

DESIGNWORKS VISIONARY LEADER

Eion Edgar

STRONG SENSE OF DUTY

Business, education, arts and sport. To succeed at leadership level in any one of these is commendable. To stay at the top and give back to all four is outstanding. It is this combination of vision, drive and duty, that has seen Eion Edgar named as New Zealand's Visionary Leader for 2007.

The judges were unanimous it was high-time this proudly Southern man was honoured.

With comments ranging from praise of his business acumen and philanthropy to his sense of duty and leadership, there was nobody else in the running.

To remain such an ongoing vibrant force in business – and elsewhere – proves Edgar has a knack for leadership, operation, foresight and relationships, they said. On top of that, he's a proud New Zealander and a thoroughly decent person lauded by colleagues and competitors alike.

Edgar is chairman of Forsyth Barr, a Dunedin-based firm of sharebrokers and investment bankers with branches nationwide – an expansion process he has overseen. He joined the company in 1972 after a period with Dunedin accounting firms and broking houses in Auckland and London.

He graduated with a Bachelor of Commerce from the University of Otago in 1967 and completed his accounting qualifications the following year. He was awarded a Fellowship of the College of Associated Chartered Accountants in 1996 and was recognised with a Valued Contribution to the Profession Award in 2003.

He is president of the New Zealand Olympic Committee and chair of Queenstown Resort College. His board commitments include roles as director of Martinborough Vineyards Estates, Mr Chips Holdings and Structurflex Group. He is also a trustee of the Arts Foundation of New Zealand, the Central Lakes Trust, the Foundation for Youth Development (formerly Project K), The Halberg Trust and the Skeggs Foundation as well as past president of New Zealand Soccer and the Patron of the Wakatipu Trails Trust.

In 2003, Edgar completed a five-year term as Chancellor of the University of Otago and had a total of 23 years on the University Council. Previously he has been chair of the New Zealand Stock Exchange, a director of the Accident Compensation Corporation and of the Reserve Bank.

In 1995, Edgar was named Dunedin Citizen of the Year for his contribution to the arts, business, education and the sport-



ing community. In the 1996 Queen's Birthday Honours List he received the Companion of the New Zealand Order of Merit, followed in 2003 by the Distinguished Companion of the New Zealand Order of Merit.

Edgar and his wife Jan have made substantial philanthropic gifts; the main ones being \$1 million to the Edgar Sports Centre in Dunedin and \$1 million to the Edgar National Centre for Diabetes.

Alongside these honours and national recognition, Edgar is willing and able to speak out on issues he sees as important to the future of the country.

In his own words (writing in the NZX *Open* magazine) Edgar has expressed concern that New Zealand is hollowing out its economy at the highly skilled level and also at the trades level.

"That this is happening when there is a great opportunity for employment is clearly of concern," he wrote, adding that the solution must lie in the achievements of the country's education system.

"We should set goals to produce students whose knowledge matches the country's natural strengths. It is demonstrably easier to do better at the things in which you excel than to acquire new talents. Hence a principal thrust of education should be vocational – to teach those who will add to our economic strengths," he wrote.

"Obviously time lost in training for necessary skills will have adverse effects on the economy for some time to come. I suspect we will be restrained in our growth while we restore a better balance between our professional and trade skill base and our resources that deal with important social, ethical and political matters."

It is that cross-sector vision which makes Edgar a worthy recipient and a truly visionary leader.