



OFFICE OF THE PRIME MINISTER'S SCIENCE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Professor Sir Peter Gluckman, KNZM FRSNZ FMedSci FRS

Chief Science Advisor

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Sir Peter Gluckman on the death of Sir Paul Callaghan FRS FRSNZ

New Zealand has suffered a tremendous loss with the passing of Sir Paul Callaghan. Paul has been our most distinguished public scientist and in the world of molecular physics has been a giant. He received much international recognition for his research, including being elected a Fellow of the Royal Society of London. He made major contributions to the complex field of nanoscience, which involves studying properties of substances at the scale of the individual atom. He is particularly acknowledged for his research which has provided a fundamental understanding the properties of fluids and colloids using the technique of magnetic resonance — a science and technology to which he contributed enormously and which has had considerable practical application.

Paul believed in collaborative science and mentorship, and in the encouragement of young scientists. As founding director of the MacDiarmid Institute for Advanced Materials and Nanotechnology, he showed that erudite basic science could be combined with practical innovation and public outreach. He was a strong advocate for interdisciplinary research, and for the need to have strong basic science married with applied science and commercial application — he demonstrated this by founding Magritek Ltd.

He has also provided leadership to the scientific community as President of the Royal Society of New Zealand.

Over the last decade, Paul had become our most public and most recognised scientist. And he did so in a way that led him to be warmly received by all. He was able to talk about science and the philosophy of science broadly and in an accessible and entertaining manner. He used radio, books and public lectures to project his belief that New Zealand could become a better and richer place through science. He projected his conviction that New Zealand was not using its latent innovative capacity well enough. He was a strong advocate for the physical sciences and for the potential of advanced manufacturing that would arise.

He received many scientific and civic honours: he was conferred a Principal Companion of the New Zealand Order of Merit, later redesignated as knighthood; he was recognised as KiwiBank New Zealander of the year, and awarded the Sir Peter Blake medal.

But he exposed his personal values and beliefs to the public too. His courage in telling the world about his battle with cancer was extraordinary, and even while he was terminally ill he was battling hard to promote a better New Zealand.

Paul was a special person — special to all New Zealanders, but particularly so to his colleagues and friends. He had a passion and integrity that made his contribution to bettering New Zealand science and innovation incomparable.

The whole scientific community joins with me in expressing our sadness and best wishes to Paul's wife Miang, his family, and to his many scientific colleagues and friends.

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