

# KEVIN WAREING

23 August 1937 – 23 February 2023.

**By:** Barrie Dexter, Arthur Webb, David Williams, Dave Flinn, Bob Smith, Peter Langley with input from the Wareing family and friends



Forests Service Executive - Richard Rawson Dave Flinn David Holmes Kevin Wareing (missing Gary Morgan)



Kevin Wareing - Manager Forest Commerce Branch



Kevin Wareing lecturer at the Victorian School of Forestry Creswick

Kevin James Wareing was born in Tullibigeal (population 200) in Central West NSW and subsequently completed secondary schooling at Frankston (Vic) High School.

Kevin attended the Victorian School of Forestry (VSF) Creswick from 1955-57 graduating as Dux in his final year. He subsequently qualified for the degree of Bachelor of Science in Forestry, University of Melbourne and Master of Forestry, Yale University, USA.

Kevin’s long and diverse professional career spanned a number of areas including field operations, lecturing at the VSF, senior managerial positions in forest management planning and commercial operations in the Forests Commission Victoria and ensuing amalgamated departments, and as a forest consultant in the latter part of his career. His experience covered native forests and the expansion program of Victoria’s plantation estate.

Kevin had many desirable attributes including his congeniality and self-effacing personality. He was very intelligent, blessed with an excellent memory, and was analytical and insightful. Combining these attributes with his natural hardworking inclination, Kevin continuously performed at high work standards.

Kevin’s distinguished working life spanned a period of considerable change in forestry. He experienced forestry’s “golden era” of expansion for the first decade, after which he lived through a period of fundamental change as the profession was



progressively exposed to external input from Victoria's post-war generation who expressed different expectations about forestry and the management of Victoria's public forests. This was challenging for many foresters at the time. However, Kevin with a broad perspective and an insightful understanding of changing societal aspirations, adapted to the new environment and was able to provide positive ideas and solutions to the new challenges.

Kevin spent a number of years lecturing to students at VSF. He was particularly well regarded as a lecturer and a "good bloke" by the students. The young foresters graduating from VSF increasingly appreciated the wisdom Kevin imparted as they gained their own first hand professional experiences.

Kevin's time in the Working Plans Branch afforded him a detailed knowledge of Victoria's forest resources. He had a particular bent towards timber resource information which was especially helpful when he subsequently chaired the Cutting Areas Review Committee. This Committee, with broad membership including environmental groups and sawmillers' representatives, was established to allow external review of the Department's harvesting plans. The Committee was always likely to be fraught given the animus between sawmillers and environmentalists. Under such circumstances, Kevin's ability to manage a relatively smooth and effective operation of the Committee was due, in no small part, to his professionalism and adept management.

Kevin successfully led the Forest Commerce Branch at a particularly busy time. As well as the normal functions of the Branch, in 1986 he lead a specialist team established to guide the technical development of Victorian Timber Industry Strategy (TIS). Kevin's knowledge and experience of Victoria's timber resources (biological, physical and geographical) and their utilisation by industry were major input into TIS.

Following release of the Strategy, Kevin's skills, on-ground knowledge and experience were utilised to lead multidisciplinary team implementing the value added wood allocation and marketing strategies for TIS. These initiatives included reducing new sawlog allocations consistent with sustainable harvest levels, negotiating new long term licences, allocating log quality according to the level of value-added processing and introducing a new sawlog pricing system in accordance with the log grading system. The introduction of a new roading charge as part of sawlog prices to ensure adequate funding for forest roads was another TIS initiative that he managed.

These policy initiatives were far-sighted but comparatively radical to sawmillers at the time. Many sawmillers saw potential adverse impacts from a number of the changes and were initially inclined to oppose their introduction. Kevin was able to work constructively with the sawmillers' peak body and many individual licensees



based on his respectful relationships, professionalism and integrity. That the TIS initiatives were successfully implemented, including in commercial areas, is a great credit to Kevin.

Kevin was involved in many major fires in Victoria's state Forests and forested National Parks and Crown Lands during his career. Under the Australian Government, Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, he was awarded the National Medal – 1<sup>st</sup> Clasp, on 25<sup>th</sup> September 1991, for thirty six years of civilian fire-fighting. In the latter part of his career, Kevin's fire experience was called on when he was commissioned, together with a close friend and colleague, to examine and make recommendations on two major extensive bushfires in Victoria, those being the 2003 fires in Victoria's Alpine area and the 2006-07 extensive fires in the Great Divide. The reports were highly commended by many fire protection experts. The wide ranging and strategic recommendations could have been seminal for subsequent bushfires and most were picked up by inquiries into subsequent devastating bushfires in 2009 and 2019.

Kevin worked as an independent consultant in the latter part of his career. His reputation as an outstanding forester meant that he was sought after to undertake a wide range of forestry projects. He worked with other colleagues on some notable studies including a handbook on plantations, a review of native forest management and forestry in the landscape. The reports from these studies came to be regarded as benchmarks.

The plantations handbook summarised the science of the establishment, maintenance and harvesting of plantations. It addressed myths like "pines ruin soils" and was aimed at farm forestry, interest groups including the environmentalists, large plantation owners and the broader public. It was an exceedingly popular booklet and was quickly sold out.

Kevin was a co-author of a booklet titled "Forestry in the Agricultural Landscape" which was published by the Victorian Department of Primary Industries.

Kevin was also a co-author of a landmark report commissioned by the Australian Greenhouse Office titled "A review of native forest management in Victoria since World War II from a carbon accounting perspective".

Kevin was an outstanding forester and made a great contribution over more than half a century. He had many friends and colleagues who all will miss him and the friendships he made lasted well beyond work. He bequeathed a legacy as a forest scientist that will endure and inspire others.