

# Biddy's Graduation

12 November 2010

Dear Yvonne and Trustees

I am pleased to inform you that I recently graduated at a wonderful ceremony at the Hotel New York in Rotterdam, and am now a Master of Urban Management and Development. Hotel New York is a landmark within Rotterdam, and was the headquarters of the Holland-America Shipping Line. The site where the hotel is built was the spot where many Europeans left Europe to migrate to the United States of America, right up until the last passenger liner left in 1950. It was a fitting place to honour and farewell the 86 participants in my course – see pictures!

You will also be pleased to know that I graduated with distinction, and the highest mark awarded within my year. My thesis, which dealt with housing development on Maori land in the high-growth Western Bay of Plenty sub-region, was very well-received and I was awarded a mark of 91% for my research work. I was very happy with both of these outcomes. Naturally, the thesis acknowledges the support of the Yvonne A.M Smith Charitable Trust, and expresses my gratitude to Yvonne herself for supporting me to undertake this course of study.

As one of the two student representatives for the course, I contributed to Academic Board meetings throughout the year and was also invited to give a speech at the graduation ceremony to the graduands, family, and friends. I took that opportunity to remind my classmates of the need to keep communicating with each other, now that we have built a network which spans so many countries, people, and disciplines.

Now that the course is over, I have been invited to work for three months as a Teaching Assistant at the Institute for Housing and Urban Development Studies to deliver an e-learning course about innovations in urban finance, and to travel to Ghana to help deliver a course about land reforms in West Africa. I have also been awarded a short-term position as an Artist-in-Residence at Hommes Gallery, in Rotterdam, beginning in November. I have also been encouraged to turn my thesis into a couple of academic articles to submit to journals, and will get this completed in the next few months. An earlier academic article – which I developed as part of the background research for my thesis - was published last month, by the Centre for Sustainable Cities in Wellington. Depending on employment opportunities, I may return to New Zealand in May 2011.

My short-term goal is to use the next six months to cement my connections here in Europe and to search for a new job – location so far unknown! I have decided that I would like to work to implement complex urban projects, and I would like my next job to develop my project management skills to complement my knowledge of urban issues and policy. I anticipate that this job will be a junior position, but aim to be working in a senior position developing and implementing urban projects by the beginning of 2013. I am currently looking at jobs in the UK and Australia, where there are a number of large-scale urban

projects, as well as in New Zealand where my long-term interest lies. I have been following the developments of the Auckland 'Super-City' debate, and there are sure to be some opportunities to contribute my new skills to implementing the 'Super-City' project. In addition, the recent earthquake in Christchurch presents some major challenges to urban managers to repair and rebuild the city. I have also decided that I am very interested in working in the Pacific Islands, and aim use some of the knowledge gained through this Masters degree to work with our neighbours in the Pacific, using New Zealand as a base and potentially working with New Zealand-based Pacific Islanders to help finance urban infrastructure projects in their home countries.



I would like to reiterate my thanks to both the Yvonne A.M. Smith Charitable Trust and Yvonne herself for your generous support of my study in the Netherlands. Without a doubt, this year has been one of the most important, inspiring, and exciting times of my life. At different points I have been challenged, worried, or stressed, but I am very happy with what I have achieved – with your help – and am optimistic about my ability to make a difference in our New Zealand cities in the coming years. I also look forward to making a contribution to the Yvonne A.M. Smith Alumni programme in whatever way I can.

Gratefully yours,  
Brigid Livesey