

# Richard a salt-of-the-earth farmer

## **RICHARD HEATH DOUDLE**

**Farmer and community leader**

**Born:** May 18, 1934; Port Lincoln

**Died:** July 24, 2018; Hahndorf

**R**ICHARD Doudle was a leading community figure on the Eyre Peninsula – and a landcare advocate who changed the area's agricultural practices.

Educated at Coultla Primary, Wudinna Area School and Prince Alfred College, Richard was raised by parents Wilf and Alister on a farm near Coultla. The property had significant salt-affected areas caused by rising water tables and previous land clearance.

Years before it became



popular, Richard recognised that rehabilitating the saline soil was the best way to reclaim farming land.

With Linnea and his longtime sharefarming friend Neville Parker, he fenced off salt

areas and planted native species. He fenced creek lines to establish windbreaks and areas for birds to live, all at his own expense and well before government landcare subsidies were introduced.

Each year, he marked a new area for reclamation, while cropping his farmland and removing sheep from the fragile soils. As the property improved, his efforts inspired other local farmers who began using similar methods to revitalise their own properties.

Richard received a Centenary Medal for his efforts in landcare and his extensive additional community involvement. He was Port Lincoln's Australia Day Citizen of the

Year in 2002. He declined the offer of a Medal of the Order of Australia in 2003 because he did not want to be singled out above others.

Richard believed that to be part of any community, you had to be involved – and he was happy to step forward and help if he thought his contribution could make a difference.

He was a district councillor for Lower Eyre Peninsula and took leadership roles in many local and district organisations, from schools and hospitals to churches and freemasonry.

The community gave back when Linnea was gravely ill in hospital in Adelaide after giving birth. Richard's neighbours

and friends helped with the crop and the farm while he spent weeks by her bedside until she recovered.

Richard poured his energies into restoring the historic 1854 St Matthew's church at Poonindie, just north of Port Lincoln. When the 2005 Wangary fire swept through, everyone was amazed that it narrowly spared the church.

Richard was heard to wryly remark that there was no way it was going to burn down given all the time, effort, fundraising and government grant requests that he and the community had put into it.

Richard is survived by Linnea and children Rachel, Bryce, Michael and Chris.