

# School of Environment Cumberland Lecture 2017



## Lesley Head, Professor, University of Melbourne

**Lesley Head** is Redmond Barry Distinguished Professor and Head of the School of Geography at The University of Melbourne, Australia. Lesley is a geographer who works on the cultural dimensions of environmental issues, including climate change. Her insights into human-environment relations have been developed by combining palaeoecological, archaeological and cultural geographical perspectives. She was King Carl XVI Gustaf Visiting Professor of Environmental Science, Sweden (2005-06) and an ARC Australian Laureate Fellow at the University of Wollongong (2009-14). Her books include *Second Nature. The history and implications of Australia as Aboriginal landscape* (2000), *Cultural Landscapes and Environmental Change* (2000), *Backyard. Nature and Culture in Suburban Australia* (2007), *Ingrained: a human biogeography of wheat* (2012) and *Hope and Grief in the Anthropocene* (2016).

Her main current research project is 'Sustainability and climate change adaptation: unlocking the potential of ethnic diversity'.

## Hope and grief in the Anthropocene: environmental thinking for uncertain times

The Anthropocene is a potentially catastrophic age demanding new ways of thinking about relations between humans and the nonhuman world.

In Australia, we are both strong contributors to climate change and particularly vulnerable to its impacts. I argue that preservationist responses to environmental challenges, dominant in colonial settler contexts, are hampered by grief for a pristine and certain past. I will outline the characteristics of environmental thought and practice more appropriate to life on an increasingly volatile earth saturated with human influence. The Australasian combination of distinctive biophysical environments, indigenous heritage and presence, and the diversity of migrant experiences, provides cultural resources with which to approach the future. Scholars like Kenneth Cumberland recognised this distinctiveness, and I invite the audience to contemplate Aotearoa New Zealand comparisons.

**Monday 27 November 2017**

**5-6pm**

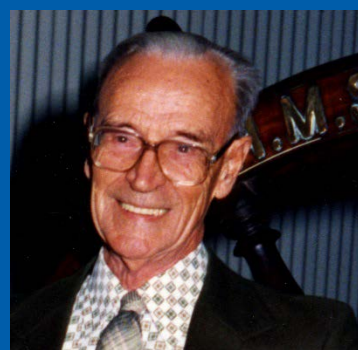
**Case Room 302-G20**

**23 Symonds Street**

Reception follows in Science Building 302,

Level 6 breakout space

**6-7pm**



This annual lecture series is named after Kenneth Brailey Cumberland, Head of Auckland University's Geography Department and renowned for his ground-breaking 1981 documentary series *Landmarks*.