

About the late Professor Peter Cullen AO

About Peter Cullen

What a great bloke! He was one of my heroes: someone that put science and technology into the Real Speak that would be understood and regularly spouted across the Table of Knowledge that exists in every pub and club in Australia.

Ian Kiernan AO, Chairman and Founder of Clean Up Australia and Clean Up the World

Peter Cullen is remembered for his superb capacity to synthesise and communicate complex ideas, simply and clearly, to local communities, policy makers and politicians in a way that supported them to make decisions and take action.

Peter Wray Cullen, AO (1943–2008) made an enormous contribution to the management of natural resources in Australia, most of all around water. Among many influential roles he was the founding National Water Commissioner, a leading member of the Wentworth Group of Concerned Scientists, Chief Executive of the Cooperative Research Centre for Freshwater Ecology, Chairman of the Victorian Water Trust Advisory Council, Director of Land & Water Australia, President of the Federation of Australian Science and Technological Societies, and a member of the Prime Minister's Science, Engineering and Innovation Council. He was appointed as an Officer of the Order of Australia in 2004 for service to freshwater ecology, and was awarded the Prime Minister's Prize for Environmentalist of the Year in 2001 for his work on the National Action Plan for Salinity and Water Quality. Internationally, Peter was a Member of the International Water Academy and the International Ecology Institute, and was awarded the Naumann-Thienemann Medal of the International Limnology Society.

As Tim Flannery wrote in Peter's obituary in *The Age* on 18 March 2008:

"he was someone to whom prime ministers looked for leadership."



"Peter Cullen was provocative, constructive, brave always grounded in good science"

(Professor Andrew Campbell, formerly of Charles Darwin University; now CEO, Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research)

Peter Cullen had a rare gift for conveying complex concepts in clear, simple language, with a knack for metaphors that lay people could understand and find illuminating. He was as comfortable in dealing with politicians, senior policy makers, the media or industry groups as he was with scientists. His candour, courtesy, credibility and discretion earned him respect at all levels, and an unusual degree of access to the highest levels of power, which he used judiciously. He was highly influential in Australian government decisions to invest at unprecedented levels in the National Action Plan for Salinity and Water Quality, the National Water Initiative, and the National Plan for Water Security. He was also a wonderful mentor

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and sounding board for young scientists: he cultivated bright young policy makers whom he thought might go places, and he was a great advocate for developing leadership and communication skills.

...the champion of the rivers who led the debate on the national water crisis and helped revolutionise how Australians think about it.”

(Marion Wilkinson in *The Sydney Morning Herald*)

Peter was an instigator and an active participant in the national debate about water. He was passionate about finding solutions, and adamant that they should be based on the best available knowledge (Marion Wilkinson, *The Sydney Morning Herald*).

Read some of Peter's writings

The late Peter Cullen speaks again, through his book sponsored by the Peter Cullen Trust.

This Land Our Water: Water Challenges for the 21st Century is a beautifully presented volume that, for the first time, publishes Peter Cullen's last writings and speeches. It also reminds us of the man, through vignettes by colleagues, friends and family. Cameos from well known writers include one by the Hon John Howard AC.

The book is available for purchase (\$79.95 + postage and handling), by emailing office@petercullentrust.com.au. Payment can be by either cheque, credit card or bank transfer.

A number of Peter's articles are available for free download, at: http://petercullentrust.com.au/publications/peter_cullens-writings