

## Professor William Roy Jackson AM, 27 February 1935 – 3 November 2019

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This special issue of the *Australian Journal of Chemistry* is dedicated to the life of Professor William Roy Jackson. As a testament to the man, his life, and his contributions to chemistry, the papers that make up this issue demonstrate Roy's breadth and depth of knowledge in the field, as well as his close interactions with such a diverse group of chemists.

William Roy Jackson was born in the small town of Bacup in Lancashire, England, and after graduating from a local grammar school he headed to the University of Manchester, where he received a Bachelor of Science with first-class honours in 1955. He then received a PhD in organometallic chemistry from University College London in 1958. A postdoctoral fellowship at Oxford immediately followed and then, at the tender age of 24, Roy took up a lectureship in chemistry at Queen's University, Belfast. It was a very productive time in Belfast and he was promoted to Reader in 1970 and was awarded a DSc from the University of London in 1973.

In 1970 and fortunately for Australian chemistry, Roy took his family to Australia where he joined Monash University as Chair of Organic Chemistry, and it marked the start of a long and illustrious relationship with the University, and with the wider scientific community in Australia.

Over the course of his career, Roy had research interests in fundamental organic chemistry, but also had strong links to industry and applied research. He was involved in major projects in the liquefaction of Victorian brown coal in collaboration with Dr Frank Larkins, while also having collaborations with BHP, ICI, AMRAD, Biota, and DuPont. Roy was a chief investigator in research grants that brought in more than \$20 million and the ensuing high profile research led to international recognition for contributions to organic chemistry, particularly in the field of organometallic compounds and their involvement in homogeneous catalysis.

In the late 1990s, in collaboration with Professor Colin Raston, Roy became involved in the sustainable chemistry arena. They co-founded the ARC Special Research Centre in Green Chemistry, and Roy served as director of the centre for three years. Green chemistry in Australia has become a major force from these early beginnings established by Roy and Colin.

Roy was frequently invited as a plenary speaker at conferences and gave many inspirational research seminars at other universities. His contribution to the world of science and academia was recognised by his many awards and honours,

including the Leighton Memorial Medal, the RACI's premier award that he received in 2002, and a Centenary Medal in 2003. He was a Fellow of the Australian Academy of Applied Science and Engineering, and a Fellow of the Royal Australian Institute of Chemistry, where he was national president in 2000–01 (he was president of the Victorian branch in 1980). He was also a Fellow of the Australian Institute of Energy.

Roy was the head of the Department of Chemistry at Monash from 1992 to 1994 and was appointed the inaugural Sir John Monash Distinguished Professor in 1995, and continued working for the University on a part-time basis well into his 80s. In 2013, he was appointed a Member of the Order of Australia (AM) for services to science in the field of organic chemistry as an educator and researcher.

Roy's irrepressible enthusiasm for teaching and research was inspirational and a major attraction to students and colleagues. Over the course of his career, he supervised more than 50 PhD graduates who went on to occupy senior positions in Australian industry and government departments. He was an enthusiastic supporter of promoting the University's interaction with the general public, and for many years ran highly acclaimed chemical 'magic shows' for spellbound children (with many bangs and explosions!) on Open Day.

Roy's enthusiasm for life extended well beyond chemistry, into music (playing the recorder and choir singing) and poetry (especially during any boring meetings!). He was a keen squash player (who was always pushing the limits of the rules) as well as an avid bushwalker which led to a strong interest in the sport of rogaining, indeed in attracting some of his colleagues at Monash, and any overseas visitor, into the action.

Roy's enduring legacy is beyond chemistry. He invited many colleagues to the infamous 'weekend away at the Grampians' where 'we can have a wee drink, a nice meal and short stroll in the mountains'.

On one such walk on a fine late November day to the Major Mitchell Plateau in the Grampians where we were embarking on a short walk to 'dust off the red wine' from the night before, it started to get rather blustery. It was mentioned to Roy that perhaps the weather was turning for the worse. 'Ahhhh, don't worry, we've seen worse' was Roy's response. All walkers were clad in shorts and T-shirts, so we were all a little concerned, but took Roy's advice and marched along. A little later, the temperature dropped ~15–20 degrees, and concerns were again

raised. 'This is nothing! You should've seen us up here in winter!' was the response. So we trudged on and then the blizzard came in, the snow was relentless and most of us, except Roy and a few experienced Grampians walkers, were freezing, so Roy then suggested we head off in front and try to get back to the hut before the weather got much worse! We could all see the headlines of the newspapers saying 'split up walking group lost in freezing weather in Grampians' but we took off, not really knowing where we were going. Eventually we got lost but circled around looking for tracks, when we bumped into Roy with his colleagues sitting on a log with a hot cup of tea they had brought along in a thermos. 'Are you guys lost? The path is just up here behind this scrubby outlook'. And we plodded off along the track, where 11 h after setting off, we found the mains water had been cut off from the house for the weekend, so no warm showers. However, after building a bonfire and cooking massive steaks on the BBQ with a large glass of red, we forgave Roy and

settled in for the night. On another occasion, we did get lost, and Roy said 'Colin go ahead up the hill, there is a track there'. On getting to this location there was no track but 'there was one 20 years ago!' And the stories go on, and on!

The Grampians bring back so many fond memories of singing, consuming too much red wine, dealing with Roy cheating at trivial pursuit, and dreading him bringing out the chainsaw to cut some timber for the fire.

Roy was a great family man, having brought up three children with his loving wife Heather. His love of his furry friends was also all too obvious to all!

Professor Jackson will be sorely missed by all, but we still hear *Danny Boy* being belted out in his dulcet tones.

### **Conflicts of Interest**

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.