

Distinguished Service Award Louise Richards

Nominated by the representatives of the New Zealand Board of Geography Teachers (NZBoGT)



Photo: Louise Richards

Citation

Louise Richards has been a member of the NZBoGT since 2015 - firstly, as the Wellington Regional Representative. She became the Deputy Chairperson at the 2016 AGM and stepped into the role of Acting Chairperson in 2016 when the current chairperson suddenly moved out of teaching. In 2018, she was formally elected as Chairperson and in 2019 was appointed Vice President of the NZGS. This latter appointment is recognition of a closer working relationship between the tertiary and secondary sector that Louise has been keen to foster at local and national levels.

Prior to her role on the NZBoGT, Louise was an active member and Chairperson of Wellington Geography Teachers Association (WellGeog) and she continues to be an active member of this group providing professional learning opportunities and activities for Geography teachers and students in the Wellington Region. During this time, Louise has shown significant leadership and has worked tirelessly with the NZBoGT and the NZGS to improve the level of professional support provided to Geography Teachers in New Zealand. Usually the NZBoGT would nominate a Chairperson for the Distinguished Service Award as they are leaving the role. However, her leadership throughout the COVID-19 Pandemic has been so significant that we would like to nominate her for this award while she is still serving in this position.

Through the COVID-19 Pandemic Louise has brought the NZBoGT together to support teachers. The group has come together with solutions to support teachers and enable Geography assessments to take place under a global pandemic. Utilising resources across the community and developing others further to enable fieldwork and Geography programmes to continue in a new and different formats.

Throughout her tenure as the Chairperson of the NZBoGT, Louise has led the work to rebuild relationships with the Ministry of Education and New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA). In her quest to tackle some of the more pressing problems in the subject she has met with both of these organisations and instigated many changes that benefit the geography community. Louise has regularly updated the wider community about these discussions via the Board's quarterly publication, *The Network*, and in person at the biennial Social Science Teachers Conferences. The Board is now in a position where we are involved in the Review of the Achievement Standards and are regularly called upon to offer advice on the future position of Geography.

Louise worked with key members on the NZBoGT through the application processes for us to gain significant funding and opportunities for professional development for Geography Teachers through the establishment of a Network of Expertise for Geography. Subsequently, she has worked with the Teachers Refresher Course Committee to develop Geography Conferences that allows for Geography Teachers to be better connected and supported wherever they are located and to attend professional learning opportunities. These courses are targeted specifically to Geography teaching, allowing participants to

engage with current practice, network, and learn as together as a wider Geography community. Louise is a very good communicator in her role as chairperson and actively takes a collaborative approach in her decision making at board level, regularly consulting the opinions of others on issues and decisions. Her relationship building has enabled the group to work collectively and be in the strong position that it is currently.