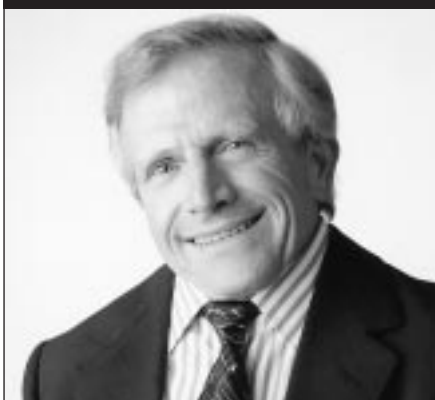


## OBITUARY



**Harry McGurk**

Born Glasgow, Scotland, 23 February 1936  
Died Melbourne, 17 April 1998

The Staff and members of the Board of Management of the Australian Institute of Family Studies were saddened by the death of the Director, Dr Harry McGurk, who passed away on 17 April 1998 from complications following heart surgery. He was sixty-two.

Harry was born in Glasgow in 1936. He left school at fifteen, and worked as a clerk in an electrical firm. During his youth he was very active in the Church of Scotland Youth Assembly, and became a member of the Iona Youth Associates. He spent much

of his spare time on Iona – a small windswept island off the Isle of Mull on Scotland's beautiful rugged west coast – helping restore the Island's ancient Abbey. His involvement with the Quakers dates back to this time.

In his early twenties and wanting to further his education he took up evening classes, and at the age of twenty-four did a Diploma in Social Work at the University of Glasgow. He then worked as a Probation Officer for several years. After a period in Nigeria working with the Education Authority there, Harry returned to Scotland to complete a degree in psychology at the University of Strathclyde, followed by a PhD on the Discrimination of Orientation in Infancy and Early Childhood.

In 1971 Harry was offered a one year post-doctoral fellowship at Princeton, New Jersey, following which he returned to the United Kingdom and joined the Department of Psychology at the University of Surrey. During this time he published numerous research articles and books, supervised many post-graduate students, and held visiting professorships in the United States, Australia and Spain. In 1990 he moved to the University of London as Professor of Developmental Psychology and Director of the Thomas Coram Research Unit at the University's Institute of Education. From there he moved to Australia to take up the post of Director of the Australian Institute of Family Studies, in June 1994.

Harry came to the Institute with an international reputation for his research into family matters. He brought to the role of Director an abiding commitment to social justice issues, especially those involving children, and a wealth of experience and worldwide contacts. He had enormous energy, vitality and dedication. As the Federal Minister for Family Services, Mr Warwick Smith, said: "Dr McGurk's dedication and expertise significantly raised the level of public debate about issues relevant to Australian families. The research undertaken by the Institute during his directorship helped to inform policy makers and the community alike."

During his years at the Institute Harry devoted time and energy to research and projects that he believed were important for the wellbeing of Australia's children and families. One of these was the Parenting-21 study, the Australian component of an international collaborative research project investigating cultural differences in parenting practices. As part of this research, Harry was particularly involved in working with the University of Queensland, Cairns, and with

Torres Strait Islander families. Other projects with which he was closely associated were the Looking After Children Project; Modelling the Costs of Child Neglect and Abuse, with the South Australian Office for Families; several Child Protection Project Evaluations for the Victorian Department of Human Services; and the National Youth Suicide Prevention Strategy Communications Project. He was a member of a national consortium that is proposing to conduct a Feasibility Study for Longitudinal Research on the Outcomes of

Child Care for Children. His participation and expertise in all these endeavours will be hugely missed.

Harry was a member of many international organisations, including the Board of Directors of the International Family Policy Forum, the Society for Research in Child Development, and the British Psychological Society. Since 1996 he was President of the International Society for the Study of Behavioural Development, and for some years was editor of the *International Journal of Behavioural Development*.

Over the years Harry developed a passion for cycling, and enjoyed some wonderful cycling holidays in England and Scotland. After his move to Australia, he continued to pursue this passion. He came in one morning and related an experience he had pedalling home the previous evening. He was in Flinders Street, Melbourne, when he was about to overtake a carriage pulled by two draught horses. At the last minute the driver swung the horses into a U-turn, which left Harry stranded – where to go? He "did the only thing possible and followed the path of the horses, slowly, gracefully, and to the applause of the hundreds of people who had stopped to watch" (his words) to see what he would do. This was typical of his ability to rise to the occasion!

As well as cycling, Harry had many interests, the latest being table tennis. It was during our regular lunchtime games at the Institute, waiting for his turn with the bat, that we were able to enjoy fully his bracing humour and his challenging wit. And it was here that we learned a bit more about Harry the man, rather than Harry the Director, as he shared with us his knowledge of music and opera, his fondness for cooking and good (vegetarian!) food, and his experiences in the many countries he visited. He talked often of his love of Scotland and particularly the island of Iona.

Members of Staff and Board of Management joined Harry's family and friends at a Meeting for Worship to give thanks for Harry's life at the Quaker Meeting House in Toorak, on 22 April 1998.

We extend our deepest sympathy to Harry's daughter, Rhona, and to his partner, Anne, and her sons Daniel and Eric. He will be missed. In the words of his family,

A life fully lived  
So much given  
So much more to give

*Narda Sowter*