

Economic Society of Australia Awards 2022

The ESA Distinguished Public Policy Fellow Award honours a distinguished Australian economist for their contribution to the application of economics to public policy.

The Women in Economics Network nominates **Karen Chester** for this honour.

Throughout her distinguished career as an economist, Karen Chester has contributed her expertise across a range of public policy areas and played a role in some of the most significant Australian public policy reforms over recent decades

Karen began her career as an economist in the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, and then served in several senior roles within the Commonwealth Treasury. While at Treasury, Karen became the first woman and the youngest person to be promoted to Treasury's Senior Executive. Her work at the time included contributing the seminal FitzGerald Report on National Saving.

Karen gained CEO of Access Economics, Partner at Access Capital Advisers, and Partner at Mercer where she advised some of the world's largest superannuation and pension funds. She has also had directorships on several Australian infrastructure company boards and is a graduate of the Australian Institute of Company Directors.

Bringing these private sector industry insights to public policy, Karen returned to the public sector as a Commissioner at the Australian Productivity Commission in 2013 and served as the Deputy Chair of the Commission from 2016. During this time, she chaired an expert panel's capability review of the Australian Securities Investment Commission (ASIC) – the world's first capability review of a regulator. In 2019, Karen was appointed as Deputy Chair and Commissioner at ASIC. her current appointment.

Across her various public policy appointments, she has led high-level inquiries across a range of critical issues, including GST distribution, Australia's superannuation system, overcoming Indigenous disadvantage, Indigenous educational outcomes, housing, intellectual property arrangements, and natural disasters. She has contributed to the economics profession more widely through various advisory and ambassador roles, including serving on the Advisory Board of the Melbourne Institute and as an Alumni Ambassador for the UQ Faculty of Business, Economics and Law.

Karen holds a Bachelor in Economics with first class Honours from the University of Queensland. In recognition of her exceptional leadership and contribution to economics, in 2017 the University of Queensland awarded Karen an honorary doctorate in Economics.

Karen has generously given her time, mentorship, intellect and guidance to the Women in Economics Network in Australia, across a range of the network's initiatives. She has demonstrated continues to be an inspiring and supportive professional role model the next generation of female economists.