

## APPS Fellow

### Professor Lester Burgess AM



Lester was only the third person to be made a fellow of the Australasian Plant Pathology Society and this honour was a fitting reward for his contributions to, not only the field of plant pathology, but also to APPS. During his working career Lester managed to fill most of the positions on the APPS Executive most recently as President during 2001-2003 and was instrumental in the establishment of the APPS Newsletter, the precursor to Australasian Plant Pathology. Lester is also a fellow of the American Phytopathological Society.

Most of Lester's career was spent at the University of Sydney, initially as an undergraduate and postgraduate student and then as a member of academic staff. In between this he had several postdoctoral positions in the US. He was awarded a personal chair in Applied Mycology in 2000 and retired from "formal" employment in July of this year. He does of course remain very active in research and teaching despite having retired. At various points in his career he also held adjunct positions at Pennsylvania State University and Kansas State University.

A large proportion of Lester's scientific work has focused on the diseases caused by *Fusarium* species, especially crown rot of wheat caused by *Fusarium pseudograminearum*. To date he has written over 100 scientific papers, a number of book chapters and several books, mostly on *Fusarium*. He has also described a number of new species of *Fusarium*, was one of the few researchers internationally interested in the ecology and biology of the genus and worked to understand the methods for controlling diseases caused by *Fusarium*. He has been recognized for two decades as one of the authorities on *Fusarium* which has resulted in a multitude of requests for guidance and advice and a number of international research collaborations.

The other component of his work which will leave a lasting legacy is his role as a mentor of students (both formally and informally) and other researchers. His list of students who did projects and degrees under his supervision is one of both quantity and quality and his infectious enthusiasm for plant pathology was responsible for many students choosing to study plant pathology and mycology.

His recent work in Vietnam and Indonesia has had an enormous impact on plant pathology in those countries greatly enhancing the capacity of those countries and enabling a number of researchers to deal with the variety of plant pathological problems they face in those environments.

An APPS Symposium day was held recently at the Botanic Gardens Trust to celebrate Lester's career and featured talks by a number of Lester's former students and post-docs, emphasising the impact that he has had. While Lester has now formally retired no-one really expects him to slow down too much, maybe some time for fishing now and then, and we can expect many additional achievements to be added to those above!

Brett Summerell, Botanic Gardens Trust

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