

Margules, Ray (from the Forester Feb 2014)

Ray Margules 15/2/1925 - 21/11/2013

Ray Margules can rightly be called a founder of consulting forestry in Australia and he was visionary in his understanding of the landscape and the value of forests and the importance of trees to human wellbeing.

He was born on February 15th in 1925 and grew up near the Cotter settlement with his brothers and sisters in the foothills of the Brindabella Range outside Canberra. His childhood ensured he had good bush skills. After a short stint in the Merchant Navy during the final phases of the Second World War it was not surprising that his love of the bush took him to study forestry. He graduated with a B.Sc.(For) Sydney and a Diploma of Forestry from the Australian Forestry School in Yarralumla, Canberra at the end of 1950. In 1951 he joined ACT Parks and Gardens which was then part of the Commonwealth Department of the Interior. He first worked under another forester and former IFA Jolly Medallist Lindsay Pryor and then David Shoobridge also a Forester, his principal role was in fire protection and suppression.

He was awarded a Public Service Scholarship in 1965 to study for a Masters Degree in Landscape Architecture at the University of California at Los Angeles (UCLA), Davis campus. Upon graduation he returned to Canberra and ultimately negotiated a release from his public service commitments to establish his own consulting business in 1967 which specialised in forestry and landscape architecture. Ray's interests were broad. He had a strong interest in traditional forest management and plantation development as well as developing trees in urban landscapes to improve the living environment for everyone. He had a true sense of the landscape approach to forestry something which is only just coming to prominence today.

For a little over 10 years Ray managed all his own forestry consulting and it was not until 1979 that he employed his first forest consultant employee a recent graduate.

Feeling that consulting foresters were not represented in the Executive of IFA or even particularly welcomed he proposed the formation of the Association of Consulting Foresters of Australia. Following discussions with other consulting foresters particularly Geoff Chandler and including Keith Gray, Don McIntosh, Bob Newman, Peter Stevens and Jack Gittins, Ray became their inaugural President in 1978. He led the association through its formative years and he was adamant that it should never be a 'club' and that any forestry professional consultant to the industry should be able to join.

Ray retired from full time consulting in 1985 and moved to Byron Bay to grow macadamia's a crop he believed would have a good future as it was a native species, a durable crop and the climate on the North Coast of NSW was ideal. He took keen interest in the IFA on the North Coast of NSW and was elected a Fellow. He also remained interested in the company he started and encouraged the joint venture with his old forestry school colleague John Groom who had a similar forestry consulting business in New Zealand in 1991. His first two employees continued to build the forestry consulting business which is now a household name in the Australian forest industry - Pöyry Management Consulting.

Ray was a good sportsman playing Rugby Union for the Australian Forestry School and was part of their winning Canberra Cup team in 1951 and he continued for many years as a referee. His wife Lorraine for many years his business partner was a great support to him and they had four children. Although none became foresters, his eldest son Chris was a highly regarded ecologist at CSIRO.