



Mr Robert Cowan OAM
Honorary Fellow of St Mark's College

Over a quarter of a century, from 1995 to 2020, Robert (Bob) Cowan OAM and his late wife, Gayle Cowan OAM, supported hundreds of students from regional areas to be at St Mark's through Cowan Grants which have totalled approximately \$1 million. He is a Governor of the St Mark's College Foundation.

Bob Cowan served as Chair of Cowan Grant Pty Ltd. (formerly Cowan Grant Charitable Trust) from 1994 to 2008, and from 2008 as Director. The Cowan Grant Charitable Trust was created by Bob Cowan's parents in the early 1990s, and has supported students at a number of institutions as well as at St Mark's.

As Chair and as Director, Bob Cowan led the running of this remarkably generous scholarship program, working closely with Gayle Cowan and other trustees. It is clear that many of the students who received Cowan Grants to come to St Mark's would not have been able to come to study in Adelaide (and would not have been able to study at university at all) were it not for the Cowan Grants they received.

Bob Cowan led this life-changing work with enthusiasm, vigorous commitment, clarity of mind, efficiency, and generosity of spirit. He maintained a very close working relationship with successive heads of this College, as he has with other institutions, and also took an active and warm interest in the students supported by Cowan Grants. Bob and Gayle Cowan visited St Mark's College on very many occasions to meet with students, both through formal occasions (such as scholarship presentation ceremonies) and through social occasions (such as meals together at the College).

In January 2023, Bob Cowan was awarded a Medal of the Order of Australia "for service to the community of Mount Gambier". The citation, which also mentions Bob's work with the Cowan Grants, listed his service in other leadership positions, reflecting his interest in and commitment to his professional field of forestry, education at all levels (kindergarten, and primary and secondary school, as well as at the university level), art, and other community interests.

These many roles include: Director, Forest Operations, 1987-91, for Forestry SA, and service in other forestry organisations; Chair and Chief Executive Officer, Regional Development Australia Limestone Coast (formerly South East Economic Development Board), 1992-95; Chair of the Riddoch Art Gallery; and chairing the governance bodies of a local high school, primary school, and kindergarten in Mount Gambier.

Bob and Gayle Cowan's two sons, Leigh and Jeremy Cowan, were both resident students in St Mark's, and Leigh Cowan was College Club President in 1989.