

NZPSA

New Zealand Political Studies Association
Te Kāhui Tātai Tōrangapū o Aotearoa



This is the final edition of the NZPSA's quarterly newsletter for 2017. Our annual conference is happening at the University of Otago at the end of November and there is much to talk about with a new government, new policy directions and a turbulent international environment. Our AGM will take place during the conference, so come along and nominate yourself for any of the vacant positions. We look forward to seeing you all there. And, as this is my final newsletter as President, I want to give heartfelt thanks to Julienne, Ben and Pia for their support this year. Enjoy the summer and all best wishes for 2018.

[Jennifer Curtin](#), NZPSA President

Reminder Annual NZPSA Conference

The 2017 NZPSA Conference will be hosted by the University of Otago from 29 November-1 December, with the Postgraduate Workshop on the 28 November. The conference programme can be found [here](#), and the AGM will be held on the evening of Thursday 30 November. If you have an item to add to the agenda, please forward to [Julienne Molineaux](#).

Reminder of Prizes and Applications:

- Entries for the [Undergraduate Essay Prize in Māori Politics](#) are due by Monday 6 November 2017 and should be submitted to [Dominic O'Sullivan](#)
- Entries for the [Undergraduate Essay Prize for Aotearoa New Zealand Politics](#) are due by Monday 6 November 2017 and should be submitted to [Jack Vowles](#)
- Entries for the [NZ Politics Postgraduate Conference Paper Prize](#) are due by Monday 6 November 2017 and should be submitted to [Jack Vowles](#)
- Entries for the [NZPSA Postgraduate Conference Paper Prize](#) are due by Monday 6 November 2017 and should be submitted to the [NZPSA President](#)
- Entries for the [Environmental Politics and Policy Postgraduate Conference Paper Prize](#) are due by 6 November 2017 and should be submitted to [Julie MacArthur](#)

Research Assistant Position

The School of School of History, Philosophy, Political Science and International Relations at VUW is seeking a Research Assistant for the longitudinal study: 'Big Data and Voter Turnout.' This is a fixed-term position of 18 months. The successful applicant will have experience in working with large and complex spreadsheets and datasets, skills in data analysis and an ability to maintain the highest standards of data accuracy and give attention to detail. The successful applicant will also coordinate and supervise other staff engaged in data collection, and liaise with Statistics NZ. Please share widely. The online application process can be accessed [here](#). Contact [Jack Vowles](#) for more info.

New Book

A new volume on the Magna Carta, co-edited by Steve Winter is out now. More details are available [here](#).

2017 New Zealand post-election conference

Hosted by [Stephen Levine](#), [Jon Johansson](#) at Parliament House on 6th December, 9-5pm

US Travel Information

The NZPSA's Immediate Past President, Vicki Spencer, was recently denied entry into the US on a technicality. She advises anyone who will conduct research, have their expenses paid to give a seminar or lecture, or if they are receiving an honorarium in the US to take a hard copy of the visa waiver regulations for business travellers with them. For further information see [this article](#).

APSA-NZPSA Postgraduate Student Award Clark Tipene, University of Auckland

I had the pleasure of attending this year's Australian Political Science Association Conference, with support from the NZPSA grant. I presented a paper titled "Rethinking "political" engagement: What recent research tells us about young people and politics", using my Masters thesis work and the Social Attitudes Survey 2015 data to make sense of young New Zealanders' political participation.

The paper was warmly received and I received a lot of useful feedback about my paper, which will help as I go into the final stages of writing my thesis.



I thoroughly enjoyed this first conference experience. I met a few Australian scholars that I had read for my thesis, as well as a few potential supervisors for a PhD topic next year. A special thanks to Julienne for all her support in organising my registration for the conference.

Remembering Alan McRobie



Alan (centre) and Nigel Roberts on TVNZ's "News at Ten" in July 1979.

Alan McRobie's death earlier this year has robbed New Zealand political science of one of its most assiduous researchers. For Alan – like C.P. Scott, the former editor of the *Manchester Guardian* – comment was free, but facts were sacred. In an age of fake news and Trumped-up lies, Alan's passing is all the more sad.

Alan McRobie was born in 1936. As an undergraduate, he studied at the University of Otago, after which he trained as a teacher. A former student of Alan's recalled how Alan had been his geography teacher at Dunedin's King Edward Technical College during the 1960s and how Alan had showed "great support to me during a difficult childhood."

Alan's prowess as a teacher saw him appointed to a lectureship in social sciences at the Christchurch Teachers' College, and while there, he enrolled to do a Master's degree in political science at the University of Canterbury.

Alan's 1975 MA thesis was a research *tour-de-force*. Entitled *Electoral Redistribution in New Zealand*, it was 432 pages long and forty years later still stands as a singularly authoritative study of the evolution, creation and work of the New Zealand Representation Commission – a body which, despite the advent of MMP, still plays a central role in New Zealand's electoral management.

It was while he was writing his MA thesis that I first got to know Alan McRobie. I was lecturing at the University of Canterbury, and we teamed up to study the 1977 electoral redistribution, which increased the number of seats in Parliament from 87 to 92. Doing the research for and writing *Election '78: The 1977 Electoral Redistribution and the 1978 General Election in New Zealand* (McIndoe, 1978) was the first of three major collaborations in my life as an academic. Like the collaborative relationships that followed it (namely, with Stephen Levine and then later with Therese Arseneau), my work with Alan was challenging and demanding, but also extremely enjoyable, as well as, frankly, fun. While we worked out methods for pouring old electoral wine into new bottles – that is, for calculating old election results in new constituency boundaries – we were always aware of the need for accuracy and transparency. To be sure we met these criteria, Alan and I imagined a tiny Robert Chapman sitting on our shoulders constantly asking "How did you calculate that?" and "Are those figures really correct?" At times, though, the thought of Robert Chapman as possibly a little devil or a little angel (or a combination of both) whispering into our ears reduced Alan and me to fits of laughter.

In our Introduction to *Election '78*, Alan and I envisaged we'd be long-term collaborators and we looked forward to "working on our study of the 1992 redistribution". This was not to be. I moved to Victoria University at the start of 1981. This didn't slow Alan down. Far from it. He spent a year as a visiting professor of political science at the California State University in Chico, where – among other things – he studied electoral redistribution processes in the United States. In 1989, he published the *New Zealand Electoral Atlas* (GP Books) – which remains to this day an invaluable guide to the history of New Zealand's ever-evolving electorates.

The 1992 and 1993 electoral referendums not unexpectedly caught Alan's eye – and his critical mind. He edited a book about the first referendum, calling it *Taking it to the People? The New Zealand Electoral Referendum Debate* (Hazard Press, 1993). During the 1993 referendum – the second and decisive vote that gave New Zealand MMP – Alan joined me as a political science advisor to the Electoral Referendum Panel, and we once again enjoyed working together.

After the electoral referendums, Alan teamed up with Keith Jackson to write a major study of the profound change that New Zealand had made – namely, *New Zealand Adopts Proportional Representation: Accident? Design? Evolution?* (Ashgate 1998). Alan and Keith's collaboration did not stop there. Together they wrote the *Historical Dictionary of New Zealand* (Longman, 1996; and The Scarecrow Press, 2005). Alan also found time to collaborate with Colin James and with Stephen Levine, as well as produce privately published studies of a range of electoral redistributions in New Zealand (such as *Election '84* and *New Zealand's 1998 Electoral Redistribution*).

In brief, Alan McRobie was a genial, hard-working, meticulous political scientist. His wife, three children, grandchildren and great-grandchild can take solace from the high regard in which Alan was held by his colleagues in political science.

Nigel S. Roberts
Emeritus Professor of Political Science, Victoria University of Wellington

PhD Profiles



Mahdis Azarmandi completed her PhD in September 2017 at the National Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies and the Department of Media, Film and Communication at the University of Otago. Her dissertation titled *Colonial Continuities - A study of anti-racism in Aotearoa New Zealand and Spain* demonstrates how the history of the Spanish empire and its colonies and the Anglo colonial exploration of Oceania were crucial sites for the production of racial thought. Using discourse analysis of anti-racism materials the dissertation highlights how the disregard for coloniality's historical continuities is reflected in the absence of engagement with white privilege alongside racism. The dissertation demonstrates how the structure of whiteness, in which anti-racist groups exist, impacts and perpetuates patterns of forgetting and ignorance. For anti-racism this means that not engaging racism in its past and present iterations, and failing to conceptualize race and racialization as historically evolving, runs the risk of re-producing violence and perpetuating racial injustice.

Mahdis has also published on the politics of memorialization in Spain, including "Commemorating No-bodies – Christopher Columbus and the Violence of Social-forgetting" and "Colonial Redux: When Re-naming Silences - Antonio Lopez y Lopez and Nelson Mandela", with Roberto D. Hernandez. mahdis.azarmandi@gmail.com

Sylvia Nissen completed her PhD at the University of Canterbury in February 2017, with a thesis titled '*Politics as Creative Pragmatism: Rethinking the political action of university students in Aotearoa New Zealand*'. Her thesis argues that there is more to contemporary student political action than is often assumed, and draws on 70 in-depth interviews with students at New Zealand's eight universities about their attitudes towards politics and the challenges they face as students. The thesis provides a framework for understanding the experiences of contemporary students that inform their political action, and identifies a particular type of political agency that seems to be emerging among New Zealand students. Sylvia is currently a Postdoctoral Fellow at the University of Canterbury working on 'CYCLES', a project examining the aspirations of young people living in seven cities globally, led by the Centre for the Understanding of Sustainable Prosperity (CUSP) at the University of Surrey, UK. She has also been lecturing at Lincoln University in New Zealand politics and environmental policy, and is revising her thesis for publication as two short books alongside journal publications. sylvia.nissen@canterbury.ac.nz



NZPSA Conference 2017 Postgraduate Workshop

1pm-5.30pm, Tuesday 28 November Room 6N4 Richardson Building, Otago University, 362 Leith St, North Dunedin
On Tuesday 28 November, the Otago University Department of Politics will host a pre-conference event for postgraduate students attending the NZPSA annual meeting. A series of seminars and panel discussions will examine the ins and outs of publishing as a postgraduate student, study-life balance, and work options for post-postgraduate life. There will be ample time to discuss and ask questions from former postgraduates who navigated these issues. Afternoon tea will be served around 3 pm. The last seminar wraps up at 5.30 pm and the evening unwinds with ten-pin bowling and a restaurant dinner in downtown Dunedin. Contact Annisa Sidi annisa.sidi@postgrad.otago.ac.nz

IPSA Summer Schools

It is worth remembering that IPSA offers interesting summer schools in concepts and methods at different locations around the world which can provide opportunities to gain exposure to eminent scholars and network with other doctoral students. While applications for this year have closed, keep an eye on [this](#) page for those offered in 2018.

