



Eric Wilson
1930 - 2004

Eric was born in Carlton on 27 December 1930, and was educated at Oakleigh, Clayton and Dandenong West Primary Schools. He left school in 1943 aged 13, to support his widowed mother. Until he was almost 21, he worked in the market gardens around Dandenong as a casual labourer. During the next 9 years he worked for Kraft in their factory; at 30 he moved to Bush Electric, as a fitter and turner, for 6 years. At 36, Eric moved to Safeway, where he was employed for 9 years. In 1962, he met and married Jan, his lifetime love and friend. They moved to Dandenong where they have lived ever since. Their only son Craig was born in 1968.

The breadth of Eric's commitment to the people of Dandenong is supported by his need to strive for social justice. Eric had a severe car accident in 1964, spending seven months in hospital. The experience led Eric and Jan to join the Australian Labor Party, where they worked to help initiate Medibank health cover. From 1985 until his retirement five years ago, Eric worked as Electorate Secretary for the Federal member for Holt, and was Honorary Chief Returning Officer for the Federal and State branches of the A.L.P. for 28 years. Between 1986-1995 he served as a Councillor of the City of Dandenong and was Mayor in 1992-1993. Eric has been a Chairperson of Dandenong's Australia Day Committee, the Youth Employment Program and an active member of the Benevolent Society.

Eric helped to form the University of the Third Age, which now has over 350 members, and is a foundation member of the Dandenong Foodbank Committee, where he still works tirelessly as a volunteer. Eric is involved with Dandenong's Senior Citizens Clubs and helped to establish clubs for non-English speaking migrants. Eric also has worked for the Market Radio Station, Red Cross, School Committees, the Jan Wilson Community Centre and the Dorothy Bailey House Project. However, it is when he talks about Wallara Australia that his quiet passion shines. Eric has been a board member since 1989 and Chairperson since 1996, striving for intellectually disabled people to be respected and valued.

The outstanding contribution Eric has made to the Dandenong community, particularly to the disabled, the unemployed and the poor, has touched thousands of lives. The young man who went to work at 13, to look after his family, never stopped. His “family” simply became the people of Greater Dandenong.