Aileen Joy Plant

CELEBRATION OF LIFE

13 • 4 • 07
A celebration of the life of Professor Aileen Plant

Order of Proceedings

- Master of Ceremonies
  Lisa Adams

- Official welcome and message from Curtin
  Jane den Hollander,
  Acting Vice-Chancellor

- Nyoorn Ceremony on behalf of the Nyungar community
  Kim Collard

- Aileen’s achievements
  John Mathews

- Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing
  Mary Murnane

- Ministerial Advisory Committee for AIDS, Sexual Health and Hepatitis
  John Kaldor

- World Health Organization, Geneva
  Angela Merianos

- Northern Territory Health Department
  Shirley Hendy

- The Master of Applied Epidemiology program at ANU
  Linda Selvey

- International role and the Australian Biosecurity CRC
  John Mackenzie

- Aileen’s protégés
  Rochelle Watkins
  Raina MacIntyre

- Response from Aileen’s family
  Reg Parnell

- Australasian Faculty of Public Health Medicine and
  Curtin Division of Health Sciences
  Charles Watson

The grand piano will be played by Deborah Lehmann, a public health and medical colleague, and friend of Aileen’s.
Tea With Aileen

In a morning sunbeam flecked with gold
Madura leaves, brown lit speckles
Fell like grain from spoon to pot
Black twigs of Russian Caravan
Depth of flavour, she said
A sparkle in her ocean eyes
Green leaf on white china
Sweet and light Mountain Mist
She laughed and added some
In the garden we sipped
From delicate cups
Wondered on how and why
And watched a white cloud
Fade into a wide, blue sky.

LISA ADAMS
Aileen. Your star never had a chance to wane, and it will always shine brightly like your sparkling blue eyes and magnificent golden hair. Who could forget your classic ‘Aileen putting her hair up’ manoeuvre? It was always a special treat when your hair was down.

DAVID HEYMANN
When we had ten minutes together in the morning of her last day in Indonesia, we discussed the work we had done together in the past - and our plans for the future. Her plans were simple – to continue to serve in whatever hamlet or island she found in need. Aileen will live on through those whom she has helped throughout the world. The world is a better place because of her life.

ANDREA ELLIS
I feel very privileged to have had that time with her. It only helped to reinforce the deep respect I already had for her. Such a super lady and a great mind.

STEPHEN PROWSE
In reflecting on Aileen’s contribution and the comments I have received from her colleagues, words such as inspirational, infectious love for humanity, insightful, dedicated servant of public health, commitment, and enthusiasm all convey the admiration we felt for her.

RENU DAYAL-DRAGER
This has been such terrible news for all Aileen’s friends and colleagues. I can only imagine what it must be to see her empty place. Aileen had a beautiful face that shone with her inner light and generosity to impart her knowledge and humanity. She is larger than life and will continue to inspire me.

ANGELA MERIANOS
Ails, you shone so brightly and nurtured us with your wisdom, kindness, compassion and generosity. You also had a great sense of the ridiculous and made us laugh, and an enormous intelligence to challenge our assumptions - great talents both. To borrow some words from another friend – a star has suddenly disappeared from the sky. I’m very proud to have been counted as one of your friends. I’ll miss you.
Lots of love, Angela
ANGUS NICOLL
Many of us knew Aileen well as one of those people that we knew could be parachuted into difficult and stressful public health emergencies and would then work through and sort it all out. The ultimate public health ‘safe pair of hands’. I first came across her in an EU meeting in Madrid when she was working in Geneva during one of her WHO placements. She was a breath of fresh Australian common sense, and good for us all. Seemingly eight foot tall and wide and built by the same firm that did Stonehenge, I always knew she had significant health problems. But she paid scant attention to herself and her health and never complained of what she was suffering. She was a wonderful public health person and a great colleague, always with a wicked sense of humour.

PAT DRURY
Aileen was a marvellous warm person – compassionate and committed. Straight-talking – Aileen never suffered fools gladly, but always kept her sense of humour and perspective. Irrespective of who Aileen met, she treated everyone equally – and as a result brought out the best in people. Aileen’s work and professionalism are testament to a life devoted to people’s health and public health.

MARGARET CHAN
She never hesitated to travel to the places she was needed. And we needed her, many many times, in extremely challenging situations. She brought a deep sense of duty, commitment, vast experience, ethics, courage, and professionalism to her work. Those who knew her described her as “the best,” “the beating heart” and a “true servant” of public health.

JOHN MACKENZIE
Dear Ails, Thank you for all those wonderful times we’ve shared and the golden memories I’ll cherish, and especially the warmth of your smile and that chuckle you gave every time you thought I was trying to pull the wool over your eyes! We shared so much as we looked and worked towards a similar horizon. It was a privilege to have been your friend and colleague. Thank you dear Ails.
Aileen Joy Plant

Professor of International Health & Deputy Chief Executive Officer, Australian Biosecurity Cooperative Research Centre, Curtin University of Technology

MBBS (Western Australia) (1977)
MPH (USyd) (1988)
FAFPHM (Fellow of the Australasian Faculty of Public Health Medicine) (1989)
PhD (USyd) (1995)

Career Milestones

International assignments, consultancies, and advisory meetings: Vietnam, WHO Geneva, Fiji, Thailand, Egypt, Cambodia, Indonesia, Libya, China, New Zealand, USA, Malaysia

Member, Communicable Diseases Network Australia

Member, National Influenza Pandemic Action Committee including Chair, Research Committee

Member, Expert Advisory Group for the Chief Medical Officer for Australia

Member, Advisory Committee on Polio Eradication, World Health Organization

Member, Advisory Board for the Institute of Advanced Studies, Charles Darwin University, NT

Member, Strategic Research Initiatives Working Group, National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC)

Co-Chair, Capacity Building Grants for Population Health awards, NHMRC

Member, Urgent Research Committee, NHMRC

Member, National Arbovirus and Malaria Advisory Committee

Member, both Board and Scientific Advisory Committee (SAC) National Centre for Immunisation Research & Surveillance of Vaccine Preventable Diseases

Member, Editorial Board, Australia and New Zealand Journal of Public Health
Aileen’s family wish to thank all of you for being here today. Many people travelled long distances or cancelled other commitments to be here, and we thank them especially. We wish to thank Aileen’s friends and colleagues, all of whom have been wonderful in this time of grief. Our thanks go also to the Acting Vice-Chancellor, Professor Jane den Hollander, the Staff of Curtin University and the Staff of the Australian Biosecurity CRC for setting aside their grief and helping us; and for their hosting of this celebration of Aileen’s life.

Above all else, we thank you all for being such wonderful friends to Ails over so many years. She loved and treasured each and every one of you; and she was right.
Aileen
Joy
Plant
1948 – 2007