



The West Obituaries

Edited by Torrance Mendez

CEO helped transform Rockingham

GARY HOLLAND

Born: Pinjarra, March 1943

Died: Rockingham, April 2008

Gary Holland's vision for the City of Rockingham became reality as its first town clerk and later chief executive officer who oversaw projects that transformed the area from a coastal backwater to a thriving urban destination for work, shopping, living and leisure.

He died in office at the age of 65, unable to witness the formal opening of the latest addition to the burgeoning landscape, the Gary Holland Community Centre, named after him in honour of his achievements.

Gary was an office junior in the old Rockingham Road Board in 1960 when the late shire clerk, Don Cuthbertson, schooled him in the ways of local government and

how to make it function effectively.

Over time, Gary was promoted to deputy shire clerk and became shire clerk in 1982 before the explosion in population and development that few other areas in WA could match.

Then, on November 12, 1988 he assumed the mantle of town clerk and Rockingham took its first tentative step forward as a





city in name and in making. By 1996, Gary was chief executive officer.

Back in 1988, Rockingham had a population of around 38,000 which would more than double in less than two decades to an estimated 97,000 in the 2006-07 financial year. Approvals for new homes, residential units and other licences were worth \$73 million in 1988; they were \$424 million in 2006-07, roughly a sixfold increase.

Gary had the task of overseeing the City Centre Project, which aimed to establish a heart for Rockingham that could keep pace with relentless growth while providing facilities to meet local demands. The result was booming development that included new homes for young families drawn to the area for its lifestyle and affordable housing.

Critical facilities were established — the Warnbro Aqua Jetty, the Waterfront Village, the education precinct including Rockingham Campus and Murdoch University, Lark Hill sportsplex and, of course, the new community centre.

Accolades flowed and he got a nickname, The Godfather. He became an honorary freeman of the city in 1995 and was honoured with the Centenary of Federation Medal in 2003, followed by the Public Service Medal in 2004.

Rockingham Mayor Barry Sammels said: "I believe Gary is an example of everything a local government officer should strive to be and an example to us all on how to conduct ourselves in public service."

Gary George Holland was born on March 6, 1943, the first of two children to butcher George and wife Margaret Holland.

At first they lived with family in North Dandalup before breaking away to a new life in the sleepy hollow of Safety Bay in 1954.

George Holland built their house in Safety Bay Road with the help of 11-year-old Gary. In later years, when asked why Safety Bay, Gary would quote his father, who had noticed fewer flies.

The lad went to Kwinana and John Curtin high schools and excelled in sport — he held the high jump record at John Curtin. He got two job offers on leaving — National Australia Bank and the Rockingham Road Board — and on the advice of his father chose the latter as a "job

for life".

There he found romance with an office colleague who became Mrs Barbara Holland in 1967. The newlyweds moved into another house a few doors away from his parents' home. Gary joined the Army Reserve and rose to the level of sergeant while maintaining an interest in furthering his education, attending night school in Perth four nights a week.

Domestic life was

peppered with extended family and three children, Andrew, Michael and Lisa.

He was a director of Peel Thunder Football Club. The club beat Claremont in the week after his death, putting Peel in the top four of the WAFL competition for the first time in its history.

Horseracing was another passion. Gary attended the Melbourne Cup each year and was involved with the Australian Trainers' Association and WA Trainers' Association.

News of his cancer struck at a time when he was contemplating retirement. Gary Holland died on April 13, leaving a wife and three children, and grandchildren Kieara, Drew, Luke, Tamsin, Amber and Ysabella.

Never one to trumpet his achievements, when pressed he would say that the greatest of these was to raise a family and establish a good name in the community.

Chris Lee, president of the Kwinana Industries Council, representing major businesses in the industrial area, is more effusive: "Just as Sir Christopher Wren's monument was considered to be London's St Paul's Cathedral and much of the city he redesigned, Mr Holland's monument is the thriving City of Rockingham, of which he must also be regarded as a principal architect."

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