

Ryan, David (from The Forester Dec 2006)

**DAVID RYAN, THE FORESTER
(1941-2006)**

David (Dave) Ryan passed away in October, 2006 at Coffs Harbour after a long battle with melanoma. He leaves a wife, Jan and two daughters.

Dave commenced his forestry career as a cadet forester with the Forestry Commission of New South Wales in 1959, attending Sydney University and later the Australian Forestry School in Canberra. He graduated with his forestry degree in 1964.

Dave's first career appointment was to the Baradine District where he worked with Cypress Pine and hardwood until 1968. In 1968 and 1969 he was forester in charge of Condobolin District, once again working with Cypress Pine and hardwood. In 1969 he was transferred as District Forester, Bermagui South managing large areas of high quality native forest. In 1973 the Bermagui office transferred to Narooma. In 1981 during the expansion of the woodchip export era at Eden, Dave became Deputy Regional Forester, South East. In 1983 he transferred to Coffs Harbour as Deputy Regional Forester, again being involved with the management of native forest as well as with an expansion phase of softwood plantations in the Casino area. Dave was promoted to the position of Fire Management Officer for the Forestry Commission in 1990, based at Head Office. When the Forestry Commission was restructured in 1992, and subsequently became State Forests, Dave accepted a voluntary redundancy. And so began a whole new and successful career as a Forestry Consultant. His business enterprise, Boambee Forestry Services, was located at his home at Boambee. His workload included the complex, detailed planning of harvest operations for Forests NSW and for private property. More latterly he completed a lot of work with Local Government assessing development sites for bushfire risk. In this period he purchased a sizable property in the Dorrigo area where he fattened cattle. This was Dave's switch off or relaxation, away from forestry issues and work.

Not content to be an ordinary farmer, David was an inspirational and supportive treasurer and chairman of Bellinger Landcare and a representative of Bostobrick Landcare Group. He initiated sub-catchment planning in his neighbourhood, based on a major creek running past his property. The Bostobrick Landcare Group implemented their catchment plan over a number of years from a variety of funding sources and expanded its operations onto the Little Murray River. Fencing of the waterways was the most common activity, followed by tree planting and weed control. The group also became involved in the Acid Soils Action Program and provided two trial sites for the monitoring of soil property changes and cattle weight gains as a result of lime application.

Dave has been a member of the Institute of Foresters of Australia since graduation. During the 1980's and 1990's the public forest authorities were undergoing extensive review and restructuring, often under hostile and stressful circumstances. Many foresters were unwilling to devote time to Institute affairs. Dave was a prominent and notable exception to this generalisation.

Dave Ryan was instrumental in the establishment of the Southern Branch of the IFA in the early 1980s and served as its inaugural Chairman.

In 1991 Dave became the first forester to chair the NSW Division based outside Sydney. In this position Dave served as the NSW representative on the Board of the Institute of Foresters of Australia. Dave continued in this position until 1997 when he became Divisional Secretary. Dave's period as Chairman of the NSW Division coincided with sometimes dramatic change and upheaval in forest administration and development in NSW. This demanded an enormous effort by members of the Institute in order to promote an appropriate professional view on these hectic and emotional developments, which saw the dedication of Wilderness Areas and National Parks in pre-emptive moves prior to comprehensive regional assessment, the freezing of timber supplies which were to have been made available under the EIS process and the introduction of legislation dealing with endangered species and vegetation management on private lands. It is a matter of fact that Dave Ryan not only coordinated this large effort by the limited number of willing helpers, but he personally prepared many of the submissions and responses demanded from the Institute during this time.

Within the Institute at a National level Dave pioneered, promoted and assisted introduction of accreditation and continuing professional development of Foresters. He was a member of the first RPF Registration Committee.

During this hectic period Dave was a regular contributor to the IFA newsletter. He sought out through diligent research the core elements of an issue and then promoted the work widely, keeping members informed of diverse topics such as honey production, forestry and fish in North America, and eucalypt plantations.

Dave was well known for his research on the early descriptions of native vegetation and explorers and surveyors and the role of fire on the structure and distribution of this vegetation. He wrote extensively on this hotly debated topic and contributed to an often contrary view to our knowledge of the so-called pre-1750 distribution of forest types.

He was an active member of the Forest History Association. Dave's efforts with the IFA were recognised in 1999 when he was elected to the Fellow level of membership of the Institute of Foresters of Australia.

In addition to being a very active Member of the IFA, Dave served as Secretary/Treasurer of the Association of Consulting Foresters of Australia for 10 years and participated in the work of the Australian Forest Growers Association. He was also an active member of the Forest History Society.

Forestry was a profession Dave loved. He was a passionate and studious forester; a forester with deep-seated convictions. There is no doubt that that over many years Dave Ryan has been a doer and that he has been a major player and innovator over a difficult and complex period in forestry affairs in NSW. As succinctly put by a Past President of the Institute of Foresters, Dr Gary Bacon, David Ryan made an immense contribution to forestry "over a full rotation."



