

## Citations

### **Nomination of Professor Robin A. Kearns for Distinguished New Zealand Geographer Award 2014**

Nominated by Auckland Branch, cited by Dr Karen Fisher, The University of Auckland and Dr Nick Lewis, The University of Auckland.

#### **Citation**

Professor Robin Affric Kearns has made an outstanding contribution to geography scholarship both in New Zealand and internationally. His work is centred on the geographical concept of place which continues to hold together disciplinary traditions and provides many of the discipline's unique insights. Robin's programme of research has seen him work collaboratively with many different geographers, particularly those in the early stages of their careers. He has also worked extensively with others, extending the reach of geography well beyond its traditional boundaries. Much of his research is community focused, and his work has been steadfastly community-oriented and animated in a commitment to the values of community. More specifically, Robin's work has enhanced local and international understandings of the multiple dimensions of human wellbeing, and the political practices and cultural dynamics of place. He has been a prominent global leader in the fields of health geography and health social science, exercising international influence from local research interest and their ethical politics.

Robin's excellence as a socio-cultural geography researcher is exemplified in his remarkable publication record and in the high esteem in which he is held by the global geography community. Over the past 27 years, Robin has published more than 130 journal articles, two books, 39 book chapters, 14 papers in edited conference proceedings, and 30 significant other publications. Among other leading journals, Robin has published in *Social and Cultural Geography*, *Antipode*, *Geoforum*, *Environment and Planning A*, *Journal of Rural Studies*, *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, *Area*, and *Progress in Human Geography*. He acted as referee and has written more than 30 book reviews for these and more than 20 other international journals, and has served on the editorial board of *Geography Compass*, *The Canadian Geographer*, *Progress in Human Geography*, and the *Space, Place and Society* series. Specifically, his contribution to the *New Zealand Geographer* is substantial. He served as Research Editor for the *New Zealand Geographer* from 2002 – 2009 and has written eight editorial pieces and 19 papers for the journal. In addition, Robin is a regular presenter at international conferences (more than 50 presentations over his career to date), and has made 19 invited or keynote presentations to symposia and conferences across the world.

#### **Research, teaching and service**

Robin has explored the links between culture, health and place. His work is empirical and theoretical and ranges across rural, urban, coastal and health system spaces. It is given meaning by a deep humanist politics. In his own words, Robin's work has explored "the meanings and dynamics of places

and their influence on human wellbeing”. It has always been driven by the way people experience place, but has allowed Robin to investigate and engage in mediating “the downstream effects of policies and political practices on the cultural dynamics of places”. Specifically, Robin has studied the capacity of urban design to promote physical activity as well as social cohesion; the ‘downstream’ consequences of the deinstitutionalisation of mental health care and the ways the lives of users and providers of services have been reshaped by evolving policy; the impacts of rural restructuring on community wellbeing; the transformation of clinic and hospital spaces and their connection to health care consumption; the influence of transnationalism on the urban landscape and experience of health and wellbeing; and the character of consumption spaces and practices and links to the experience of wellbeing. Robin’s recent work has turned to the relationship between science and the arts in place-making. Across these interests Robin has provided a model for a geographer after the cultural turn, a post-modern geographer who engages just as comfortably in rural and urban spaces, and in coastal and outback spaces as well as institutional and mundane social spaces.

Robin’s outstanding scholarship in geography was recognised early in his career during his years as a graduate student; he was awarded the University of Auckland’s Kenneth B. Cumberland Thesis Prize for his MA thesis and a Canadian Commonwealth Scholarship in 1988, which funded his PhD. Robin’s research has been funded by several substantial research grants from funders including the Marsden Fund, Health Research Council NZ, the Foundation for Research, Science and Technology, and the Economic and Social Research Council. These awards have seen him work collaboratively with researchers across New Zealand and internationally and resulted in numerous publications. Robin has also conducted research work for a number of agencies including Auckland Regional Transport Authority, Auckland Regional Council, Housing New Zealand Corporation, Ministry of Social Development, Ministry of Health, and Ministry of Women’s Affairs. Through this work Robin has been able to bring his scholarship to the service of local and national government agencies.

Robin has taught geography at the University of Auckland since 1990. His dedication to teaching and learning in geography is evidenced in his contributions to both undergraduate and postgraduate courses at the University of Auckland since this time, and most notably in his graduate supervision. As well as teaching social and cultural geography at undergraduate and postgraduate levels, Robin makes a significant contribution to courses focused on developing and enhancing students’ research skills. In addition to helping students learn about how to do research, Robin generously shares his experience and insights on the ethical dimensions of research. In this way, Robin seeks to cultivate geographers who are thoughtful and considerate in their interactions with others. In addition, by supervising young scholars through summer scholarships, Robin has mentored numerous aspiring geographers and provided opportunities for them to further enhance their geographical research skills. Many of these students have gone on to pursue further studies in geography or have secured employment which enables them to utilise these skills in non-academic settings.

Robin has supervised more than 60 Master and PhD students, including seven who are currently working as academics in New Zealand universities. Robin’s commitment to excellence in teaching practice has seen him engage in a range of teaching development activities through his career. Robin

has been awarded two University of Auckland teaching awards in recognition of his teaching excellent. In 1999 Robin was awarded the Distinguished Teaching Award and in 2011 he received the University of Auckland's Sustained Excellence in Teaching Award.

As Geography Disciplinary Lead in the School of Environment, Robin is now leading colleagues at the University of Auckland through a difficult period of institutional transition in which disciplinary identities and futures are being renegotiated. His leadership builds on extensive involvement with the **New Zealand Geographical Society** that dates back to the 1990s. Robin was the Auckland Branch Secretary (1992 – 1993) and Auckland Branch Chair (1992 – 1994) and continues to be actively involved in Auckland Branch activities until the present. Robin edited the *New Zealand Geographer* from 2002 to 2009.