Vale Emeritus Professor Arthur McComb

(BSc, MSc (Melb.), PhD (Cantab), F. Inst. Biol., FAA)

Dr Arthur McComb, was Professor of Environmental Science at Murdoch University from 1989-1996, serving as Director of the Institute for Environmental Science from 1989-1994. Professor McComb remained active at Murdoch as Senior Scholar in Residence in Environmental Science from 1997-2010, and became an Emeritus Professor and member of the Banksia Association in 2011.

He was born in Melbourne, graduating from Melbourne University with both a B.Sc and M. Sc in 1959, then completing a PhD at Cambridge University. He joined the University of Western Australia in 1962 as a lecturer and prior to moving to Murdoch was joint Director of the Centre for Water Research.

Emeritus Professor McComb combined a considerate and unassuming manner with a keen analytical mind attuned to the environmental issues of the day. He led seminal research on aquatic plants and nutrient dynamics that improved our understanding and management of the Blackwood River Estuary, seagrasses in Shark Bay and the Swan River, loss of seagrass in Cockburn Sound, and eutrophication of the Peel-Harvey Estuary. The latter science underpinned the construction of the Dawesville Channel.

Emeritus Professor McComb generously shared his expertise and time with students and colleagues across academia, as well as advising government agencies and science managers. 34 students completed PhD’s under his supervision and they have gone on to influential roles in universities, government departments, industry and consultancies.

He served as Chair of the National Parks and Nature Conservation Authority, the Lands and Forest Commission, and as a member of the Life Sciences Panel of the Cooperative Research Centres Committee.

Emeritus Professor McComb authored or co-authored 9 books, and 156 refereed papers and book chapters. His outstanding contributions were recognised through medals and awards from the Australian Society for Limnology, the Royal Society of Western Australia, the Australian Marine Sciences Association, and the Prime Minister’s Centennial Medal for contributions to environmental science. He was both a Fellow of the Institute of Biology and the Australian Academy of Science.

Emeritus Professor McComb inspired all those who knew him. So many people across the world, in the fields of freshwater, estuarine or marine research and beyond, will now be thinking of the difference he made to their lives, and will miss his quiet wisdom and sincere support.