

The 2016 Award Recipients

The Public Interest Award- Dr Russell Wills



The Public Interest Award recognises valuable contributions to psychology in the service of the public interest in areas or issues of concern to psychologists. In making this award the Society considers the extent and significance of the public interest contribution made by the nominee and its import for psychologists, our discipline and practice. In conferring this award on Dr Russell Wills the New Zealand Psychological Society is recognising the exemplary leadership and initiative Dr Wills has displayed in the role of Children's Commissioner since 2011.

Dr Wills has been leader and spokesperson for a team that has consistently brought the issue of child poverty to the attention of the public and government. He has been a courageous advocate for children, challenging the government and the public to act on the issues of poverty and violence that affect too many of our young and vulnerable. His efforts have changed the national narrative about child poverty, sustaining media attention and ensuring there has been increased investment in children in each of the last

three budgets. Dr Wills has ensured that children's rights and their best interests have been at the heart of his work. He has been an outstanding Children's Commissioner.

President Kerry Gibson noted that in making this award to Dr Russell Wills the New Zealand Psychological Society is recognising both his individual efforts and achievements and the significance of the issues of children's rights, child abuse, and children living in poverty for psychologists, the government and the wider society in Aotearoa New Zealand.

The Hunter Award- Professor Devon Polaschek



The Hunter Award recognises and seeks to encourage excellence in scholarship, research, and professional achievement in psychology. Eligible nominees are current members of the New Zealand Psychological Society with a history of distinguished scholarship, research and professional practice that has been widely recognised. In conferring the 2016 Hunter Award on Professor Devon Polaschek the Society acknowledges and celebrates both her impressive body of research in the field of criminal justice psychology and her continuing commitment to excellence in professional practice. President, Kerry Gibson noted that Professor Polaschek's published work and innovations in clinical practice have made valuable contributions to work with violent offenders, to offender rehabilitation, to issues surrounding parole, and to addressing the challenges created by lay and professional understandings of psychopathy, and to issues associated with psychopathic personality traits in offender rehabilitation.

Professor Polaschek has brought clarity of thought, meticulously careful research, and a commitment to exploring the professional implications of

current research, her own and that of others. That commitment and the quality of her work has won her wide international recognition as instanced by her being invited to deliver the R. G. Myers lecture in 2012 and a Visiting Fulbright Scholarship at John Jay College of Criminal Justice, New York in 2014.

The G.V. Goddard Early Career Award -Achievement and Excellence in Applied Psychology- Dr Alice Theadom



The G. V. Goddard Early Career Award commemorates the contributions Professor Graham V Goddard, Head of Department of Psychology, University of Otago, made to psychology. It is an award recognising early career achievement and excellence in applied and professional psychology. President Dr Kerry Gibson congratulated the recipient of this award, Dr Alice Theadom who is a senior lecturer in the Department of Psychology and deputy director of the National Institute for Stroke and Applied Neuroscience, Auckland University of Technology. She has made important independent contributions to the understanding of people's adjustment to and recovery from neurological illness and injury. She has helped generate significant external research funding for the Institute. She is a prolific writer having been lead author and co-author of numerous articles published in high impact journals including *Lancet Neurology*, *Journal of Neurotrauma*, and *European Journal of Neurology*. An important aspect of Dr Theadom's work on traumatic brain injury (TBI) is that she has focused on mild TBI which is the most common form. Epidemiological studies have shown that nearly all TBI is

categorised as being of mild severity (90-95%) for which, it was thought, symptoms resolved quickly. Her study of the deleterious effects of recurrent TBI found that there is a cumulative effect of recurrent TBI with sufferers experiencing frequent, severe post-concussion symptoms a year after the initial TBI. Alice's work has given voice to those who have been struggling to get help with their symptoms and she has argued for improvements to services for TBI sufferers.

Karahipi Tumuaki –President's Scholarship- Jessica Gerbic



The Society offers annually the Karahipi Tumuaki President's Scholarship which recognises research undertaken by Māori postgraduate students in psychology that is Māori centred and of value to the Māori community. Jessica Gerbic's research aims to explore how young Māori women cope with motherhood in a rural setting. Her research will challenge deficit models of Māori and of teenaged mothers and will instead adopt a strength-based approach to understanding their experiences. She will use a Kaupapa Māori methodology, working closely with the local communities within which the research is located. President Dr Kerry Gibson noted that Jessica's research has the potential to challenge stigmatised views of young Māori mothers, to empower young women in this position and to help services to develop a better understanding of the needs of this group. It is expected that Jessica's research will have important implications for the way that teenaged Māori mothers are viewed and treated in Aotearoa New Zealand.