

Professor Douglas Paton Legacy Fund



There were so many diverse and wonderful facets to the late Professor Douglas Paton as he and his life were tremendously rich and deep. Most of all Douglas was, and always will be, a deeply loved, respected and appreciated son, brother, partner, uncle, great-uncle, friend, colleague, collaborator and neighbour.

Douglas truly lived an authentic, rich and fulfilled life. He will live on in our memories as a loving and caring, strong yet gentle, authentic, gracious, humorous and loyal human being who lived with great integrity and sense of purpose. Douglas contributed so much to humanity and our Earth. He was a brilliant, humble, committed, and wise scholar, researcher, educator, supervisor for Honours, Masters and PhD students, and an advisor to national and international organisations.

Douglas did his BSc (Hons) in Psychology at St. Andrews University, Scotland, and his PhD at the University of Edinburgh. He was a Senior Lecturer at St. Andrews and Curtin Universities. He then worked as Associate Professor at Massey University's School of Psychology in Aotearoa New Zealand from January 1996 to October 2002, before taking up a Professorship at the University of Tasmania and then at Charles Darwin University. Douglas was also an Adjunct Professor at the University of Canberra, and a Senior Research Fellow at the Bandung Resilience Development Initiative in Indonesia. Throughout, Douglas retained a strong working link with Massey University through the Joint Centre for Disaster Research (JCDR), where he supported our research and teaching as a Research Fellow.

Douglas created an extraordinary body of knowledge and wisdom in the Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) space in the form of comprehensive theories developing all-hazards and cross-cultural individual and collective adaptive capacities. His most recent work included developing transformative approaches to community capacity-building during disaster recovery and using the visual and performing arts to support disaster recovery. You find a detailed overview of Douglas' body of work in this [editorial \[click here\]](#) of a special issue that pays tribute to the him in the Australasian Journal of Disaster and Trauma Studies that he founded and was the editor of for many years.

Throughout his career, Douglas worked with researchers and practitioners from diverse organisations including government, Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and charities across the world. He undertook comparative work in Australia (bushfire, flooding, tsunami), New Zealand (earthquake, volcanic activity), Japan (earthquake, volcanic activity), Indonesia (volcanic activity), Taiwan (earthquake, typhoon), Iran (flooding), Ethiopia (flooding), USA

(volcanic activity, tsunami) and Portugal (bushfire). He also researched long-term recovery processes in New Zealand (2011 Christchurch earthquake) and Taiwan (2009 Typhoon Morakot).

Douglas was truly a world class researcher, respected internationally. In 2005-2006, he was the Australian delegate to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Education for Natural Disaster Preparedness in the Asia-Pacific. He was a member of the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (then UNISDR, now UNDRR) RIA sub-committee (2012-2016) and served on the Psychosocial Advisory Committee for the Christchurch earthquake (2011-2013). In 2014, his role as a Technical Advisor on Risk Communication with the World Health Organisation (WHO) helped develop the community engagement program for the Ebola response program in Sierra Leone.

Douglas is listed in the Stanford University/Elsevier BV list of the top 2% most cited researchers worldwide. In 2021 - 2023, the Australian Research Review listed Douglas as the top Australian researcher in the Emergency Management/DRR field of research. In 2025, Douglas has a Scopus h-index of 50 and the corresponding h-index on Research Gate as 67. Douglas published 25 books and some 200 peer-reviewed papers and chapters with over 260 collaborators from across the world. He has served as Editor of Massey University's Australasian Journal of Disaster and Trauma Studies (Founding Editor), Disaster Prevention and Management, and the International Journal of Mass Emergencies and Disasters. He sat on several journal editorial boards, including the International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health, Disasters, and the International Journal of Disaster Risk Reduction.

Douglas's work was full of insight and compassion, reflecting his love for the world. Through his outstanding philanthropic research work, he will continue to shine a light on the world and inspire people to contribute to and empower those who are suffering. Douglas gifted us with the essence of his work in his last book "[Advanced Introduction to Disaster Risk Reduction](#)". Humanity can choose to use his wisdom to reduce the risk of disasters, and to empower and enable people to be safe, as Douglas intended. We, as the people he travelled with, can choose to use, build upon and further expand his work, individually and collectively.