Rural leader bridged politics

John Walter Legoe
Farmer, local government leader
Born: July 26, 1951; Kingston SE
Died: December 8, 2005; Adelaide

John Walter Legoe, the eldest of three sons of John and Edna Legoe, was universally admired through the various stages of his life for his infectious good humour.

Growing up on the family farm in the Kingston SE region, he spent his early years at the local school before attending Scotch College, Adelaide, from 1964 to 1968, distinguishing himself there in rowing and what is now called "networking".

After school, he learned some real life experiences under tough bosses, while jackarooping for the Scottish Australian Pastoral Co in the Upper South-East and the New England region of New South Wales. He enrolled at the Glenormiston Agricultural College in Victoria where he studied farm business management, while honing his networking skills.

Next stop was the United States as part of the Minnesota International Agricultural Exchange Program where he worked on farms and studied at the University of Minnesota. Continuing his travels in Europe, he met Gayle Wines, whom he subsequently married.

Back home at Kingston, Gayle and John produced two children, Sarah and Nick, while John worked on the farm and Gayle at the local hospital. John Legoe’s “political career” began when he joined the board of the Kingston Hospital, becoming its nominee on the first board of the South East Regional Health Service.

He joined the Kingston Council in 1993, serving as council chairman from 1996 to 2001, and played a vital role in many local improvements. He was elected president of the South East Local Government association, became chairman of the Greater Green Triangle Regional Organisation and joined the Local Government Association state executive, all in 2000. He was elected LGA vice-president the following year and president in October, 2003.

His many roles included serving on the Natural Resource Management Council, the Australian Land Council and the Australian Local Government Association Board. A highlight was his work in promoting strategic collaboration between state and local government, culminating in him signing a groundbreaking State-Local Government Relations agreement with Premier Mike Rann.

Highlights of his LGA presidency included being advised by Prime Minister John Howard of a $26 million boost to local road funding and leading the LGA through major legislation being passed through Parliament involving the complete overhaul of local government electoral provisions and reforms to the ratings and financial governance arrangements.

John received huge support from his wife, Gayle, even when her own workload was very demanding. He is survived by Gayle and children Sarah and Nick and brothers Peter and Scott.