

## Peter Morgan, Australian wool industry veteran, retires in July

Rachel Simmonds The Land 26/06



*Agriculture pioneer Peter Morgan is retiring on June 30 after 61 years serving the wool industry.  
Picture by Rachel Simmonds*

Peter Morgan has reached his diamond jubilee with Australia's wool industry and will retire after delivering groundbreaking software, ram fertility research and lamb mortality studies.

Dr Morgan, 82, is hanging up his boots on Friday from his executive director role at the Australian Council of Wool Exporters and Processors and the Private Treaty Wool Merchants of Australia, where he spent the past 24 years.

He served the wool industry for 61 years, and said his career started with an impromptu meeting with a professor in Sydney. "I really enjoyed chemistry at school and I enjoyed maths, during high school I saw myself as doing something in the chemistry world," he said. "The closer I got to the end of high school the less I became enthusiastic about it, I wasn't sure if that was what I really wanted to do."

Dr Morgan said he left home for two weeks over the Christmas holidays after his Leaving Certificate, and on his return his father had organised a meeting for him in Sydney. "My father saw in the Sydney Morning Herald that the University of New South Wales was offering a 500-pound-a-year scholarship to do a Wool Technology course," he said. "That's how it all started, when I came back home he told me I had an appointment with a professor Euan Roberts at Darlinghurst in Sydney on Monday."

He said he enjoyed the course and eventually applied for a position for the north-west division of Western Australia's Department of Agriculture at 22 years old. "I was always a bit adventurous," he said. "My mother grew up in the bush and I had a host of aunts and uncles on that side who grew up in the bush, so it wasn't totally foreign to me."

Dr Morgan moved to Port Hedland, WA, for the role where he worked with the region's woolgrowers and started studying ram fertility in the Pilbara. "Ten years after the Korean War boom, the wool industry's whole infrastructure was becoming more modern and started importing rams to lift wool production," he said.

Dr Morgan said the imported rams headed "straight for the trees" in the summer and their reproductive performance averaged about 30 per cent, so he decided to investigate and help the pastoralists develop breeding programs. "It was accepted that the rams bred in the country had a much greater resistance to the heat," he said. "We were changing the resources of their rams, I was a bit of an urger and their lambing percentages went up 15 to 20pc on average, and they had surplus sheep for sale.

"It meant they could also cull the poor cutters and lift their average wool production as well."

Dr Morgan's work in Port Hedland led to his Masters studies in the mid-1960's at the University of Western Australia. He then pursued a PhD in lamb mortality in the late 1960's. "It was the time of the wool-price crash when it crashed to zero and led to the reserve price scheme," he said.

"And I got offered a position with the Australian Wool Testing Authority."

He spent about 27 years at AWTA, first working in Fremantle, WA, as regional manager before he moved to the head office in Melbourne. "I joined four months before the start of pre-sale testing," Dr Morgan said.

He said a standout industry change included the introduction of computers, which led to a three-day course where he started designing software for AWTA. "It was marvellous, I have a natural bent for maths and numbers and computers were just starting to move from a computer room to the front office," he said. "I saw we had these visible record computers that were essentially programmable, and I thought as manager I could do my job better if we made better use of the computers."

Dr Morgan's life-long dedication to the wool industry was recognised in his life memberships with the Australian Superfine Woolgrowers Association and the Private Trading Wool Merchants of Australia, and an Australian Wool Industry Medal.

He said highlights included meeting Sir Edmund Hillary and receiving a letter from Agriculture Minister Murray Watt to congratulate him on his six-decade dedication to woolgrowers and the industry.

He said he hoped to see the wool industry enable growers to breed increasingly productive sheep.

"We've got those words of sustainability and traceability, but it's how you use them with your business," Dr Morgan said. "You have to have a bit of 'go' about you."

He said he enjoyed the opportunities he had throughout his career, and cherished the wool community. "They were, and still are pioneers," he said. "And the wool industry was such a pioneer."