

2010 AARES Distinguished Life Member

Michael J. Taylor



Mike Taylor grew up in Melbourne spending extensive time with his farming relatives in Wimmera and Southern Victoria. Pursuing his agriculture interest, Mike earned a B. Agr. Sci. degree from the University of Melbourne in 1970 and a graduate Diploma in Agriculture Economics from the University of New England in 1972, with the support of a cadetship from the Victorian Department of Agriculture.

Mike began his career in the Economics Branch at an interesting time for agricultural economists in Australia, given the emerging role of the Industries Assistance Commission and other policy processes underway. Mike showed great aptitude for the subject and quickly became engaged at the cutting edge of policy at the highest levels. One of his first assignments was in Victoria's dairy policy changes in the early 1970s, beginning his continuing involvement in a 30 year process of Australian dairy policy reform. However, Mike was involved in policy issues across the board and took an active interest in every major policy project undertaken by the Economics Branch.

Mike rose through the ranks of Senior and Principal Economist and Director of Marketing. In 1990 he took a break from public service to serve as CEO of the Australian Dairy Industry Council for 2 years.

Mike returned to public service in Victoria in 1992 as Secretary of the Department of Agriculture, which was expanded to include Minerals and Energy in 1995. In 1996, Mike was given the challenging assignment of merging two seemingly immiscible Departments – Conservation, Forests and Lands with Agriculture, Minerals and Energy – into a mega-department of

Natural Resources and the Environment. Against the odds, the merger under Mike Taylor's management was successful. Mike left Victoria, in 2000, to begin a decade of service in the Commonwealth government, including Secretary for the Department of Agriculture Forestry and Fisheries (2000–2004) and Secretary for the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government (2004–2009).

In 2009 Mike took up his current role as Chairman of the Murray-Darling Basin Authority. He also serves as Chairman of the Gardiner Foundation (2009–), Director of the Melbourne University-Melbourne Business School (2008–), and Director of the Bushfire CRC (2009–).

Mike has been an active member and enthusiastic supporter of AARES since the early 1970s when he served as President and Secretary of the Victorian Branch.

Throughout his period of more than 15 years of service at the Chief Executive level, Mike Taylor has provided extensive and authoritative policy advice, provided leadership and direction in managing large and diverse organisations, and led negotiations on issues internationally as well as within Australia. He played a major national leadership role in improved agricultural research and development, trade policy quarantine policy arrangements to improve protection from pests and diseases, the development of the National Food Industry Strategy and the establishment and implementation of the National Action Plan for Dryland Salinity and Water Quality and the National Water Initiative. He has been extensively involved in preparing and negotiating international, Commonwealth, State and industry agreements and legislation, and in advising the Governments and Commonwealth-State Ministerial Councils on a wide range of issues related to transport, security, regional development, water, energy, minerals, agricultural, food, forestry, fisheries, environmental and sustainable natural resource management issues. In recognition of his extensive service to Australia, Mike has received a number of significant honours, including Officer of the Order of Australia (2007), Centenary Medal (2001), and Advance Australia Award for Services to Agriculture (1990).

Many factors may have contributed to Mike Taylor's remarkable accomplishments, but chief among them are his great energy, enormous enthusiasm, outstanding intelligence, and abiding good nature, including a generous willingness to allow others to take credit for any success while treating everyone equally. As well as contributing to accomplishment, these characteristics make Mike fun to work with, generally good company and a great friend. Throughout his career, including an extended period of him being based in Canberra but with his family home in Melbourne, Mike has remained happily married to Eve and together they have raised two daughters, Erica and Rachel.