

FOREWORD

I always like his incredible touch of invention at academic board. He can put wonderful challenges to the board, always with impeccable preparation, very moderate but hard-hitting modulation. I often think that they probably don't realise how much he challenged them until the next day or so. Wonderful fun for all of us members and a joy for democracy. And such a huge difference to his normal, private begrudged self.

– Professor Brigitte Boenisch Brednich

One of the challenges that Gordon has posed in writing this introduction to the special issue of the Victoria University of Wellington Law Review, celebrating Gordon's 40-year career at Victoria University of Wellington, has been that his footprint has been hard to detect – even the normally reliable internet has not yielded many clues. The reason for that lies undoubtedly in the fact that Gordon hates to draw attention to himself. As the above quote suggests, Gordon has been a colleague always there to fight for the good of the institution as a whole, and his colleagues, without drawing attention to himself and without offending anyone. In fact, Gordon is a master in the art of understatement. His strong duty of care and his insatiable efforts to be fair have made him a much admired committee chair and a much loved member of the academic board by his colleagues and undoubtedly at the same time much respected by the university management. One of his fellow academic board colleagues describes Gordon as forthright, fearless and the upholder of conscience and critic against university management (if necessary) – but one with a good sense of humour. Gordon has been responsible for better thinking, whether through defusing conflict or removing pomposity and woolly thinking, at all levels of university management. He is so moderate in his tone and temper that the very occasional moment of intemperate comment can catch colleagues by surprise – it is noted because it is so rare and, as such, can carry considerable weight when it comes to the fore.

It will not come as a complete surprise for the reader given the preceding paragraph that Gordon's primary teaching and research focus is employment law, on which he has written extensively. His publications have focussed on the extensive reforms to New Zealand employment law that began in the 1970s and particularly the reforms of 1991 and 2000, and the continuing evolution of the law. Other principal areas of his research have been the law of personal grievances and the development of good faith in employment law.

Gordon has served as the Asian Vice-President of the International Society for Labour and Social Security Law and is a member of the Advisory Committee of the Labour Law Research network and President of the New Zealand Labour Law Society. Gordon has practised as a barrister and has represented clients in the various employment institutions and the courts and has provided advice to various union and the New Zealand Council of Trade Unions on various aspects of labour law reform.

Gordon has also taught and written on international trade law and in particular on New Zealand's trade agreements at both a multilateral and bilateral level.

Unsurprisingly, Gordon has been a fantastic colleague not only for his Law Faculty colleagues, but also for example supporting the University's Treaty of Waitangi Research Unit and colleagues around the University.

Gordon's journey to Victoria University started in Methven. It was a town country teacher exchange programme that was responsible for his move to high school in Christchurch (one of the seconded teachers from Christchurch encouraged Gordon to go), where he became good friends with his long-standing colleague, Richard Hill. Richard describes the foundation of their friendship as "both not fitting in" (the rather traditional Christchurch school environment – albeit for different reasons). University? He has been a professor at Victoria University since January 2007 but his academic career started in 1977 as a temporary, three-year term lecturer in commercial law in the Department of Accountancy. Since then he has travelled through an academic career marked by devotion to the institution in a range of roles, ending up at the Faculty of Law, which he joined in 2002. He was an Associate Dean of Graduate Studies and Research at the Faculty of Commerce from 1 February 2000 until 31 January 2003, and an Associate Dean Research (Law) from 22 January 2003 until 30 June 2005 and again from 1 July 2006 through to 31 December 2007. These bare titles do not adequately capture the good cheer, citizenship and collegiality he has displayed without fail across a career of note. He has been a friend and colleague to junior and senior academics alike and a source of wise counsel.

Gordon likes glamping, fine food (he is a wonderful chef), a good glass of wine, the races and since the beginning of the seventies, weekly "chewing the fat" over a glass of wine with his friends James Belich, Pat Walsh, Peter Brosnan and Richard Hill.

This volume celebrates Gordon's career and it speaks for itself that this issue is edited by Gordon's long-time colleague and friend, Richard Mitchell, and Gordon's former PhD student Dr Dawn Duncan¹ and comprises contributions from colleagues from all around the world discussing the various aspects of employment law. In addition, articles from Gordon's Faculty of Law colleagues celebrate Gordon's 40 years at Victoria University of Wellington.

Petra Butler, Professor of Law

Mark Hickford, Pro Vice-Chancellor and Dean of Law

1 Richard and Dawn would like to thank Dominique Allen, Christopher Arup, Richard Naughton and Carolyn Sutherland for their assistance in respect of this special issue.