

## ANZUUA Newsletter – Vale Leo Leriche.

At our June Sunday Service we included a memorial service for Leo Leriche who passed away on the 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2022, aged 88 years. Kate Barrett-Lennard wrote and delivered the eulogy and we sat quietly as Leo's favourite piece of music Bach's Prelude from Cello Suite NO 1 was played from a video clip on the screen.

There now follows a brief summary of Leo's life from circa 1952.

After completing four years, including seven months sea-time on an aircraft carrier, at the Marine Corps Base in San Diego, California, Leo completed a history major from UCLA (The University of California) and also achieved a scholarship to study in Saint Louis, Missouri.

In 1974 he completed his PhD in education at St Louis University. He then went on to produce a book 'Society and Schools' published in 1984, which questioned the harsh punitive model of traditional American education where many students were left with a sense of over-riding failure. Leo proposed an emancipation of this repressive and punitive model; one where students had a voice in governance and could feel inspired by their education. While residing in Germany his book was published into 8 languages and he presented various papers and articles on the international stage. With Kathy's support Leo had begun working on a new edition of his book but with the onset of Parkinson's Disease and mobility becoming ever more difficult, this was not possible to complete.

When Leo arrived in Australia he taught in secondary schools and universities here in Perth and coached the Claremont Jets grid iron team. The team members loved and respected him and he remained with them for many years until mobility difficulties forced his departure from the team, who gave him a huge celebratory farewell. During early days in Perth Leo married but, unfortunately, four years into the marriage his wife became ill and Leo nursed her for 20 years through the rigors of muscular deterioration until her death. He then set up the Dr Thelma Bessell-Browne scholarship in her honour at Curtin University which awards a one-off payment of \$1,600 to a different student each year who is studying 4<sup>th</sup> year in an undergraduate degree in education.

Leo was one of our founding members together with Peter Ferguson and Goff Barrett-Lennard and others. Leo joined the church in 2000 and became a frequent delegate representing Perth at our ANZUUA Conferences.

In 2015 Leo and Tim Southgate, another Perth member, visited a Unitarian from the United States, Jeremy Rubin, many times in Wooroloo Prison, making the lengthy trip to the prison on visiting days and spending time checking in and continuing to encourage Jeremy during his unfortunate prison ordeal. Leo never wavered in his commitment to do this journey.

He loved all that Unitarianism stood for and contributed also by visiting people in hospital and providing church talks. He was an exceptional member and early was a recipient of the Unitarian Order of the Flaming Chalice for contribution to the church and Unitarianism.

Leo loved all Unitarian values and stood keenly for unity, justice, fairness, democracy, equality, life-giving learning systems and humanitarianism in his life. Leo lived his values. At one stage Leo had taken into his home as a flat mate a South Sudanese researcher and university student to whom he gave support for writing research papers and also considerable leniency with bills. When this student fell on hard times due to his family becoming refugees in the South Sudanese war zone, Leo was just keen to help him find work to assist financially. This fellow was coached by Gordon McDonald and Kate for job interviews. Leo's incredible patience with this fellow was testimony to his commitment to social justice and assisting those less fortunate than himself where possible.

We are honoured to have known Leo with his lifelong values and qualities and remember him as the gentle educator and loyal friend. He is greatly missed by Perth members.