

## BEAL, Professor Robert – International Expert on Blood Transfusion; Year of '50

*The following is reproduced with the kind permission of NATA (National Association of Testing Authorities).*

<https://www.nata.com.au/19-nata-news-archive/137-remembering-bob-beal>

Professor Robert (Bob) William Beal AM, passed away in Adelaide on 20 November 2016 after a short illness.



Born in Newcastle on 25 March 1934, Bob was educated at Newcastle Boys' High School. He graduated in medicine from Sydney University and gained fellowships in the Royal Australian College of Physicians, Royal Australian College of Pathologists, Royal Australian College of Medical Administrators, the Australian Institute of Management and the Australian Medical Association and was a Clinical Professor of Medicine at Flinders University. He was still teaching until his death.

Bob commenced as the Director of the Australian Red Cross Blood Transfusion Service in South Australia in 1964 at the age of 29 as the youngest director ever appointed. He continued in that role for 32 years, and during that time, both blood transfusion and clinical medicine underwent significant change and transformation. Bob was passionate about the safety of the blood supply - locally, nationally and internationally.

He was President of the Australian Society of Blood Transfusion 1978-80 and the International Society of Blood Transfusion 1998-2000 and was Head of the International Federation of Red Cross & Red Crescent Blood Program in Geneva in 1990-1992 and 1996-97 (also working with WHO). In these roles, he was able to influence and guide the safety of blood programs globally.

Along with Judith Hay, Bob's leadership created a culture where managers and staff truly understood 'why' they needed to do everything and passionately cared about what they did, taking enormous pride in motivating donors to return and in delivering the blood supply for patients. And of course, this rigor and discipline maintained the safety and sustainability of the blood supply.

Bob had enormous energy and was a champion for 'proper process' which made him a perfect NATA Technical Assessor, a role he held for over 16 years. He was also a member of the NATA Council and was elected to the NATA Board in 1994. In this capacity he was responsible for approving many accreditations and made a valuable contribution to NATA's Medical Testing program.

His influence in setting up NATA's joint medical testing program with the Royal College of Pathologists of Australasia (RCPA) is central to its current strength and success.

Bob's membership of the Haematology / Immunohaematology Technical Group from 1986 to 2000 provided the focus for determining appropriate best practice in the individual disciplines within the medical testing profession.

A celebration of his life was held at St Peter's Cathedral which is the family's regular church, full of music and stories, and this event was summed up by Philippa Hetzel from the ISBT in this tribute:

“An avuncular man, a polymath, highly respected and very knowledgeable, a mentor and friend, a great story teller” - these are the words chosen by colleagues to describe Bob Beal. He was liked and respected by so many people here in Australia, and internationally. His life was full and productive, his service and achievements, significant and many.

While Bob was a stickler for the rules, he was also very kind, taking a genuine and personal interest in other people. He had a remarkable memory for detail and was a wonderful raconteur. He had a series of favourite one liners that he would quote liberally and repeatedly to invariably teach a moral lesson.

A favourite was: “Blood Transfusion is like marriage: it should not be entered upon lightly, unadvisedly or wantonly or more often than is absolutely necessary.”

Bob himself had a natural interest and curiosity to understand: to learn and to share his knowledge. He was always an active participant in whatever he undertook. It was his initiative and passion to start the first ARC International Humanitarian Law Committee, in South Australia. His interest and support of that particular cause continuing until his death.

He was an accomplished organist and choir master, a keen golfer and an avid reader. He is survived by his wife Sue, five children and ten grandchildren.

Bob will be fondly remembered and greatly missed.

