

## Obituary

# In Memoriam: Trevor Keith Hawkins

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A man of many companions may come to ruin, but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother. (Proverbs 18:24)

On November 22, 2010, Trevor Hawkins died suddenly and unexpectedly of complications from a cerebral haemorrhage. He is survived by his partner, Sandra and their son, William. His loss has deeply affected all who knew him, had worked with him and had been taught by him. Trevor was born in 1951 and grew up in Kulnura, inland from the Central Coast of New South Wales. He moved to Sydney in order to undertake a Bachelor of Arts degree majoring in Psychology. He graduated from the University of Sydney in 1974.

### Our Privileged Knowledge About Trevor

Robert Pryor knew Trevor from 1971 up until his death. They were university undergraduates together in psychology. They subsequently worked together in government departments, universities and in two vocational and rehabilitation companies, which they jointly owned. Robert and Trevor frequently ran joint workshops and conference sessions over a 25-year period. They also co-authored several journal articles in national and international publications.

Jim Bright knew Trevor from 1995 up until his death. Jim worked with Trevor at the Vocational Capacity Centre for some years.

### Brief History

Trevor was then employed with the New South Wales Government in the Division of Vocational Guidance Services for less than one year before beginning his long association with vocational rehabilitation. Initially, he worked for the Commonwealth Rehabilitation Service and subsequently received scholarships for the Graduate Diploma in Rehabilitation Counselling at the Cumberland College of Health Sciences 1978 and for a master's degree at the University of Southern Illinois in 1982. After working for a period in the United States he returned to Australia. He successfully applied for a lectureship at Cumberland College in 1984 and continued to teach there until his death, in the process teaching and mentoring literally hundreds of students over that 26-year period. Trevor's ongoing teaching contribution also included conducting numerous workshops for rehabilitation counsellors throughout Australia for over 20 years. In addition, he was a frequent contributor to national conferences sharing his expertise about inter alia, brain injury, job search strategies, client advocacy and vocational assessment.

Trevor continued to maintain an active involvement with individual clients as well, through rehabilitation and assessment work with a variety of consultancies including his own private company, Trevor Hawkins Consulting. In 2001, he became a Director of the Vocational Capacity Centre and performed the roles of both consultant and executive manager up until his death.

In addition, Trevor played a seminal role in the development of the Australian Society of Rehabilitation Counsellors (ASORC), holding virtually every executive position on the management team, often several times over, including the position of President. He contributed countless hours to the ongoing running and progress of in-service provision of ASORC. His experience and perspicacity were continuously influential in decisions crucial in ASORC's development.

In light of such a history of contributions to the profession, it is not unreasonable to conclude that Trevor Hawkins has a legitimate claim to be considered as the virtual father of rehabilitation counselling in Australia.

However, on a more personal level it is not only what Trevor accomplished for rehabilitation counselling in Australia, it was also the way that he went about accomplishing it for which he will be remembered. While it may be possible to outline a wide range of admirable qualities that Trevor displayed, only two will be focused up on here. The first is Trevor's amiability. Every day rehabilitation professionals are confronted with stories of illness, injury and sometimes tragedy. Yet despite working in an area where many buckle emotionally under the burden of all of this, he was consistently amiable.

### *Amiability Was One of Trevor's Defining Qualities*

'Amiable' means to be friendly, likeable or agreeable in disposition. On the face of it, this seems an obvious quality that would benefit anyone seeking to be successful in work. However, it is a mistake to underestimate both the power of amiability and the apparent of scarcity of it in the workplace. To recommend that others be friendly or open is easy, but in practice people often find it difficult to be amiable.

All of us, even the most repugnant, can usually manage a few moments of unctuous agreeability, but such sporadic or self-serving gestures are more likely to raise questions of insincerity and lack of integrity in the surprised minds on the receiving end. To be amiable means to be consistently and authentically open to others. It means being approachable, at all, or nearly all times.

Amiable people such as Trevor, like other people. They respect other people. They are interested in other people. They want to see others succeed and will work to help them achieve. Perhaps, most importantly, they like themselves or at least they are self-accepting. They are at ease with themselves and so can be at ease with others. There is no pent-up energy, no points to prove, no audience they perceive they need to impress.

There was a quiet, peaceful, groundedness in Trevor's amiability. He did not seek or need the limelight. He was a team player and who did not need to engage in ghastly false team bonding to convince others of his sincerity. Indeed, he was more likely to arrange events spontaneously that respect the needs and preferences of others and, in so doing, to naturally build an esprit de corps.

Amiable people, such as Trevor, are popular. They are go-to people who are consistent, competent, respected and reliable. Amiable people have a sense of perspective, but at the same time they are not removed or remote. They have a maturity that is understated and reassuring. When one starts to unpack amiability, it is obvious that amiability should never be taken for granted and never underestimated. Trevor's good-heartedness towards almost everyone with whom he came into contact, is a legacy we can all value.

### *A Person With Exceptional Commitment*

The second attribute that Trevor clearly displayed was that of commitment. In a world of 'don't have the time to ...', 'don't get sucked into ...', 'stay cool ...' or just plain 'whatever ...', the need for whole-hearted commitment to causes that matter becomes even more crucial and more valuable. Trevor often showed commitment to his family and friends, but more publicly it was his ongoing and relentless commitment to the cause of assisting those with disabilities that made him such a remarkable person. His endeavour to teach well, his concern for his students' professional development, his ambition that the profile of rehabilitation counselling would be more prominent, his willingness to provide advice and assistance to colleagues and his unfailing care for his clients, all demonstrate a visionary hope for what the profession might become and a profound desire for the provision of the highest quality services to those with disabilities. What never failed to impress about Trevor was his unswerving desire to always do 'a good and professional job' in whatever he was doing. This would sometimes cause him frustration when the 'system' would not allow it, when resources were too scarce and when others did not share his vision. However, it was not a frustration born out of inflexibility and wilfulness but simply out of an aspiration for the provision of the best possible services to those with disabilities.

Trevor's commitment to the rehabilitation counselling profession was not of the kind characterised by an egotism that believes if things are not done the way I think or want them to be done, then I am going to 'take my bat and ball and go home and not play with you any more'. He knew what he believed was in the best interests of the profession, his colleagues and his clients. At the same time, his commitment was never conditional on always getting his way and having his views prevail over all others. Trevor never impressed as the kind of person who saw his commitment as some special sacrifice that he was making professionally and therefore that everyone else should be so grateful that they should let him have his way all the time. It was here that his amiability displayed itself in combination with his commitment. It was his openness to others' views, his willingness to work with others and his good humour that prevented him from simply dismissing others' perspectives if they were contrary to his own. In doing so Trevor demonstrated that rare combination of attributes that allowed him to take his work with extreme seriousness and yet not to take himself too seriously.

The sign of a life lived well is that it leaves a legacy not only of individual achievement but also of human inspiration. In his amiability and his commitment, Trevor Hawkins' life provides a mentored model of professionalism that each of us who remain should not only admire but also aspire to emulate.

Professor Robert Pryor and Professor Jim Bright  
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