

## **Vale: Dr. Kaye Coates – an ‘irresistible force of nature’**

Dr Kaye Coates, who passed away on 03 January 2023, was a highly regarded food scientist and a great friend and mentor.

During her 23 year career in the Victorian public service within the (then) Victorian Department of Primary Industry, she emerged as a national leader in agricultural food safety, reforming how industry and governments considered food safety from the farm through every part of the value chain.

Kaye completed her PhD in 1994, at La Trobe University, where she investigated the growth of *Pseudomonas* spp. as spoilage flora on pork, and received a post graduate scholarship from the (then) Pig Research and Development Corporation. She led the Food Microbiology team at the department’s Attwood campus of the Victorian Institute of Animal Science in undertaking a range of research projects that focussed on shelf life, product integrity and safety through the supply chain.

A significant achievement of her work was the establishment of an export market for Australian pork to Singapore, for which she was awarded the Batterham Memorial Award by the Australasian Pig Science Association, and the departmental Daniel McAlpine Science Excellence Award for services to industry. This work included Kaye, and her team, scrambling around in cargo planes at Tullamarine (fortunately located conveniently close to Attwood), working with pork processors and freight forwarders in Australia and the importers, supermarkets and pork cutting rooms in Singapore. The activities included providing training in food safety and undertaking product and surface microbiological analysis and temperature logging, all directed at improving the handling and thus the shelf-life performance of the Australian product in the market. It also involved attending high level meetings in Singapore with government officers and AUSTRADE, all of which Kaye handled with her usual aplomb and good humour.

Her final role at the department was as the Program Investment Manager, managing research investment to improve product integrity, quality and food safety and, thus, market access for Victorian industry. She continued her contribution as a consultant after leaving the department.

Kaye was always ready to take on a challenge – her mantra was ‘*How hard can it be?*’ – and she inspired her colleagues and staff to work with her to find solutions. She was warm, wickedly funny, and a role model for many female scientists. It was typical of Kaye that she insisted the Daniel McAlpine award be conferred on the team, not her individually. Her spirit of collaboration and the generosity she displayed to all team members, no matter how junior, was illustrated in the stories that were told at the celebration of her life: her staff and colleagues always felt that, as she was achieving remarkable things, she was taking us with her and teaching us how.

For this, Kaye, we thank you. You will be missed.

*Words by Heather Haines*