



Patrick Joseph O'Shaughnessy

22 August 1936 – 16 June 2022

Research Forester in Forest Hydrology: Pat O'Shaughnessy died in Canberra in June 2022. He had moved there from his beloved Yarra Valley with Anne to be close to his children after a diagnosis of terminal cancer. With his passing we have lost a major practitioner in forest hydrology field research. Data from his work has underpinned major and continuing research efforts in industry and Universities.

Pat was born in 1936 to Margaret and Peter O'Shaughnessy as one of five children and grew up in Caulfield and Balwyn. After matriculating from Xavier College, he attended The University of Melbourne and the Australian Forestry School in Canberra, from which he graduated in 1960. He then moved to Tasmania where he worked on forest mappings in the Arthur Range in the south-west wilderness area, and district work at Geeveston and Queenstown (managing Huon pine forests). This developed in him a love of Tasmania - he walked the Overland Track many times and climbed Tasmanian peaks when he had the chance. He was a Rotary Fellow from Tasmania to the USA in 1966. If our recollections are correct, he also distinguished himself in an automotive sense by having a second-hand Delage sports car (his understated verdict - "totally unsuited to Tasmanian roads").

In 1965 Pat was recruited as a research forester by the Melbourne and Metropolitan Board of Works (MMBW). This involved a relocation to Melbourne. He recalled, with amusement, that the ad for the job was in "Situations Vacant", alongside truck-drivers and labourers. It was here in Melbourne in 1970 that he met a young teacher, Anne Kennedy, at the wedding of mutual friend. They were married a year later and settled down in the Croydon area. As well as having three children (Clare, Adrian, and Stephen), Anne achieved renown as a Croydon Councillor and Mayor.

Pat's recruitment by the MMBW was the result of a policy decision to undertake serious forest hydrology research. In 1960 the State Development Committee recommended logging on Melbourne's water catchments. This was strongly opposed by the MMBW. At the time protecting the water supply catchments was the principal barrier protecting public health. There was also limited evidence that regrowth mountain ash forests used more water than the old growth forests. Melbourne's increasing demand for water resulted in logging being excluded from more areas of State Forest. To resolve the dispute between logging and water supply interests the State Government directed the MMBW to conduct comprehensive and well-funded research in catchment hydrology.



Thus, a hitherto languishing paired-catchment project (“Coranderrk”) was resuscitated. In this, a “control” was designated, and two other catchments were subjected to various levels of logging. In 1967/68 the research program was invigorated. New gauging weirs were built at Coranderrk, rainfall and weather stations were installed and a network of soil moisture access holes installed. Professional and data collection staff were appointed, and appropriate MMBW Management Committees were established. Subsequently this research work was extended to the “North Maroondah” project in which various configurations of logging and thinning were trialled. A larger catchment was also “strip-thinned” in a joint project with the then Forests Commission Victoria to see how much additional water could be gained. Patrick was substantially responsible for the direction and administration of these field projects. The MMBW assembled a top-class team of scientists to process and analyse the experimental data together with the historical data from the water supply catchments that had been impacted by the 1939 fire. A major series of reports were published which are viewed as fundamental reference resources today. Pat became Chair of the Australian Forestry Council Research Working Group into Catchment Hydrology, as well as part-time lecturer for The University of Melbourne and RMIT.

The advent of such high-quality data (coupled with Pat’s amiable nature and ability to find a way through a large organisation) led to a substantial involvement by Australian Universities. The work was also taken up by the Cooperative Research Centre for Catchment Hydrology. Ultimately substantial logging was deemed unacceptable on political grounds, but the work has underpinned current and future thinking on the future of Melbourne’s catchments. More latterly, the research momentum gained has allowed evaluation of the impacts of both major fires and climate-change on water harvesting by Melbourne.

As well as research, Pat’s environmental knowledge caused him to have leading roles in various environmental studies including a proposed “Yarra Brae” storage, the Thomson Dam, the development of State Policy for the Timber Industry Strategy, and the Victorian Code of Forest Practice. He was also a Board Member of the West Gippsland Catchment Management Authority.

Ultimately the MMBW was dissolved by the Government and the Melbourne Water Corporation took over the assets. Priorities were altered and, in 1993, Pat thought it was an appropriate time to retire. Since he was no longer working in the forest, he and Anne purchased a house high on a hill at Yarra Junction so that he could look over the Yarra Valley and the Donna Buang Range. After some years they then moved up-river



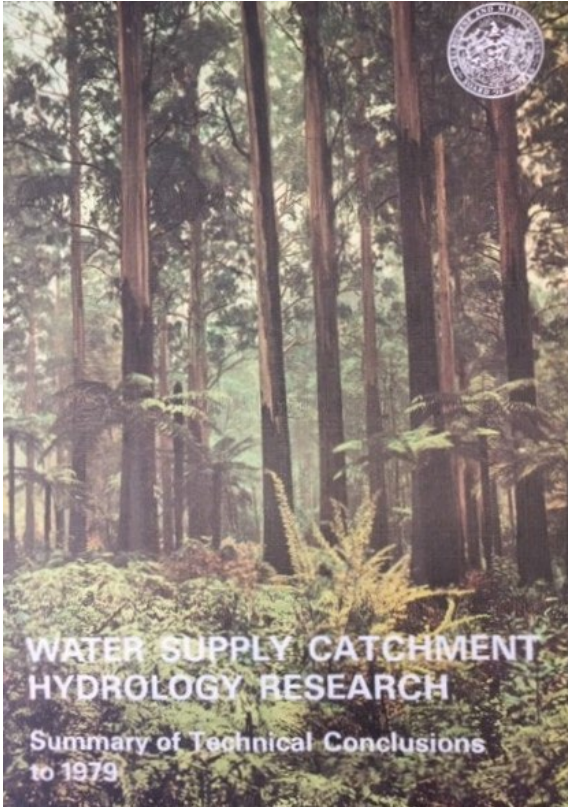
to Warburton. Here, Pat was active in the University of the Third Age, a Probus Club, the Catholic Church, and many community activities. He was generous with his deep knowledge of forestry, mountain ash, and the history of water harvesting and would often lead walking groups looking at these. This was recognised by an Australia Day Award for services to local conservation. Pat kept up his wide interest in forestry by involvement in the Institute of Foresters (now Forestry Australia), serving as State and National Secretary; for this he was recognised as a Fellow of that organisation. Pat and Anne were at Lake St Clair in Tasmania just a few days before they received the diagnosis of terminal cancer five weeks before his death

Pat is survived by Anne, children Clare, Adrian, and Steven, their partners, and four grand-children. His siblings have predeceased him.

The Obituary was written by **Leon Bren** and **John Langford**. Leon was a forest hydrologist with the Forests Commission Victoria and John was a hydrologist with the MMBW at the time much of this work was undertaken.



The young Pat.



One of the many research reports, with Pat as a major contributor. The work achieved new standards of reporting in world hydrology.

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