

## Citation for Ben Schrader, proposed for Life Membership, PHANZA

Ben Schrader (b. 1964) is a notable public historian, an expert on urban history and the urban environment, a foundation member of PHANZA and a passionate advocate for New Zealand's built heritage.

Born in Christchurch, Ben spent most of his formative years in Wellington. He attended Victoria University, where he graduated BA in history. After a spell overseas, he returned to Victoria to study for his MA Thesis, 'Planning Happy Families: A History of the Naenae Idea', which he completed in 1993. In 1995 he enrolled at Melbourne University to work on his PhD thesis, 'Rebuilding Melbourne: modernity and progress in the central business district, 1910-50'; it was completed in 2001.

Ben's working life in history began with his contributions to the *New Zealand Historical Atlas/Ko Papatuanuku e Takoto Nei*, a project which commenced in 1990 and was published in 1997. His work on the urban plates in the Atlas was ground-breaking, giving salience to this often overlooked facet of New Zealand history.

His first major publication was *We Call It Home: A History of New Zealand State Housing*, published in 2005, for which he was listed as a finalist in the history category of the Montana Book Awards. The following year he published *More than a landlord: a short history of Wellington Housing Trust*.

Ben was co-editor of the Economy and City theme of *Te Ara – The Encyclopedia of New Zealand*, authoring many of the city entries, including those on city images, city planning, and street life.

In 2016 Ben published the seminal *The Big Smoke: New Zealand Cities 1840-1920*, the first comprehensive look at New Zealand's early urban history. It won the 2017 W. H. Oliver Prize and the 2017 New Zealand Heritage Non-fiction Book Award and was shortlisted for the General Non-fiction category of the New Zealand Book Awards the same year. The *Big Smoke* demonstrated Ben's skill at combining scholarly analysis, the experiences of ordinary people and fresh interpretation to produce a work that will be influential long into the future. He then worked as a free-lance historian before being awarded a J D Stout Fellowship in 2022 to work on a book on the history of heritage.

Ben has contributed chapters to numerous journals and publications, such as *Zeal and Crusade: The Modern Movement in Wellington* (1996), *Heartlands: New Zealand Historians Write About Where History Happened* (2006), *Homes people can afford: how to improve housing in New Zealand* (2017) and *Women now: the legacy of female suffrage* (2018). Ben has taught several courses at Victoria University, both for the History Department and the post-graduate Museum and Heritage Studies Programme.

Ben has been an advocate for built heritage, particularly urban heritage, all his working life. He has served as a committee member for Historic Places Wellington since 2015. He has given expert evidence in hearings, many public lectures and conference papers, written a

number of think pieces for on-line media, mentored young historians and reviewed publications.

Ben was a founder of PHANZA and a constant supporter, serving on its first committee and returning to the committee on two more occasions. Ben's commitment to PHANZA, public history and the role of the historian in public life cannot be disputed.