

# Adviser reshaped Australian farming

**J**IM grew up in Essendon and as a boarder at Geelong Grammar excelled at football, athletics and cricket. On school holidays he helped out at his grandparent's farm at Acheron in Central Victoria.

He met his future wife, Wendy, while studying for his Agricultural Science degree at the University of Melbourne.

Jim's first irrigation research and advisory work was close enough to Melbourne for him to play league football matches for Essendon as well as City United at Goulburn.

In 1963 he focused on farm management as a consultant in Australia and in Thailand and Indonesia.

During the next 12 years he was well recognised in the industry and as convener of the consultancy section of the Australian Institute of Agricultural Science. He completed his masters degree and in 1973 became the senior lecturer in farm management economics at Melbourne University.

In 1976 he was recruited as director of the SA Department of Agriculture and Fisheries, the first from outside SA's public service since 1905. The position was later retitled Director General.

Jim's wide industry expertise enabled him to make many changes to improve the department's professional services. His innovations in corporate planning were adopted in other areas of the public

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service. For farmers, he upgraded economics services, and delegated management to the regions to make them more responsive to local issues.

Research work became better co-ordinated and was funded according to its relevance to the economic development of rural industries.

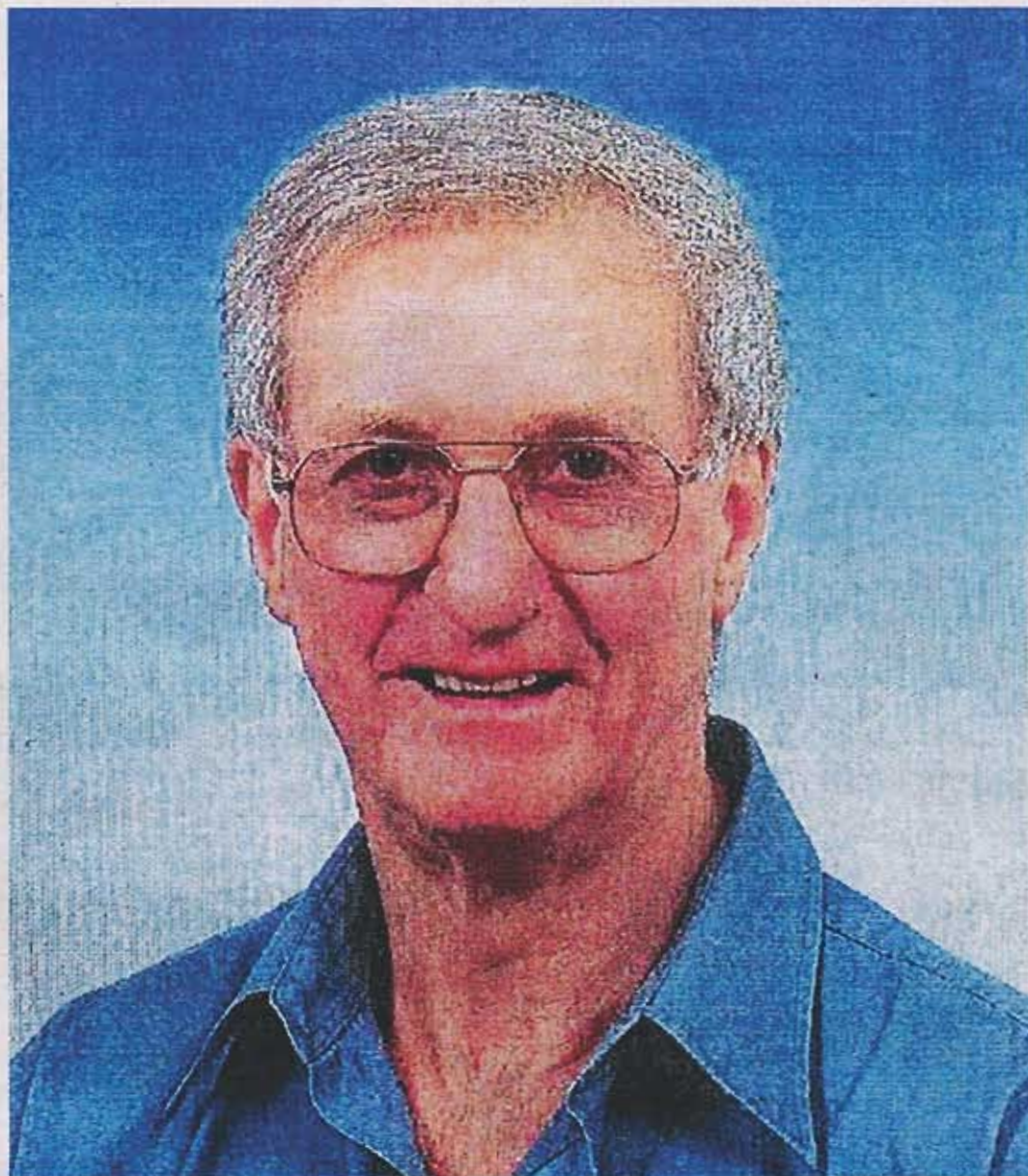
An example was the Integrated Irrigated Crop Management Service at Loxton where on-farm advice brought together soil and horticultural science with irrigation technology.

These initiatives to bring farmers up to date with the latest scientific and technological information became a major thrust of departmental policy.

Jim worked closely with the late Keith Lewis, head of the E&WS, to introduce pipe-lining of all open irrigation channels, greatly enhancing water use efficiency in SA.

The policy was adopted Australia-wide in 2007 as part of the \$10 billion proposal to upgrade Australia's irrigation water efficiency.

South Australia led the world in dryland farming and had begun exporting its technology, along with SA's spec-



## MILESTONES

**JAMES CARVEL McCOLL AO**

**Agriculture leader**

**Born:** June 17, 1933; Melbourne

**Died:** October 5, 2013; Adelaide

**Education:** Geelong Grammar,

University of Melbourne, MAgSc

**Achievements:** Director General, SA Agriculture

**Family:** Survived by Wendy, children Kim, Shaun and Damien, and five grandchildren

ialised farming equipment, to Libya in 1972.

Jim saw the opportunity to further develop such exports, and formed an Overseas Projects Branch.

He convinced the State Government to form a government owned private company, SAGRIC International, which handled many projects in Africa and Asia before being sold as a going concern in 2006.

In 1981-2, Jim was a member of the influential Balderstone Committee which recommended far-reaching changes to Australia's national agricultural scene, particularly through the setting of exchange rates by market forces, and the reduced protection of agriculture and tariff barriers.

Jim resigned from the department in 1985 but continued to work at the national

level on agricultural policy.

He was Industries Assistance Commissioner from 1982 to 1994, and Royal Commissioner into Grain Storage, Handling and Transport. He chaired various national reviews; of agricultural education, fisheries management and the Rural Adjustment Schemes.

As a research fellow with the CSIRO's Policy and Economics Research Unit, he and the University of Adelaide's Professor Mike Young's paper on Australia's institutional arrangements for water won a Eureka Prize in 2005.

He was presented with many honours and awards, most notably as an Officer of the Order of Australia (AO) last year for his services to the primary industries.

- Peter Trumble, former deputy director of Agriculture