

Vale to Ken Eldridge

6 April 1934 – 16 June 2010

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On June 26, many past and present CSIRO staff attended a Canberra memorial service for Dr Ken Eldridge, a former Principal Research Scientist and Honorary Research Fellow with CSIRO Forestry and Forest Products. Ken's remarkable life and work was celebrated during the service and wake that followed.

Ken's work as a forest geneticist leaves a lasting legacy of global significance. In the 1970s, he led range-wide seed collections of radiata pine that now provide the genetic resources that underpin breeding programs for this important plantation species. This species is now threatened by pine pitch canker disease in its narrow natural range in coastal California and by other factors on nearby offshore islands.



Ken was a world authority on tree breeding. His scientific writings and teaching helped many countries to develop much more productive eucalypt plantations. He was an inspirational teacher, showing great empathy with students from around the world. He took the time to listen carefully and communicate clearly the essence of the subject, helping students to navigate the complexities of forest genetics.

Following his death, messages of sadness and loss at his passing were received from around the world, demonstrating his major contribution to international development, as these examples show:

- 'Many Chinese eucalypt researchers will treasure up his contribution to eucalypt knowledge, his help and friendship to us. We are very lucky to have known him.'
- 'It is a pity that we did not have the opportunity to meet Dr Ken Eldridge in Vietnam to show him how his ideas and advice have been partly realised in tree breeding activities of our country today.'
- 'Today many countries like India enjoy the benefits of the hard work put in by people like Ken Eldridge.'

Ken was always a strong advocate for environmentally responsible plantation forestry, and spoke out strongly against the inappropriate clearing of native forests for plantations, even at the risk of losing his job. We will miss Ken greatly, and we extend our sympathy and condolence to his family.