

Vale our Patron

Across Australia we are united in our love, respect and grieving for one of the greatest Australians of our lifetime, Robert James Lee Hawke, who has passed away at the age of 89.

The former Prime Minister died peacefully at home with his wife, Blanche D'Alpuget and other family by his side. He expressed no fear of death and in his last days turned his words to the political cause of equality in the country he loved so dearly.

Hailed as the finest leader of the labour movement, a conciliator and uniting force in politics to bridge the divide between industry and workers, a reformer of the financial sector and moderniser of the economy, a champion of Medicare, pioneer of superannuation and defender of the Franklin River against damming, it was his ultimate commitment to social justice that shines brightest in a remarkable life of courage.

After accepting the Barunga Bark Petition from Indigenous leaders in 1988 he struggled to bring unity of purpose in addressing the rights of the First Peoples.

His powerful rejection of racism was demonstrated on many occasions, none more clearly than when as ACTU leader he led the campaign against the Springbok Rugby tour of Australia and later as Prime Minister shaped the Commonwealth sanctions against South Africa's apartheid era regime.

Acknowledging that there was still much to be done to achieve equality in Australia, the former Prime Minister became patron of the Indigenous Australian Engineering Summer School in November 1998. Mr Hawke spoke often of his huge satisfaction and sense of responsibility in encouraging young Indigenous people to become 'nation builders'. He overflowed with generosity in commending the single-minded dedication of the retired engineer, Jeff Dobell, in founding the summer school program and continuing to build belief in this united approach to Indigenous education and opportunity.

Through two decades he handed prizes and words of personal encouragement to the numerous graduates of the university summer schools producing the growing cohort of Indigenous engineers.

The students, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders from around the land, responded to his authenticity and the keen way he listened to their aspirations.

In the words of one of New South Wales' first Aboriginal engineers, Ben Lange, "Forever, our Uncle Bob.

In expressing his love of all Australians, Bob Hawke was in return loved by so many.

**Jeff McMullen
Director
Engineering Aid Australia**