

## In Profile: Associate Professor Alaric Maude. AM Flinders University, South Australia

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### Abstract

In each edition, we hope to profile the work of a leading geographer, especially those from South Australia. In this commentary paper, we present the work of Associate Professor Alaric Maude (AM), who spoke to Dr Cecile Cutter about his career.

The Order of Australia is not lightly earned. It is the most prestigious way this country has of recognizing its outstanding community members, those who have made contributions that benefit society and country and whose contributions encourage and inspire those who follow. It follows that for a geographer to achieve such an award – for geography – is of major consequence. When the citation which goes with the award acknowledges this as ‘For significant service to education in the field of geography as an academic, researcher, author, and mentor’, then it is of fundamental importance that this society, the Royal Geographical Society of South Australia (RGSSA), also acknowledges the contribution of one of its own – Dr Alaric Maude.

Alaric is one of Australia’s most highly respected geographers. He has worked unstintingly in the fields of geography and geographic education for many years. Alaric spent most of his academic life as a teacher, researcher, and author at Flinders University, South Australia, joining the University shortly after its foundation in 1967, a year after its foundation, and remained a pillar of the discipline throughout his pre-retirement working life.

Alaric has supervised, either individually or jointly, more than 70 students undertaking higher level studies, from honours degrees to PhDs. His students have come from a diverse range of backgrounds including local Australian-born students as well as many from other areas of the world. Notably, Alaric strongly supported (the late) Graeme Hugo, his colleague and friend, in encouraging Flinders University to offer higher degrees to students from Indonesia, in addition to other areas of Asia. His contribution in this area led to assisting students to obtain higher degrees and encouraging long standing links between the University and many other countries.

Supervision is not really the right word for undertaking study with Alaric. He may be the supervisor, but he is much more the guide and mentor. The ideas that you thought you had may be logical, but somehow, he has the knack of changing them from logical and mundane, to exciting and stimulating, and also to make you think that they really were your ideas. As Dr Selina Tually, one of his students, commented:

I had the great honour of having Alaric as one of my PhD supervisors. He was absolutely responsible for me completing my thesis. He imparted some key wisdoms along the way: please use ‘fewer’ as it’s an endangered word; it’s never outside of anything, and a good editor/proof-reader is worth their weight in gold. Alaric also showed up to supervisors’ meetings with wine on more than one occasion...perhaps he was trying to tell me something!

When supervision meetings with him take place in his home there is the famous Maude wine cellar. Even for non-drinkers (yes there are some!) the wine cellar is special. It seems that for many geographers wine and geography go hand in hand, or glass in glass. After all, wine is probably one of the most geographic of phenomena that there could be. It relies on the soil and is different from place to place according to climate culture. It is therefore a worthy element to investigate and even more worthy to collect and make available to fellow imbibers. So, Alaric’s cellar, and it is a real physical space (also geographic), is a sight to behold.

At the broader university level Alaric was a major contributor to developing the very strong School of Geography, Population and Environment at Flinders University (and the previous Discipline and Depart-

ment of Geography). He was Head of the Discipline from 1984 to 1989 and of the School of Geography, Population and Environmental Management from 1998 to 2000. While working at Flinders he was a member of a number of senior committees including the Flinders University Council (1979–1985). Among other very varied major administrative positions he chaired the School of Social Sciences Higher Degrees Committee (1986–1989) and the Program in Population and Human Resources (1987–1991).

It is not only as a teacher that Alaric has made his mark. His enquiring mind has led to what he considers a 'respectable' publication record based on a considerably varied wealth of research. While urban centers and economic growth have been magnets for many researchers, Alaric's interest in the periphery and regional development resulted in many publications. These are not all focused on Australia's regions. Alaric describes his Honours thesis, 'The historical geography of Norfolk Island', as 'an historical study of regional development'. His interest in 'the regions' was later illustrated in his PhD on 'Population pressure in Tonga' which considered how the agricultural systems of that island nation would cope with the growing population. Regional development in areas of Indonesia and Malaysia were also subjects studied outside Australia. Nevertheless, when Alaric turned to the periphery in Australia it was to consider the effect of mining settlements and their vulnerability to the vagaries of the market and possible closure. In the 1990s, the Commonwealth Department of Housing and Regional Development was looking into the factors leading to the growth or decline of non-capital cities in Australia. Alaric's reputation for consistency and dependability made him part of a small team led by Andrew Beer, who investigated what was happening in the regions, and in 1994 published *Beyond the capitals: urban growth in regional Australia* (Beer et al. 1994). The government had its answer; there was more dynamism and growth than was anticipated, but government needed to encourage that growth to sustain the regions. Nearly a decade later Andrew, Alaric and Bill Pritchard published *Developing Australia's Regions: theory and practice* (Beer et al. 2003). It was voted by regional development practitioners a few years ago as the second most useful publication they had, which is gratifying as Andrew made sure that it was written for them.

Andrew and Alaric were not content with just knowing what happened. They resolved to find out more about the mechanisms that make some areas grow and others decline. This interest resulted in a large research project investigating and analyzing all those development agencies and the individuals with-

in them that led to successful country towns. However, the research did not end there, but expanded into a comparative international study of development agencies in the U.S.A, Northern Ireland, and England. Andrew and Alaric went on to combine their interests further to consider the links between regional development and housing assistance, thus linking elements of disadvantage in ways which had not been adequately explored by previous researchers.

Professor Andrew Beer, now Dean, Research and Innovation at the University of South Australia Business School, made this comment on their Flinders' partnership:

Working with Alaric Maude was a delight. He managed to combine great insight and wisdom with an engaging humility and a commitment to learn. Alaric was never rushed, but always thorough and considered in his approach to all things. He treated every research project as an opportunity to build on his life-time experiences, and as a chance to make new friends. He saw all parts of Australia as a place of revelation and the workings of the economy as an opportunity to improve the wellbeing of others.

Alaric's geographic contributions extend outside the tertiary arena. He has undertaken a wide range of activities which have served the profession and increased its visibility in society. First, Alaric served in a number of administrative roles for Australia's professional geography organizations. He was the Journal Business Manager for Australian Geographical Studies from 1968 to 1973 and also the Secretary for the Royal Geographical Society of Australasia (SA Branch) 1967/68-1968/69. He was the Secretary of the national body for Australian geographers, the Institute of Australian Geographers, from 2004 to 2012 and Editor of the *South Australian Geographical Journal* from 2005 until 2011. As editor, he created a journal that combined both academic and non-academic articles, reflecting the breadth of the Royal Geographical Society's interests and membership. Alaric was also a Council Member of the Australian and New Zealand Section of the Regional Science Association International from 1997 to 1999, and ran a national conference in Tanunda, the centre of a notable region. In 2013, he took on the position of Chair of the National Committee for Geography, within the Australian Academy of the Sciences. These contributions show Alaric's ongoing commitment to the discipline, academia, and community.

During the 1990s and early 2000s, and because he clearly had nothing else to do, Alaric took on the complex and difficult task of co-editing a series of

14 books published as the *Meridian series: Australian geographical perspectives* by Oxford University Press. Titles in the series cover a range of topics representing contemporary Australian teaching and research. His commitment to ensuring the high quality of this series of books, used extensively in tertiary and higher level secondary teaching, was of great value to teaching staff who were looking for robust, relevant, locally written and locally focused material that they could rely on, at a time when the available texts had little material on Australia.

Notwithstanding his significant contributions to geography and geographical education during his years of paid employment, Alaric has been stunningly productive since his so-called 'retirement!' Alaric has played a pivotal role in devising, monitoring, and implementing the Australian curriculum in geography (Maude 2014a). He was Lead Writer and then Writing Coach for the geography curriculum, and has continued to publish on the new curriculum and provide advice for teachers. In 2014, he wrote *Understanding and teaching the Australian curriculum: geography for primary schools* (Maude 2014b), to assist a generation of teachers who may not have been trained in geography or geographic research methods to be confident in their approach to the new curriculum. Alaric's contributions to the new Australian curriculum are recognized widely and valued deeply by the nation's professional geographers. In this regard he has worked closely with Malcolm McInerney, a well-known geographical education expert, who acknowledged his consistent contributions and ongoing commitment to the discipline which continues today:

It was inevitable when ACARA [the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority] started developing the curriculum that Dr Maude was appointed as the Lead Writer of the curriculum. In this role Dr Maude was tireless in cajoling others, writing and perfecting the curriculum. His drive and passion during those years (2008–2013) for geography in Australian schools was an incredibly important contribution to a curriculum that has been recognised internationally as an innovative and world standard geography curriculum. I can confidently say that without Dr Maude's input we would not have the quality geography curriculum that we presently have in Australian schools. Geography was lucky during this developmental period to have Dr Maude as our champion and tireless worker of the highest quality. Australian teachers and students of geography are certainly indebted to Dr Maude.

Work on the curriculum and teaching the teachers continues today. Alaric has recently published a series

of articles on 'powerful' knowledge and its relevance to geography (Maude, 2018). These articles focus on ways of thinking and communicating. He concludes 'the concept of powerful knowledge provides a way to communicate geography to non-geographers [...] demonstrating that these ways of thinking and understanding are both educationally valuable and not taught in any other subject'. These are powerful words about a new approach to geographical education.

Alaric's enduring contributions to the profession have been acknowledged in a number of ways. In 1997, he was awarded a Professional Service Commendation by the Council of the Institute of Australian Geographers for his work on the development of the Meridian Series. In 2009, he became one of the very few Distinguished Fellows of the Institute of Australian Geographers and in 2013 the Australian Geography Teachers Association presented him with the Don Biddle Friend of Geography Award for outstanding contributions to geographical education. His contribution to the discipline is extensive and outstanding and he has been recognized by his peers from a number of national bodies.

It is clear that throughout Alaric's life he has dedicated much of his own time and given considerable commitment to extending the importance of geography to as wide as possible an audience. He has engaged previously neutral policy makers in understanding the importance of keeping geography in the forefront of the education of young people, in order that they can understand the significant role its study makes in the future development of Australia, and in understanding the interaction between people and places. In his personal approach to teaching and encouraging such learning Alaric has influenced many others in society. Importantly, he has brought people from different nations and backgrounds together to understand the role of geography in a fast-changing society, and acted as a remarkable mentor to many colleagues and friends over a long and fruitful period. He is a strong, insightful, well-respected but gentle person who has given an outstanding amount of himself to Australia and geography in particular. All of this is undertaken with a unique sense of humor, one which it is difficult to describe. Speaking to his colleagues I found it described as 'witty', 'dry', 'droll', and 'clever'. This may be best shown by a recent example. When I emailed him about writing this piece, I commented that it was hard to write about him without making it sound like an obit. His response was 'Nothing wrong with an obit, as long as it doesn't say that I am dead'.

May his contributions to the discipline continue for many more years.

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