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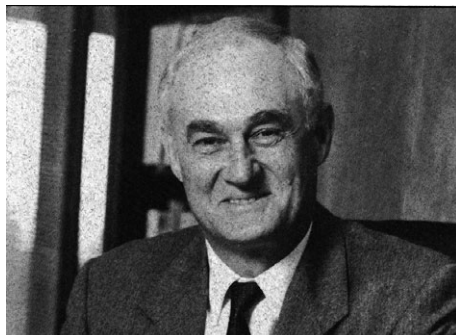
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Obituary



Dr Geoffrey (Geoff) Lee Miller, AO, FAICD, MAIAS, was born 26 January 1942, in Grafton, and died on 10 October 2014 in Bellingen, NSW. He lived his too short life to the full and well.

It is said, that when a boy his interest in raising bantams and growing lettuce convinced his father to send him to Farrer Agricultural High School in Tamworth. Geoff was to go on to be awarded First Class Honours in a Bachelor of Agricultural Economics degree from the University of New England, Armidale. He was later awarded an MA and a PhD in Applied Economics from the Food Research Institute, Stanford University, USA. He had a powerful mind and a persuasive manner.

During his life in the Australian Public Service (APS) Geoff was a member of ten government boards, councils and task forces, such as the Australian Wheat Board, the Australian Wool Corporation and the Cabinet's Task Force on Long Term Economic Growth. His professional expertise was in the field of applied industry economics, which had been reflected in his academic studies and achievements.

His career highlights were many, including Director of the Bureau of Agricultural Economics (BAE), 1977–1981; Director of the Economic Planning Advisory Council, 1983–86; Secretary of Department of Primary Industry, 1986–87 and Secretary of the Department of Primary Industries and Energy 1988–93. He was named Man of the Year in Australian Agriculture in 1978.

Over his career Geoff was responsible for an enormous amount of agricultural reform and restructuring. Through the 1980s and into the 1990s all Commonwealth agricultural commodity statutory marketing authorities were reformed, (including two wheat plans), as were agricultural research and development arrangements and expenditure by way of corporatisation, to put them on a more secure funding basis. Major policy changes were carried out in meat, dairy, wool and horticultural policy. The National Disaster Relief

Arrangements for drought were changed and the Rural Adjustment Scheme was adapted to meet the farm adjustment needs of the day. Accent was placed on fisheries management, Australia wide, following the signing of the Offshore Constitutional Settlement, prior to the formation of the Australian Fisheries Management Authority. More attention was paid to the social dimension of rural as well as agricultural Australia, including the establishment of the Rural Counselling Service, the funding of Rural Women's Access Grants and Farmsafe.

The importance of trade reform was highlighted under Geoff's leadership, as was the need to adapt to the needs of the customers of Australia's commodity exports. Other institutional change included the establishment of the Bureau of Rural Resources and the Australian Registration Authority (now AVPMA) for the registration of agricultural and veterinary chemicals. Also, Plant Variety Rights were introduced. The portfolio was active in fisheries, land water and forest management with the introduction of a National Soil Conservation Programme, (followed by Landcare), a National Forest Policy, the National Resource Information Centre and early progress on water reforms.

On retiring from the APS in 1994 Geoff Miller applied his experience and depth of understanding through a range of appointments in Australian business and statutory authorities and in international institutions. Before this he had already been a member of the Policy Advisory Council, Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research, 1982-83 and had chaired OECD's Committee on Commodity markets, based in Paris. In 1998-2003 he chaired the Food and Agribusiness Investment Fund of Gresham Rabo Management Ltd. He chaired the Trade and Economic Sessions of the International Forum on the Indian Ocean in 1995. He chaired the International Food Policy Research Institute, based in Washington D.C., 1997-2003, probably his most prestigious international agricultural leadership role.

Geoff was a warm, loving, considerate man with a great sense of humour. Geoff first married Helen, nee Elliott, in 1964, and they had three children: Astrid, Ben and Andrew. Helen passed away in 1977. Geoff and Cynthia were married in 1983 – Cynthia being the mother of Nick and Kate and who became part of the melded family.

JOHN KERIN*
Minister for Primary
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