

OBITUARY

Dr REG TAYLOR, 1930 – 2005



Dr Reg Taylor – a distinguished soil scientist, a long-time officer of CSIRO, Fellow of the Australian Academy of Technological Science and Engineering, and an inveterate inventor – died in Adelaide on 12th September 2005, aged 75.

Born in Adelaide on 9 August 1930, Reg attended Christian Brothers College and was awarded a BSc in physics by the University of Adelaide in 1951. He then joined the Defence Standards Laboratory where he worked until 1954. In 1954 he was appointed to CSIRO Division of Building Research in Melbourne, then moved in 1956 to be an Experimental Officer in CSIRO Division of Soils in Adelaide. Over the next 38 years he worked in Adelaide and his research contributed much to the knowledge of metal oxides in soils. He was awarded an MSc at the Waite Agriculture Research Institute in 1962 and rose through the CSIRO to become a Chief Research Scientist by the time he retired in 1992. Reg was elected as a Fellow of the Australian Academy of Technological Sciences and Engineering in 1989 and served as Honorary Secretary of the South Australian Division of the Academy from 1991 to 1994. In 2001 he was awarded the Centenary Medal to mark the important contributions he had made to science in Australia.

By synthesizing metal oxides and by studying their natural occurrence in soils, Reg's work led to a better understanding of how these important soil minerals form and how they react. In 1981, in recognition of his achievements in soil science, Reg was awarded a DSc degree by the Catholic University of Louvain, in Belgium. His thesis for this degree was entitled "Soil Oxides of Iron and Manganese" and consisted of an annotated series of pioneering papers that he had published in journals of soil science and mineralogy. His work earned him a distinguished international reputation, as was demonstrated by his numerous invited contributions to books on soils and minerals, his invited participation in

international conferences, and his collaborative work with distinguished scientists from other countries.

Leading on from his work on metal oxides, Reg made numerous novel studies on transition metal alkoxides formed with glycerol, which enabled the chemistry and the structures of these compounds to be established and demonstrated the medical uses of several of the compounds.

Always keen to see his research applied, Dr Taylor generated many patents covering such diverse areas as water purification, pharmaceutical goods, cosmetics, mineral exploration and minesite rehabilitation. Recently, his work on transdermal administration of vitamin C has been commercialised.

He was a highly motivated, bold, innovative and a stimulating experimentalist. To work with him was great fun because he was never afraid to challenge current thinking. Scientists will miss a colleague from whom they learnt much. He was a powerful champion to people who needed help and was always immensely loyal to his profession and colleagues.

Reg had a strong faith and was active, together with his wife Margaret, in his local Catholic parish activities. As an active member of the St Vincent De Paul Society for over 40 years, he served as President of the Kingswood Conference for 5 years and later, after moving to Somerton Park, as Secretary of the Glenelg Conference until his death.

Reg was also an active Probus club member, and in the last few years of his life, despite increasing physical pain and disability he was an enthusiastic and much loved and hard working crew member on the yacht 'Seven Seas'. In all these extra-curricular activities Reg sought to serve and lift the spirit others, with little or no thought for himself.

Reg is survived by his wife Margaret, six children, twelve grandchildren and one great-grandchild.

Rob Fitzpatrick

(with assistance from Phil Slade, Doug Kneebone, Brian Sherman and staff in CSIRO)