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World Netball Congress 2021

Service Award Citation



Citation for Ruth Aitken ONZM

Netball New Zealand

Ruth Aitken has won the Netball World Cup for New Zealand both on the court and off it, but her impact on netball – particularly in coaching – has radiated throughout the world.

A Silver Fern in the team who won the 1979 world tournament, Ruth then became one of New Zealand's most successful sporting coaches. She guided the Ferns for nine years, during which they won the 2003 Netball World Cup, back-to-back Commonwealth Games gold medals, and the 2009 World Netball Series.

Moving into her role as Netball New Zealand's coaching director, Ruth helped set a new direction for coaching at every level of the game, markedly increasing the number of coaches in New Zealand. She was also a national selector for three years.

But the reach of her influence goes way beyond Aotearoa. Ruth spent three years coaching in Singapore, shaping the success and development of their national team.

She's been a member of the INF Coaching Advisory Panel and she continues to help Netball New Zealand with the Pacific Sporting Partnership, delivering netball training to Fiji, the Cook Islands, Samoa and Tonga.

Ruth's professionalism, integrity and meticulous approach has also been in demand with other sports. She is a member of the NZ Sports Tribunal, that rules on a range of sporting disputes.

But her heart is never far from netball. Ruth was a coach mentor for the successful New Zealand U21s at the 2017 Netball World Youth Cup, and has previously been the performance manager in the Waikato Bay of Plenty Zone.

This latest accolade sits alongside being made a life member of Netball New Zealand and an Officer of the NZ Order of Merit for her services to netball.