Bill Keating was a very important, dedicated and committed member of the strong and vibrant Australian Branch of the IWSc, from the very beginning, and was synonymous with the advancement of wood science.

In particular, the Australian forest products industry today has much to be grateful for the work of Bill Keating.

As Secretary and later Chairman of the Branch, he had a great and wide influence and contribution to the advancement of wood science.

Bill accepted the nomination as Branch Honorary Secretary on the formation of the Branch in 1973. His considerable organisational skills and initiatives in his duties, particularly in the various seminars, conferences and workshops arranged by the Branch resulted in it being established as a serious base for the furtherance of wood science and technology. Coupled with this was Bill’s worldwide reputation and particularly contacts with the UK’s leading wood scientists.

Bill was Chairman of the Branch from 1985 to 1989.

Bill was elected Vice-President of the IWSc in 1984, and this today means that he is an Honorary Fellow of the Institute of Materials, Minerals and Mining (Wood Technology Society community). This was in recognition of Bill’s long and close association with the IWSc, particularly his interests in timber technology education, which provided the impetus for the (Australian) National Common Core Curriculum in Timber Technology.

Upon graduating from, Bill worked for the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO) and PMG (Postmaster General’s Department) involved in the fields of timber utilisation, standards for timber grading and general dissemination of information of wood properties. Bill was ideally suited to develop the aforementioned Curriculum.

He is a prolific author and contributor on wood science and technology. He has 6 books (some co-authored with Eleanor Bolza), for example, The Trade Flow of Timber in Australia, The Twisting of Corsican and Radiata Pine Telegraph Poles, and Characteristics, Properties and Uses of Timbers. He has over 68 Citations of which 8 were highly influential. An example of Bill’s writing is seen from the piece below, about the formation of the Australian Branch of the IWSc.

On retirement from CSIRO, Bill continued to take an active and leading role in the furtherance of wood science.
Bill (second left) with John Brazier, Harry Greaves and wives.

See also our profile on Dr Harry Greaves.

INSTITUTE OF WOOD SCIENCE
Australian Branch Formed

By W. G. Keating Branch Secretary

An Australian branch of the London-based Institute of Wood Science has recently been formed. This Institute, established in 1935, aims to advance the scientific, technical, practical, and general knowledge of persons interested in the study of wood and allied subjects. Since the early formative years of the Institute, a small group of Australian members has maintained a rather tenuous link with others around the world with a similar interest in wood science. For its population, Australia, over the last 40 years, has had a significant number of wood scientists, largely based at the CSIRO Forest Products Laboratory. With the spread of the wood science profession into industry, there has been a growing need for some cohesive group to provide a suitable forum and, as with other professional groups, to forge a bond of common interest. It was felt that the Institute of Wood Science would admirably serve these purposes.

Preliminary discussions in London during 1968 with officers of the Institute were the first move in the formation of a local branch. The proposal was nurtured for some time, and culminated in formal approval being granted for the formation of the Australian branch in December 1970. A talk by Dr. E. J. Gibson, vice-president of the Institute and Director of the Princes Risborough Forest Products Laboratory, given in Melbourne in August 1971, provided the further impetus necessary to form an ad hoc committee.

During 1972, 54 applications for membership were forwarded to London and the inaugural branch meeting was held in November of that year. The Committee elected then served until March 1973 and subsequently became the permanent Committee, with Dr. W. E. Hills of the Forest Products Laboratory as Chairman.

Some of the activities of the Institute in England include publication of a journal which has established a high international reputation, the holding of meetings and symposia, and visits to relevant scientific and industrial concerns. In Britain, the Institute is actively involved in the education sphere and is the examining body for approved courses in timber technology and timber economics at the technical college level. It is expected that the local branch will progressively follow a similar pattern in its activities, with the addition of a local newsletter for its members to supplement the Institute’s journal.

The first function organized by the Australian branch was a dinner and talk held on 10 April 1973 at Clunies Ross House, Melbourne, at which Professor J. D. Ovington, Head of the Department of Forestry, Australian National University, Canberra, was the guest speaker. In introducing Professor Ovington, the Chairman, Dr. Hills, explained the aims of the Institute and its particular relevance to local conditions. He pointed out that in these times of energy crisis it is worth remembering that Australia has more solar energy than practically any other country and photosynthesis through
forest trees is the best means of accumulating and storing this form of energy. He listed the advantages of timber when compared with some other materials in the areas of energy required per unit production, by-product formation, disposal costs, and environment restoration. He suggested that from a social viewpoint we should be asking whether forest products, from multiple use forests, should not be penetrating the field occupied by other products, particularly those from non-renewable resources.

Professor Ovington in his address entitled "The Increasing Need for Wood Science in the Forest Products Industry", explained how increasing population, environmental problems, disparity in living standards, and the influence of informed public opinion were all modifying the magnitude and pattern of wood production around the world. He saw the role of the wood scientist as one aimed at improving efficiency, lowering costs, and developing new products. He emphasized that there must be a significant improvement in communication, not only with the general public but also between the relevant specialist fields, of which wood science is but one.

The Institute will reprint Professor Ovington's address and make it available to those interested in the subject.

The branch is currently planning two other functions for 1973. The first of these is a panel discussion on the topic "Wood Science and Industry: the need for two-way communication". The three speakers on this panel, Messrs. Lindsay Bryant, Norton Ladkin, and John Stokes, who are all Institute members, are well known and highly respected within the timber industry. This discussion will probably be held in late July or early August.

For the second function, on 17 October, the Institute has been most fortunate in obtaining the promises of addresses by two world-renowned wood scientists. They are Prof. Dr. W. Liese, Research Institute for Forestry and Timber Industries, Republic of West Germany, and Dr. H. O. Fleischer, Director of the Forest Products Laboratory, Madison, Wisconsin, U.S.A.

Enthusiasm in the Australian branch is high and there are excellent prospects for the future. Industry support will be welcomed and membership inquiries can be directed to either the Chairman or Secretary, Forest Products Laboratory, CSIRO, P.O. Box 310, South Melbourne, Vic. 3205.