation.

His insistent advocacy of geography as a discipline, at the Royal Society of New Zealand, the National Committee on Geography, as Chair of SPEaR (Social policy Evaluation and Research) and currently as Director of BRCSS (Building Research Capability in the Social Sciences), have all opened spaces for geographers to contribute more fully to the sciences and social sciences in New Zealand.

Since 1995 he has been a member of the New Zealand National Commission for UNESCO, and between 1995 and 2003 he was Chair of the Commission's Social Sciences Sub-Commission. Since 1996 he has been the New Zealand Immigration Service's representative on the inter-governmental International Metropolis Project, and until very recently the Royal Society of New Zealand's contact point with the International Geographical Union (IGU). He is a full member of the IGU Commission on Population and Vulnerability. He was the prime mover in securing the regional meeting of the IGU in Brisbane in 2006, at which New Zealand geography had a major presence.

Dick Bedford is an enthusiastic voice of geography in the public domain. His inter-personal skills and stature as an academic are recognised nationally and internationally. In 1990 he was awarded the NZ 1990 Medal for services to New Zealand. In 2000 he was elected to Fellowship of the Royal Society of New Zealand. In 2001 was appointed as academic adviser to the Ministerial Advisory Group on Immigration, and in 2005 to the Ministerial Advisory Group on Official Statistics.

Throughout his career Dick has been supervisor and mentor to many geographers who have gone on to develop highly respected careers in many different areas. Perhaps the highest tribute that can be applied to any supervisor comes from a former PhD who recalls with admiration and fondness the support that Dick gave her over the course of her PhD and subsequent career, "despite our very different approaches to understanding mobility". In his work with BRCSS Dick has tirelessly championed the interests of postgraduate students and emerging

researchers. Dick's contribution to making a new generation of geographers and social scientists was recognised formally in 2007 when he was invited to mentor He Waka Tangata, a government appointed group of emerging leaders in the social sciences.

It is with enormous pride and pleasure that we salute Dick Bedford this evening for his outstanding policy contributions and geographic achievements - with the award of Distinguished New Zealand Geographer.