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A tribute by David Horton

Barry Avent (pictured on left), the former well-known CEO of the Anglican Investment and Development Fund (AIDF) passed away on February 21 after a short illness.

In May 1999 Barry commenced 10 years of devoted service to the Fund and to the Diocese. He had not long retired after 35 years with Westpac. In later years he had served in senior positions, heading the bank's operations on Christmas Island, in Fiji and in Canberra.

When he joined the AIDF he brought his wide ranging skills and experience to bear on the operation of the Diocese's investment fund and saw it grow dramatically.

During his time Barry devoted a great deal of attention to aiding the development of the Anglican schools which had been recently created, through his oversight of the Fund's financial assistance packages for each of the schools. He became expert in the intricacies of the governmental support system and took responsibility for much of the reporting requirements.

At the same time he was conscious of the need to grow the deposit base, attract new lending and protect the moneys entrusted to the Fund's care. Substantial new borrowing arrangements were negotiated as a result of the flourishing deposit base. Despite the pressures of this period of rapid growth he maintained the proud record which had seen the Fund record surpluses in each year of its existence.

The board of the AIDF always retained confidence in Barry's skills as a manager, as a thinker and as a friend of the staff members. As to the various propositions put to the Fund, Barry could spot a 'dodgy' case from a distance, yet often massaged borderline but worthwhile applications to get them over the line to everyone's advantage.

Barry did not neglect the needs of individuals and proved a wise and compassionate counsellor to Fund members and clients who did not share his financial expertise. He was always approachable and always offered constructive advice. In fact with all Barry's outstanding talents of administration, financial skill, management expertise and business know-how, the consensus is that he is most remembered as a person who loved people, loved to help and went out of his way to offer sound advice.

Because of the breadth of his skills he was valued by the wider Diocesan community in areas which were not strictly part of his job. In his own unassuming way he was always ready to assist beyond the call of duty.

He also was heavily involved with the Federal Golf Club in several capacities including that of Treasurer. This was probably not a chore for him because of his love for the game, the flair with which he addressed financial issues and the casual ease he enjoyed in mixing with his friends.

Barry will be remembered for his ability to relate to people. He built up a large network of relationships across the Diocese. His great memory for people simply reflected his keen interest and personal involvement with folk he met. As a child he was part of a large family in rural Victoria and one suspects he played out his life practicing and modelling the inclusiveness learnt in his early life in his dealings with the various sections of society he encountered. He was a great family man and is survived by his wife, Val, and two adult children.