**Chris Rutherford – Life Membership Nomination 2024**

1. Contribution to the sector within the nominee’s paid employment

Chris worked for 25 years in the public sector serving 5 local authorities in the UK and New Zealand. He has lived in NZ for more than 35 years during which time he has made a significant contribution to professionalism and standards in public park management in New Zealand and internationally having been the architect of the Yardstick benchmarking projects established in 2001.

Chris could have developed his concept/idea as a purely commercial product however he saw the value of this to the parks and recreation sector and elected to establish an industry group to bring the project to fruition and partner with Recreation Aotearoa, and later other parks organisations in Canada and Australia and with IFPRA (now WUP) to take the project worldwide. This partnership approach has contributed financially to industry peak bodies in NZ, Australia and Canada over its lifetime as well as driving improvements in knowledge, data and best practice parks management and operations.

The Yardstick project, now 20 years old has proven to be sustainable and continues to provide essential benchmarked metrics and promote best practice in the public parks and recreation sector and is annually undertaken by local authority members in NZ, Australia and Canada.

<https://www.yardstickglobal.org>

Often at the leading edge of industry innovation Chris tackles the hard to do with a pragmatic team approach. In 2015 he again was the catalyst for the development of an industry wide Contract Specification project, a project that was unlikely to have happened without a strong influence such as Chris. This project developed a suite of grounds maintenance specifications for the public and private sector to avoid the need to “reinvent the wheel” each time a grounds maintenance contract specification or levels of service documents were required.

<https://www.nzrecreation.org.nz/Site/Parks/quality-toolkit.aspx>

1. Contribution to the sector in a voluntary or non-paid capacity

A member of both the initial NAMS (National Asset Management) Group and acknowledged for his role in the development of the early NAMS asset management manuals he also instigated and served on the PRAMS (Parks and Recreation Asset Management Systems) group that developed the industry wide condition grading manual which is still in use today.

Chris has been a member of NZ Recreation Association, now known as Recreation Aotearoa since inception and served on the National Executive (Board) from 1993 to 2000.

Chris has been actively involved in IFPRA (now World Urban Parks) during his career. He served as  Deputy Chairperson of World Urban Parks  from 2018- 2021 and previous to this was Chairperson (2008-2018) of the Asia Pacific Region of World Urban Parks and has served on many industry bodies including the Recreation Aotearoa Executive, National Asset Management Steering Group (NAMS) and the Parks and Recreation Asset Management Steering Group (PRAMS).

A keen sportsperson Chris played club cricket and representative hockey for Dorset, the West of England, Tauranga and Bay of Plenty and continued to play premier hockey well into his 40’s. He has coached many age group teams for Canterbury and Tauranga before coaching at a high level the Midlands under 21 Franchise and the Canterbury Women’s team. A number of women’s NZ Black Sticks have been coached by Chris in their development years.

In the past 10 years Chris has represented NZ Hockey at an international Masters level in the World Cup in the UK finishing with a bronze medal and other international tournaments in Singapore and NZ. He demonstrates how recreation can be continued into older age as an active player now in his 60s.

As a sports administrator Chris is a past Chairperson of the Karori Sports Club in Wellington and a past committee member of Otumoetai Hockey Club and Bethlehem Cricket Clubs in Tauranga.

Chris continues to be a catalyst in the public parks sector both professionally and as a volunteer.

1. Length of service to the sector

Chris has worked in the area of public parks operations and management from the age of 16 when he left school in Poole, Dorset UK. Working for 5 local authorities and a public parks contracting company before establishing, what is now the largest dedicated public parks consulting company in New Zealand and probably Australasia.

Chris came to NZ on a yearlong job exchange set up by Wellington City Council with a brief to manage the Botanic Garden and establish a training environment for arborists. He stayed and has left a legacy of influences in the industry.

As a qualified and experienced arborist he played a role in the establishment of the first arboricultural training facility in NZ some 30 years ago which is now the most respected arborist training facility in NZ based out of Wintec in Hamilton.

Chris was previously Manager of Parks and Facilities with Tauranga City Council, where he was responsible for the management, policy development and planning for parks, pools and community facilities. He has worked for five Councils in the UK and NZ including Tauranga City, Wellington City Council followed by stints with Fujitsu NZ and Maunsell/AECOM. Chris has significant practical experience in managing parks and community assets including Test Cricket Grounds, national sports facilities and community buildings.

Chris has demonstrated his professionalism, empathy and industry care in many ways and where a person is in need has been the first to reach out and offer a helping hand. Not known to shy away from difficult issues Chris strives to do the right thing irrespective of what the personal cost maybe to himself.

Chris having experienced the trauma and sadness of being made suddenly redundant (and setting up Xyst Ltd as a consequence) has provided discrete assistance to many industry professionals who have found themselves in a similar position. This includes a number of individuals who have been employed with Xyst Ltd while to help re-establish themselves in the industry.

Xyst Ltd was established by Chris 22 years ago and has grown to be the largest public parks consulting company in NZ employing over 30 people. Xyst has been exporting its expertise regularly into Canada, Australia and at times Scandinavia enabling the skills of Kiwi parks professionals to be shared with others across our boarders.

<https://xyst.co.nz>

Chris is held in very high regard by his peers and continues to be a catalysis for the public parks and recreation sector.

1. Relevant qualifications, awards and recognition gained by nominee

Chris became one of the first New Zealanders to be awarded the status of “Accredited NZRA Recreation Professional”.  In 2007, he was awarded the Ian Galloway Memorial Cup to recognise excellence and outstanding personal contribution to the wider parks industry and, in 2014, was awarded the status of “Certified International Parks Professional”.  In 2016, the NZRA bestowed the title of “Fellow” to Chris to recognise his industry leadership and commitment over many years.

He has held a number of influential positions which link to industry improvement projects.

Chris holds the following professional qualifications:

* Diploma in Recreational Management (ILAM Diploma),Loughborough University of Recreation and Technology.
* Royal Forestry Society Certificate in Arboriculture, Surrey County Certificate in Arboriculture
* National Certificate in Horticulture (Arboriculture), Merrist Wood College of Horticulture

Awards received:

ARPro (Accredited Recreational Professional) awarded July 2006 ongoing

CIPP (Certified International Parks Professional) awarded 2014 ongoing

Recreation Aotearoa (NZRA) Fellow bestowed in 2016

Ian Galloway Cup recipient 2007 – for excellence and personal contribution

1. Degree of innovation or uniqueness of any contribution made

Having been the architect of the Yardstick benchmarking project Chris has been invited to speak about the projects outputs around the world including in Canada, Russia, Finland, Denmark, UK, Australia, South Africa, Norway, Ireland, Portugal and France. From these speaking engagements opportunities have arisen to launch the project in other countries especially Canada and Australia.

Whenever the opportunity has arisen to make Yardstick available to the public sector in another country Chris has always linked with an industry body to ensure that the sector it is designed to serve continues to be able to influence its content and outputs ahead of striving for exclusive commercial return.

Practical benchmarking of public parks services is now available for a modest annual subscription to parks organisations in several countries. The result is a sharing of information and a drive toward best practice and constant improvement.

Chris has showcased NZ to international Parks Managers by establishing “best practice tours” which provided opportunities for parks managers from overseas and NZ to have a practical review of some of the good and innovative parks operations in NZ. Having established these tours, essentially as an alternative to fixed location conferences he enabled the industry body to pick them and evolve them further. Chris is an innovator and has the drive and ability to develop ideas into a reality that improves the wider industry.

Having been commissioned several times to develop public parks maintenance specifications Chris had the foresight to realise that there was an opportunity to develop an industry wide contract specification for the maintenance of parks and also as a measure for inhouse operations to use to establish appropriate levels of service. Chris developed a working group of large maintenance contractors, Council Officers and specialist grounds maintenance advisors to work collaboratively together to achieve a successful outcome.  This has provided an option for Councils and other Public Bodies to use the national specification as a base document where parks operations are being contracted out or alternatively where internal standards are being implemented.

Chris could have developed this as a commercial opportunity for his own companies gain but instead chose to work with the industry using his influence to bring a team together and gifting the outcome to our industry body so it is available freely to all currently.

1. The impact of the work of the nominee

It is a testament to Chris that many of the people who now work with him at Xyst have either previously worked with him in another capacity or got to know him through his industry roles.

His legacy will be that he made a difference.

1. The output of their opinion and the leadership role they have taken such as research, discussion papers and contributions to industry training.

Leadership roles include:

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| **Organisation** | **Position** | **From (date)** | **To (date) / current** | **Paid or voluntary** |
| World Urban Parks | Deputy leader - elected | August 2018 | August 2021 | Voluntary |
| World Urban Parks (previously known as Ifpra) | Asia pacific leader - elected | 2008 | August 2018 | Voluntary |
| Tauranga Racecourse Reserve | Independent community representative – appointed by Tauranga City Council | October 2018 | Current | Voluntary |
| Recreation Aotearoa (previously NZ Recreation Association) | National executive member - elected | 1993 | 2000 | Voluntary |
| National Asset Management steering group | Industry representative for parks industry | 2000 approximately | 2002 approximately | Voluntary |
| PRAMS - Parks and Recreation Asset Management steering group | Instigating leader and member | 2000 approximately | 2002 project completed approximately | Voluntary |
| Yardstick Benchmarks Industry Steering Group | Participant | 2002 | Current | Voluntary |
| Bethlehem College Cricket Club | Committee member | 2012 approximately | 2015 approximately | Voluntary |
| Otumoetai Hockey Club, Tauranga | Men’s Club Captain, committee member | 1994 approximately  2002 approximately | 1997 approximately  2007 approximately | Voluntary |
| Karori Sports Club | Chairman | 1988 approximately | 2000 approximately | Voluntary |