

The ELRR Editorial Committee pay tribute to the life and work of David Plowman, who was a founding Editor of the journal

The Economic and  
Labour Relations Review  
2014, Vol. 25(1) 3–4  
© The Author(s) 2014  
Reprints and permissions:  
sagepub.co.uk/journalsPermissions.nav  
DOI: 10.1177/1035304614523883  
elrr.sagepub.com



## David Henry Plowman AM: 9 April 1942–22 December 2013

David Henry Plowman was born on 9 April 1942 at the Mtarfa Military Hospital in Malta. His father was an English soldier who married a Maltese woman on his tour of duty during World War II. David was the second of three sons. After the war, the family moved to Bournemouth, England, but because David and one of his brothers had respiratory problems, it was decided that the mother and three boys would return to Malta. Although David's father was supposed to join the family, he never appeared, and the family, bereft of a major bread winner, found their return to Malta very hard going.

David's older brother concluded that there was no future for them in Malta and persuaded David that they should move to Australia as child migrants. They did not travel together as David had suffered an injury and needed to recover before he could travel. His brother arrived in Fremantle in 1953, and David joined him 3 months later. He was 10 years old. They were two of 310 Maltese child migrants who found their way to Australia between 1950 and 1965. Eight years later, David and his older brother sponsored their mother and younger brother to join them in Australia.

After David arrived in Australia, he was moved to Tardun, 480 km north of Perth and attended St. Mary's Agricultural College. He never lost contact with the school or his memory of the time that he spent at St. Mary's. In 2003, he published a history of the school, celebrating its 75th anniversary, *Enduring Struggle: St Mary's Tardun Farm School*.

Having finished his studies at St. Mary's, David attended teachers' college and obtained a scholarship to undertake a Master of Arts in Industrial Relations at the University of Melbourne. He was subsequently employed in the Department of Industrial Relations at the University of New South Wales in the latter part of the 1970s. In time, he became a Professor of Industrial Relations and was appointed as the Head of the School of Industrial Relations and Organisational Behaviour. In 1993, he went back to Western Australia as the Director of the Graduate School of Management (it is now called the Business School) at the University of Western Australia.

David had a broad, generalist approach to industrial relations research. He published several books and numerous articles which examined both historical and contemporary issues. The breadth of his research is indicated by the titles of his books: *Australian Industrial Relations* (1980), the first text book in the area, co-authored with a variety of other scholars over many editions; *Australian Trade Union Statistics* (1981); *Wage*



David Henry Plowman AM.  
(Photograph by permission of UWA.)

*Indexation: A Study of Australian Wage Issues* (1981); *Australian Unions: An Industrial Relations Perspective* (1983), a co-edited book of readings; *Holding the Line: Compulsory Arbitration and National Employer Co-ordination in Australia* (1989), based on his PhD thesis; *Australian Industrial Relations: An Introduction* (1992); and *Australian Wage Determination: Select Documents* (1992).

In 1994, David was elected a Fellow of the Academy of the Social Sciences in Australia. From 2002, through to its disbanding in 2009, David served as the Chairman of the Child Migrants of Malta. He liaised with Australian and Maltese governments and the Catholic Church, raising awareness of Maltese child migrants and lobbying on their behalf concerning their past treatment. I remember, on a visit to Western Australia, David taking me to a monument to Maltese child migrants in Fremantle which he spoke about with great pride. In mid 2012, David received an Order of Australia in the General Division of the Queen's

Birthday Honours List for his 'services to the community through support for child migrants, as the founding chair of Child Migrants, and to higher education'.

In late 2013, David was further honoured when he received the University of Western Australia Chancellor's Medal and the Dean's Award from the Business School of the University of Western Australia.

David was one of those who saw the glass as half full. He approached life with enthusiasm and energy. He was an energetic and hard working scholar, and an able and forthright administrator. David was not one for airs and graces. His approach to everyone was simple, genuine and courteous. He liked helping others and was never happier than when one of his students reported back to him about their progress. I spoke with him before he died. All he wanted to do was to hear my news, talk and laugh about old times, nothing about himself. He was, one of life's gentlemen.

David Plowman made important contributions to industrial relations scholarship, management education and the cause of Maltese child migrants. His was a life lived well. He is survived by his wife Catherine, children Michael and Emily and grandchild Ella Rose.

Braham Dabscheck  
University of Melbourne, Australia  
(21 January 2014)