

Rob Lewis - SARDI reflects on enduring leader

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Professor Rob Lewis leaves SARDI into his 38th year of distinguished service with the South Australian public service.

From 1993 he took up the post as Executive Director with SARDI, demonstrating foresight, vision and passion that has shaped research directions producing tangible benefits for South Australians, and put SA on the international research stage.

Professor Rob Lewis led the way in research leadership, displaying an outstanding capacity to engage with stakeholders, understand industry needs



and translate these into viable, profitable research programs on behalf of the people of South Australia.

Rob's ability to paint the vision, motivating and inspiring others to help make it a reality has set him apart as a leader, and led to many successful ventures.

At his farewell celebrations, many staff paid tribute to his gift of engendering loyalty among staff that led to many great achievements for SARDI.

Professor Lewis originally trained as a marine scientist, joining the Department of Fisheries as a Research Officer in 1973 undertaking fundamental research supporting South Australia's rock lobster fishery, before rising through the ranks of research management.

By 1987 he was appointed Director of Fisheries responsible for the integration of scientific research findings into fisheries, aquaculture and marine habitat conservation policy and legislation. His talent for communication, collaboration and consultative approaches forged in this role became the hallmark of his career.

In 1992 he joined SARDI and in 1993 was appointed its Executive Director and has been responsible for guiding SARDI into a model state research agency delivering robust and timely scientific solutions for primary industry sectors.

He has played a significant role in promoting interactions between industry, Government and research institutions with involvement in technology transfer, intellectual property management, commercialisation of research outcomes and the development of science policy.

His work in promoting research and links with Australian universities has been pivotal to the State's involvement in numerous Cooperative Research Centres, including Aquaculture, Finfish, Molecular Plant Breeding and the recently formed Seafood CRC.

Professor Lewis has been a driving force behind research infrastructure including the Ngerin Vessel, the SA Aquatic Sciences Centre, refining plans for the Plant Research Centre, home to SARDI's headquarters, and supporting development of the Lincoln Marine Science Centre. More recently Professor Lewis has been a major driver in the establishment of the Marine Innovation South Australia initiative which has united SARDI Aquatic Sciences, Flinders University, the University of Adelaide, the South Australian Museum and the seafood industry in building State capability to boost the value of the seafood sector.

University collaborators recognise that the joint postgraduate research programs with SARDI have had a positive impact on the careers of numerous scientists.

Significant private and public sector board roles have included:

- The Premier's Science and Research Council
- The South Australian Primary Industries Research and Development Board
- The Australian Fisheries Management Authority
- The Cooperative Research Centre for Molecular Plant Breeding
- Molecular Plant Breeding Pty Ltd
- Airborne Research Australia Pty Ltd
- The Crawford Fund SA Pty Ltd
- Australian Grain Technologies Pty Ltd
- Ausbiotech PtyLtd (SA Division)

He has also served as Chair of:

- The Australian Fisheries Management Authority Research Committee
- The Commonwealth Fisheries Research Advisory Board
- The Southern Bluefin Tuna Management Advisory Committee
- The Australian Maritime College Council
- The A W Howard Memorial Trust Pty Ltd

Rob will continue to serve on significant public and private sector boards, including service as a Chair of the Primary Industries Standing Committee Fisheries and Aquaculture Research National Priorities Forum.

Professor Lewis will maintain close links with SARDI and has been awarded an honorary fellowship.