

## Obituary

**Graeme John Hugo, AO, PhD**  
**5 December 1946 - 20 January 2015**

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Graeme Hugo, Professor of Geography at the University of Adelaide, died in Adelaide on 20 January 2015, barely a few months after being diagnosed with cancer. He was only 68 years into a valuable and productive life that substantially influenced Australian geography, demography and wider society. Graeme was one of the most distinguished and dedicated geographers that Australia has produced and he was certainly the most productive. His main research areas covered a smorgasbord of activities centred on migration, its changing patterns and causes and the implications for social and economic change, especially in Asia and Australia.

Graeme grew up in the western Adelaide suburb of Findon where he went to Flinders Park Primary School and then Findon High School. Findon was an unpretentious suburb and Graeme is quite probably the only person from Findon High School to have ever become a Professor. He was the first person from his family to go to university. His fascination with geography was much influenced by his high school Geography teacher, Vic Mashford, and when he received the John Lewis medal for topping the state in geography in 1963 his future direction was becoming clear. By then he was already appreciating the scope of geography as a subject with a range that could encompass the subtleties and intrigue of social geography with the 'science' of census data and statistics.

Graeme began academic life with a BA at the University of Adelaide, where he majored in Geography and History, and concurrently attended Adelaide Teachers' College, training as a secondary school teacher. In 1967 he completed his Honours year with a thesis on 'Service Provision in a Sector of Western Metropolitan Adelaide'. Three months of backpacking in South-East Asia (officially a study-tour) ensued and ensured that another direction in life, away from western Adelaide, would follow. In 1968 he



*Above: Graeme in his professional life  
Below: The scoreboard at his beloved Adelaide Oval was a fitting backdrop for the celebration of Graeme's life*



began his academic career as a Tutor at Flinders University, while completing an MA thesis there on 'Internal migration in South Australia' (1971). That was followed by a PhD at ANU, after which he returned forever to Adelaide where he firstly joined the staff of Flinders University and later transferred to the University of Adelaide. There he eventually became the ARC Australian Professorial Fellow in the Discipline of Geography, Environment and Population, and Director of the Australian Population and Migration Research Centre.

That might seem to be a trajectory within a localised small-scale geographical world, but nothing could be further from the truth. Surely no Australian geographer has been more mobile than Graeme and that is entirely in keeping with an academic lifetime spent studying migration, mobility and development in Australia and South-East Asia. Indeed Graeme long took that mobility into personal realms, as his forays into distance running demonstrated, and in his earlier days he had himself been a 'boat-person' directly experiencing the illegal movement of Indonesians to neighbouring Malaysia.

At ANU Graeme temporarily moved away from Geography into the Department of Demography, where his doctoral thesis was on 'Population Mobility in West Java' (1975), supervised primarily by Jack Caldwell. At that time ANU had developed a strong focus on the demography and economics of Indonesia. That ultimately gave him a breadth of interest and purpose that stemmed from blending the disciplines of geography, demography and other social sciences, and from developing a theoretical and practical understanding of the challenges of development in rural and urban Indonesia. Thirty years later he was to return as part of a review of the Department. Ever meticulous, Graeme carefully recorded how, from Honours to MA and PhD, the number of thesis pages had gone from 108 to 287 and then 699.

After the thesis Graeme returned to Flinders in 1975 as a Lecturer, subsequently rising to Reader in Geography. In 1991 he crossed the city to rejoin the University of Adelaide, as Professor and a year later as Head of the Department. Between 2002 and 2007 he held an ARC Federation Fellowship. Flinders did not forget him; in 2006 he was an inaugural recipient of the University's Distinguished Alumnus Award for his already exceptional contribution to research, teaching and public service.

It is simply impossible to do justice to the full extent of Graeme's extraordinary academic life—and digest a CV that extends to over a hundred single spaced pages. Graeme produced 32 books (and more are in press), more than 200 refereed articles (and more of those too are on the way) and over 260 book chapters. Then there are the three theses, 43 monographs and 89 working papers. He frequently participated in conferences, both academic and with such agencies as UNFPA, the World Bank and the International Organisation of Migration. There were therefore a phenomenal 1066 conference papers (some 25 per year between 1975 and 2013). In his last year, until early December 2014, he had given 62 conference presentations in such places as Ottawa, Bogota, Nairobi, Washington and, of course, Adelaide. And that total excludes the 20 plenary addresses, 120 assorted reports and 34 book reviews. I wrote in 2014 that 'it is impossible to imagine the flow suddenly drying up, when Graeme

has so many insights still to impart, and so many requests for him to impart them'. Sadly that is now no longer true. Some of the key publications are listed below.

Quantity never erased quality. That was demonstrably apparent in the citation counts that Graeme accumulated. He is the most cited geographer in Australia. His work with Douglas Massey and others on international migration and migration theory—a seminal book and article—have received 2250 and 3250 citations respectively, and the numbers grow daily. Numerous other publications have passed the century mark. More to the point, because of Graeme's work we now have a much more sophisticated understanding of the theory and practice of migration in the Asia-Pacific region, and Australian geography is itself more cosmopolitan in outlook. He was not just an expert on population migration in the Asia-Pacific region: he was the expert. Beyond that his expertise in fertility and mortality and more arcane aspects of demography was formidable. He was revered in Australian and Asian population studies. It has long been impossible to go to a meeting in Asia on a related issue without being confronted by someone disappointed that Graeme was not there (in itself unusual!) and then remarking on what a great scholar he was and how his inputs and insights were invaluable. He was highly respected in Asia and far beyond.

That respect came from his intellectual contributions, but also from beyond them, because they were underpinned by a quiet but persuasive concern for social justice. Beyond the multiple intellectual outputs that grace some of the finest global journals, and have been cited many times, Graeme was an activist, concerned with the development of equitable migration policies and the welfare and rights of migrants and refugees.

He was no mere scholar—quietly piling up papers and books and attending obscure conferences—but was committed to developing appropriate population and development policies that linked in different ways the destinies of Australia and Asian nations, and might contribute to building positive relationships between them. One of his last papers, only just published, was entitled 'The economic contribution of humanitarian settlers', focussing on the implications of migration into Australia and the significance, role and contribution of refugees in a multicultural Australia. That paper is a condensed version of a much larger report for the former Department of Immigration and Citizenship. Typically many of Graeme's most influential papers followed a substantial piece of work commissioned by a government policy agency. He could work as easily in a small Australian country town as speaking Indonesian in the villages and cities of Indonesia. A holism of spirit and purpose meant that he was as comfortable working in small societies in remote parts of Indonesia as addressing elite international United Nations conferences—they were all part of a whole. It was so typical of Graeme that the first song at his memorial service was John Lennon's *Imagine* ('Imagine all the people living life in peace... No need for greed or hunger, a brotherhood of man, imagine all the people sharing all the world'). But Graeme did not merely dream and imagine, he actively sought to make the world a better place.

That quiet and so often self-effacing activism was evident in Graeme's involvement with an enormous number of bodies in population studies and geography, both academic, such as the Australian Postgraduate Awards, and professional/practical,

such as the South Australian Government's Ministerial Advisory Board for the Ageing. At the time of his death he had served for eight years on the Australian Statistical Advisory Council. He was a regular television and radio commentator. It was no surprise then that the Governor of South Australia, himself a refugee from Vietnam, expressed his apologies for being unable to attend the memorial service, or that the Premier of South Australia, Jay Weatherill, whose constituency embraces Findon, remarked 'This is an enormous loss to South Australia and the nation. Dr Hugo was an international thinker of the highest calibre and was greatly respected. I regarded him as a friend and I am deeply saddened at his passing'.

At the same time the NTEU observed that Graeme 'epitomised the tradition of serving the public good. His analysis of the changing face of higher education, for instance, in terms of casualization, the lost generation of permanent academics, the increasing mobility of academics and the failure of governments to fund adequately postgraduate training were all path breaking and in turn shaped the public debate in Australia and overseas. If there is a word that encapsulates Professor Hugo it is—generosity of spirit, shared knowledge, public duty and collegiality. He will be greatly missed'. From across a range of organisations and political divides he was acknowledged, respected and appreciated.

Beyond more formal activities, Graeme was renowned for his willingness to pitch in, when others of similar rank would decline, for example in refereeing papers for Australian (and other) geography journals (he had refereed for no less than 53 different journals), for not just teaching First Year but marking their exam papers and assignments, for refereeing grant applications and so on. He was a diligent, conscientious and committed teacher and inspired more than one generation of students, many of whom themselves went on to positions of eminence. Graeme supervised 32 Honours theses, more than 50 Masters theses and 62 PhD theses: some 20 Masters and PhDs are ongoing. He still found time to be a valuable and judicious marker for 30 Masters and PhD theses from elsewhere. All of this was done quietly – fitted in dutifully and carefully between the more stellar activities. One of my PhD students was probably the last whose thesis he examined late in 2014, when he was already ill – and should have had better, more personal things to do—but he had promised. The thesis was passed with his customary generosity of spirit—while providing invaluable comments and thoughtful directions. Duty was diligently done.

It is impossible to think of an Australian geographer who is better known in the real world beyond the ivory towers, and who has made such a contribution to it. Indeed he is one of the very few geographers to have been formally recognised outside the discipline. In 2012 he became an Officer of the Order of Australia (AO) 'for distinguished service to population research, particularly the study of international migration, population geography and mobility, and through leadership roles with national and international organisations'. Belatedly in 2014 the Institute of Australian Geographers awarded him the Australia-International Medal in recognition of his outstanding contribution, as an Australian geographer, to the advancement of Geography world-wide. He has been an exemplary and thoroughly dedicated geographical citizen of Australia and the Asian world and his entire academic and

practical career has been dedicated to making, and succeeding in making, outstanding intellectual and practical contributions to the advancement of Geography.

Through all those years and those massive contributions Graeme was decidedly part of the real world outside the towers. He was a Port Adelaide Australian Rules Football tragic (long before that adjective became a noun, and long before Port Adelaide reached the national league) usually to be found carefully and dutifully recording the goals and behinds as they mounted up. The demographer was always there. Beyond that he was a cricket fanatic, with one of his last public outings being to the First Test between Australia and India at Adelaide early in December 2014. No-one would have been more delighted at Australia's victory. And no-one would have more enjoyed disputing whether India should have adopted the DRS review system, rather than poring over life tables. Fittingly his memorial service was held at Adelaide Oval where the scoreboard provided a vivid tribute to a remarkable and much loved man whose rich and full life enriched so many. Graeme leaves a partner, Sharon, two step-daughters Melissa and Emily, and a daughter, Justine, all of whom emphasised Graeme's concern for a just society and generosity and warmth of spirit, at a memorial service attended by more than five hundred people.

#### **Selected books and other publications relating to Australia by Graeme Hugo**

1975 Postwar settlement of Southern Europeans in Australian rural areas: the case of Renmark, *Australian Geographical Studies*, vol. 13: pp. 169-181.

1980 Greek immigrants in the South Australian Upper Murray (with BJ Menzies), pp. 170-192 in IH Burnley, RJ Pryor and DT Rowland (eds.), *Mobility and community change in Australia*, University of Queensland Press, Brisbane.

1986 *Australia's changing population: trends and implications*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne.

1989 *Atlas of the Australian people* volume V: South Australia, Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra.

1992 (with Alaric Maude) Mining settlements in Australia, pp. 66-94 in C Neil, M Tykkylainen and J Bradbury (eds.), *Coping with closure*, Routledge, London.

1994 *The economic implications of emigration from Australia*, Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra.

1994 (with M Wooden, R Holton & J Sloan) *Australian immigration: a survey of the issues*, 2nd ed., Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra.

1995 (with C Maher) *Atlas of the Australian people 1991*, National overview, Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra.

1999 (with G Haberkorn, M Fisher and R Aylward) *Country matters: social atlas of rural and regional Australia*, Bureau of Rural Sciences, Canberra.

2006 (with J Lienert) Child obesity in South Australia: some initial findings, *Food, Culture and Society*, vol. 9: pp. 299-316.

2011 Geography and population in Australia: a historical perspective, *Geographical Research*, vol. 49: pp. 242-260.

2012 (ed.) (with J Pincus) *A greater Australia: population, policies and governance*, The Committee for Economic Development of Australia, Melbourne.

2013 (ed.) *Migration and climate change*, Edward Elgar Publishing, Cheltenham.

2014 The economic contribution of humanitarian settlers in Australia, *International Migration*, vol. 52: pp. 31-52.

2014 Immigrant settlement in regional Australia: patterns and processes, pp. 57-82 in R Dufty-Jones & J Connell (eds.), *Rural change in Australia*, Farnham, United Kingdom.

### **Graeme's involvement with the Royal Geographical Society of South Australia**

Graeme's involvement with the Society began in 1963 when he was awarded its John Lewis Bronze Medal for top student in Matriculation Geography.

For several years from 1967 he was a member of the Society's Council.

Over the years Graeme presented to the Society a number of addresses relating to population change, especially to the use and interpretation of census data.

Publications with the Society included the 1981 paper *Future population outlook in South Australia* written by Graeme jointly with R. Allan.

In 2009 he was made an Honorary Life Member.

Graeme provided a special introduction for the South Australian Government's State Emergency Preparedness submitted by the Society.

Graeme was awarded the Royal Geographical Society of Queensland's 2012 J P Thomson Medal for significant contribution to geographical scholarship and the dissemination of geographical knowledge, and gave the Thomson Address in May 2012 at the Society's premises at Milton.