

Tony Beddison (3/69)

Tony Beddison was born in Melbourne on 3 October 1948. He completed his secondary education at Caulfield Grammar School in Suburban Melbourne. Before entering the Army on 9 July 1969, with the third NS intake of that year, he was employed as a Manager of a Licenced Supermarket by Tintagel Investments. Tony commenced OTU on 25 July with Class 3/69. Whilst at OTU he attained the rank of sergeant. On graduation on 19 December he was allocated to the Royal Australian Engineers and posted to the School of Military Engineering (SME) at Casula, NSW. After completing his training at SME, Tony was posted to 35 Water Transport Squadron in Sydney. On completion of his NS, Tony transferred to the CMF where Beddison served for over three years with 31 Terminal Squadron (Transportation) based in Swan Street, Melbourne, the depot where most Victorians commenced their NS.

Tony married Robyn in 1976 and they have three children: Sam, Georgie and Daisy and they have five grandchildren. His later “national service” included Chairing the Australia Day Committee, and the Australia Remembers program (commemorating the 50th anniversary of the end of WW2) in 1995. The latter role led to Tony being appointed an AO (Later upgraded to AC for significant other services). He also spent time on the Council of the AWM - as well as undertaking various other important philanthropic leadership roles. As well as the AC, he was also awarded an Australian Centenary Medal, Australian Defence Medal and of course the National Service Medal. Tony was one of three OTU graduates recognised with an AC - the other two being the late Tim Fischer (3/66) and Jeff Kennett (3/68).



Tony advised his OTU Classmates of his being diagnosed with Acute Lukemia just before Christmas and that he was undergoing some extensive treatment when an infection took hold a week or so before he died early on 14 January 2020 at Cabrini Hospital. His wife Robyn and his family were with him at the end.

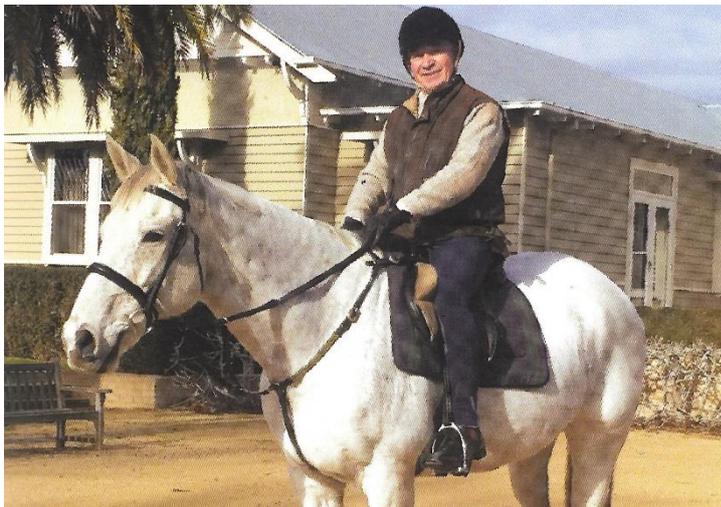
An energetic giant of Victorian life (Andrew Rule)

‘By the time Tony Beddison AC had worked his way to becoming a prosperous and influential businessman, he was on easy terms with Captains of Industry, premiers and prime ministers, princes and peers of the realm. He was well-known from the Moonee Valley committee room to Royal Ascot, where he and his wife Robyn once entered the famous course in a horse-drawn royal carriage. But when Mr Beddison died in Melbourne early on Tuesday, his brilliant career and vast network was overshadowed by his enduring work as a philanthropist.

‘The boy who spent his early days on a farm at Doreen before joining the Army became the man whose many achievements included heading the committee that built the new Royal Children’s Hospital. When the Queen formally opened the new building in Parkville in 2011,

it was not just a modern hospital for Victoria but among the finest anywhere on earth, with everything from a helipad to an aquarium and a Meerkat enclosure that brought a smile to everyone who visited. The seven-year construction was a logistical nightmare but the chairman's characteristic energy and attention to detail saw it through. Since then thousands of children have been treated, lives have been saved and families made whole again because of the imagination, perspiration and generosity of Tony Beddison and others like him. If he had done nothing else, he would be remembered for the "Children's". But it is just one of many community projects he took on with an attitude one friend describes as "tireless, enthusiastic and ever-optimistic." He also chaired Australia Remembers, the Australia Day Committee, the Prince's Trust and the FINA World Swimming Championships and was a director of the Murdoch Children's Research Institute. He was a longtime committeeman at Moonee Valley and raced several horses.

'Meanwhile, he built the Beddison group of companies into a nationwide recruitment business, maintaining strong relationships with state and federal governments on both sides of politics. He took delight in the rebuilding of the homestead and gardens on the historic property at Avenel that became the focus of family life for the Beddisons and their adult children Georgie, Sam and Daisy.



At Avenel, he was close to his boyhood friend Bill Swift, whose horse-trainer father had managed Findon Hunt Club near the Beddisons' property at Doreen. Mr Swift says the pair met as "three-year-olds" and have been mates ever since, a lifetime friendship based on their love of horses and horse sports. When Bill Swift was a butcher in Richmond in the 1980s, he had to get up to start work one Saturday at 5am after a big night out with "Tony".

Mr Swift, badly hung over, telephoned him and joked that he had better come and help in the butchery. "Twenty minutes later, there he was, showered and shaved and ready to work," Mr Swift recalled on Tuesday. "No silver spoon — a true self-made man."

'Tony Beddison was chairman of the Royal Children's Hospital. Neil Mitchell met the man he called "Beddo" (or sometimes, cheekily, "Lord Beddo") when he appeared on Mitchell's 3AW program in the early 1990s. Mitchell recalled on Tuesday: "Tony would often walk through the hospital corridors, off to some important meeting, with a tear running down his not inconsiderable nose. "He admitted he couldn't enter the place without becoming emotional because kids should not get sick. "To me he was a mentor, an adviser, a critic and loyal friend. "He loved his family, his country, farming, helping anyone who asked, and good red wine. "He was a networker, a man of integrity, determination and generosity, a great Australian." He was also a romantic. When Robyn Beddison had a significant birthday a few years ago her husband of 40 years presented her with a cream-coloured rose specially cultivated and named "the Robyn" in her honour. Last spring, their last together, the rose bloomed in the garden they built together.