

Hart

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MEDIA RELEASE

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The heart of Hart, Kevin Jaeschke OAM farewelled



*Pictured: Kevin Jaeschke at the Hart field site.
Photo: Gabriella Hall.*

The 'heart of Hart' and a "champion of family and of community" is how Hart Field-Site Group and Hart Field Day co-founder Kevin Jaeschke OAM is being remembered following his death last week, aged 86.

A Hart farmer, Kevin, husband of Lorna and father to Michael, Christopher, Louise and Graham, was integral in the foundation of what became one of the nation's leading agronomy and research sites.

His vision, drive and contagious passion for the Hart research centre and the events that grew out of it are part of his legacy, and son Michael said they remained among Kevin's greatest achievements.

"He was humbly proud at what he achieved at Hart," Michael said.

"It meant the world to him and I could run out of words trying to describe how proud he was.

"He was passionate about it and just to see all the farmers coming in for the field day year after

year, dad just wanted to better his farm and better all the farms around the area.

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“His passion, foresight and appetite for learning new things and putting them into practice, also his innovation and looking for new ideas and trying to improve his farm for future generations were what drove him.”

The initial Hart agronomy trials started in a paddock on Kevin and Lorna's farm in 1982 and continued there until 2000, with the family not only donating land, but also equipment and manpower in those early days to get the crop trials in.

With neighbour David Maitland and Dr Allan Mayfield, who was with the department for agriculture at the time, they had a vision to purchase nearby land for the specific use of a trial site.

A 40-hectare site was purchased in 2000, with a loan from the Wakefield Regional Council repaid five years ahead of schedule, which remained one of Kevin's proudest achievements for the group.

Now in its 40th year, Dr Allan Mayfield said Hart was the longest running field site group in Australia, and as far as he knew, the only farming group in Australia to own its trial site outright.

Kevin was the founding chairman when the first Hart Field Day was held in 1982, and the first event attracted about 18 farmers.

These days, the group's annual field day in September attracts almost 700 farmers and industry professionals and has been the basis for the foundation of many similar sites and events across Australia.

“In some ways it was the model for other sites including in Western Australia the Meckering no-till set up, and a lot of other sites around Australia,” Allan said.

“Birchip, for example, was based on what was being done at Hart – we had a group of Birchip farmers came to visit Hart and thought it was fantastic, and on the bus on their way home had already worked out that they could put some money in, where their site would be and who was going to do it.

“Hart is right up there nationally in terms of practical information for farmers, with a combination of expertise and speakers that they attract, and the amazing thing is that it has continued in a similar format that Kevin was instrumental in setting up.

“This is Kevin's legacy, he was instrumental in establishing a field day system that has withstood the test of time and has been inspiring a lot of other field day sites around the country over 40 years.”

Kevin also had a passion for soil conservation and worked on numerous initiatives across the region, with his genuine care and ability to listen to all concerns setting him apart.

Among one of the most recognisable projects seen by locals and travellers, was the Blyth to Brinkworth rail corridor, which was transformed from bare ground to the revegetated trail that is seen today and passes by the Jaeschke's Hart farm.



Hart Field-Site Group past chairman Matt Dare remembered Kevin fondly.

He worked on the initial Hart trial site located on Kevin's farm, working with researcher Rohan Rainbow trialling the then new no-till farming system.

While Kevin's early interest was in medics and medic pastures, he embraced the opportunity for new technology to be trialled on the site.

"We put one of the Fer-till trial sites on Kevin's farm, researching no-till seeding systems and fertiliser application in one-pass," Matt said.

"That was a significant trial for a period of three to four years on Kevin and Michael's land and it provided another trial for growers to find interest and value in at Hart, and went a long way to promoting one-pass seeding systems in South Australian agriculture."

Matt said Kevin's greatest passion was in the sharing of the trial information with other farmers.

"He really enjoyed the community of it and the interaction between researchers and farmers," Matt said.

"What will always stick with me is his smiling face and friendly nature, just seeing him at the field day site, chatting and interacting with like-minded farmers.

"Condolences from all the Hart Field-Site board, past and present, to Michael and all of the family.

"And a huge thank you to Michael, and Kevin in particular, for their input into Hart over the years."

Kevin was privately farewelled by his family on the family property on January 20, and it is hoped a memorial service for extended family and friends will be held later in the year.

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