

Leigh Radford OAM – Nomination for Centenary Silver Medal

The RGSSA Centenary Silver Medal is awarded to a past or present member of the RGSSA to recognise their outstanding service to the Society as evidenced by long and active tenure on the Council and/or Committees of the Society or by significant contributions to the varied activities of the Society. Our current President Leigh Radford OAM is extraordinarily well qualified for this significant Society award.

Leigh has given outstanding service to the RGSSA in his role as President of the Society since assuming office in 2018, six years after first becoming a member when his wife, Tracey, saw such a good fit between the Society's activities and his education (including an Honours degree in Geography), interests, and career in broadcasting that she bought a membership to our august Society for him as a gift. The rest is, as they say, history.

Leigh's background in international media and associated corporate management, and as a tertiary educated geographer, was an ideal fit for the role of President, in which he juggles many tasks at once, as the Society is in effect a small business, with its program of events, publications, library and membership services. Although hesitant at first to take on this position, Leigh had the extra personal time to throw himself into just such a challenge. It was a steep learning curve with a wholly volunteer-run Society, but Leigh has met the challenges with equanimity, developing a strong rapport with the Society's membership and external stakeholders. Leigh is always open to discussing problems encountered by volunteers, who are very grateful for the way he supports and encourages them.

As President, Leigh has gone well above and beyond what is required of the role and driven several major shifts in the Society's activities to enhance its future prospects. During his tenure the Society has appointed a Head of Travel and Volunteer Coordinator, in addition to successfully employing the Society's first Director. Together with the Library Committee and volunteer project manager Dick Wilson, he engaged with Troppo architects to redesign the library space and, through the Wheaton Bequest, to secure most of the funding needed for the project. The very successful refurbishment of the Library would not have occurred without Leigh's persistence and dedicated input.

Leigh's ability to envision improvements that will help advance the Society is undeniable. For example, he oversaw the updating of the Society's website including its ability to take bookings and pay memberships online. Not only has he been at the forefront of innovations, he has been prepared to undertake an enormous number of routine activities such as chairing Council and attending very many of the Society's various committee meetings as well as being the welcoming 'face' of the Society and publicizing it at every opportunity.

He has significantly enhanced the Society's relationship with the State Library of South Australia through regular meetings with senior staff. He has also made himself available to members on a regular basis and been prepared to engage in conversations about any issues of concern.

Of course, Leigh is most widely known for his extensive broadcasting career, having obtained his University of Adelaide Honours Degree in Geography, specializing in Biogeography. He began his broadcast career with the ABC as a trainee Rural Reporter in the 1980s, and was named Telstra Journalist of the Year in 1996. He has worked at all levels of regional, state and national reporting, becoming Head of all ABC Rural output from 2005 until July 2017, earning himself the title of Captain Rural. His broad rural interests coincide with some of the key concerns of the RGSSA, contributing significantly to what has been a happy 'marriage.'

Leigh was awarded a Medal (OAM) of the Order of Australia in 2019 for service to the broadcast media in rural and regional areas. He has also been awarded an Honorary Fellowship of the Australian Rural Leadership Foundation 'in recognition of exceptional service and commitment to rural and regional Australia'. In his broadcasting career Leigh enjoyed over three decades of extensive travel around Australia and he has broadcast programs from literally right across the country and the outback. He continues to be a casual presenter for the ABC in addition to being a founder member of the Global Foundation for Agricultural Journalism, and a partner in Events On Air, which extends the life of conferences through audio and video interviews with keynote speakers.

In recognition of over a decade of service to the RGSSA, with seven as President, allied to his achievements as a broadcaster and a champion for rural and regional Australia, it is with great pleasure that we nominate Leigh Radford OAM for the RGSSA Centenary Silver Medal.

Nominated by – Nona Verco and Guy Robinson

Seconded by - Iain Hay and Melissa Gibbs