

Michael Rochford, Sydney, Australia

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Michael Rochford is well known throughout the urological world for many reasons and could be regarded as a “Renaissance man” of urology. His urological knowledge is more than impressive, but it is his dedication to the nurturing of the discipline of urology and of his colleagues and students, combined with his humanity and care for “community,” that truly makes him a giant in urology.

Michael obtained his medical degree at the University of Sydney, graduating in 1961. He subsequently obtained surgical fellowships from the Royal College of Surgeons (FRCS) in 1966, and then his urological fellowship from the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons (FRACS) in 1972. Michael spent time working at the Whittington Hospital, with Sir Eric Riches at the Middlesex (Royal Marsden) Hospital, and with Dennis Poole-Wilson at the Christie and Salford Royal Hospitals, where he gained great experience in the surgical treatment of kidney and bladder cancers. Upon returning to Australia from the United Kingdom, he was appointed consultant urological surgeon at Nepean Hospital, Sydney in 1969, and then consultant urologist at The Liverpool Hospital, Sydney in 1971. From 1972 onward, he served as medical officer (group captain) to the RAAF, including formal appointment as command consultant urologist at 3-RAAF Hospital, Richmond, from 1972 to 1992.

This formal outline of his professional appointments does not reflect, in any way, the actual impact and significance of Michael’s influence and contribution to those institutions in Sydney. At the time of his appointment, both hospitals were community or district hospitals to which Michael brought a level of urological expertise much higher than either institution previously had available. Both hospitals were situated in the western part of Sydney and were relatively under-served. Michael was instrumental in upgrading the level of service provided, as well as in attracting better-qualified surgeons and starting training programs in urology. Today, both hospitals are major teaching hospitals in Sydney, with urology departments sought after for both training appointments and senior consulting urology posts. Michael Rochford was an active mentor of



Dr Michael Rochford, a giant in urology

many urologists who are in practice today (including myself)—he guided the path of many to urology training, espousing breadth as well as depth of training, and placing a good deal of emphasis on common sense. The last trait he thinks is far too rare in modern surgery and urology!

The Urological Society of Australasia (the name of the Urological Society of Australia & New Zealand at the time) was also a beneficiary of Michael Rochford’s expertise. He served on the Executive for many years and was honorary treasurer from 1983 to 1988. He was chairman of the Australasian Urological Foundation

from its inception in 1995 until 2022, directing its progress and continuation with great success.

The Urological Society of Australasia (USA) was formalized as a body in 1937, and immediately began its association with the SIU. At that time, the Australasian section of the SIU was limited to 10 members—8 from Australia and 2 from New Zealand. As early as 1940, the USA was requesting the quota be increased—this did occur slowly over subsequent years. At that time, SIU meetings were held every 3 years, mostly in Europe, with French as the dominant language and simultaneous translation a typical feature—although obviously an increasing financial burden for the Society. The SIU has undergone substantial changes since those days, and Michael was a very significant conduit for evolution within the SIU.

The 1991 SIU meeting was held in Seville, and a very enthusiastic group led by Bruce Pearson (chair), Michael Rochford, and David Golovsky lobbied for the 1994 meeting to be held in Sydney. The Executive of the SIU voted in its favour, and that decision would be the first step in a series of changes that, in one sense, could be regarded as an “avalanche of evolution,” although some undoubtedly perceived it as revolution. The SIU meeting in Seville heralded another momentous change for the SIU, as the meeting’s official language was changed from French to English, with the local organizing committee having the discretion as to what translations were available.

Unfortunately, Bruce Pearson passed away unexpectedly in 1992 leaving Michael and David Golovsky to jointly run the meeting. The “chair” of the Australasian Section President was left vacant in his honour. Until that time, to attend an SIU meeting, a delegate had to be seconded by an existing SIU member. Michael and David lobbied successfully to have this restriction lifted, allowing invitation to the meeting to be extended to all urologists, which, of course, remains the situation to this day. More than 2700 delegates attended the SIU meeting in 1994 in Sydney, demonstrating that people were prepared to travel great distances to a good meeting. Michael Rochford was predominantly responsible for obtaining sponsorship for the meeting, which highlighted that an SIU meeting could be financially successful. That significant influx of funds allowed the establishment of the SIU secretariat office in Montreal, which was the start of the “professionalization” of the organization and the progressive changes that formed the SIU of 2023.

Michael then started a long association with the Executive/Board of Directors of the SIU. He became chairman of the congress and established strong and long-standing relationships with industry and other professional organizations. Early in his role as chairman

of congress, he and the committee faced logistical challenges, but Michael’s diplomacy and his organizational skills were instrumental in overcoming all difficulties, and he was always quick to give credit to local organizing committees.

Of course, Michael continued with the organization to become appointed president of the SIU in 2002 in the Stockholms Stadshus, the hall where the Nobel Banquets are held, and his own memorable “presidential” meeting was held in Hawaii in 2004.

There are many stories that could be told about Rochford/SIU exploits around the world, and there are undoubtedly even more than will never be told. I think it could be a very educational evening to give Michael that extra whisky and get him to tell some of those tales, but alas his discretion is legendary, and I fear I will go wanting!

Philosophically, Michael saw a far-reaching role for the SIU, and with some like-minded fellow members guided the organization to a wider and more expansive role than it had originally performed. This, of course, was made possible by the new-found financial stability afforded to the SIU by the Sydney meeting, followed by the Montreal meeting in 1997.

Education, training, and access were the areas Michael Rochford saw as the backbone of the SIU, and how the SIU could have an identity of its own that was quite distinct from that of national societies and associations. Much of the Rochford “vision” has come to fruition in our present, modern SIU.

- Meetings—he pushed for an annual meeting (as opposed to the original triennial meeting) so as to keep the SIU in the mind’s eye of urologists and current to potential sponsors. After a period of biennial meetings, we now have an annual meeting.
- Journal—he also thought the SIU needed a journal and, together with Mostafa Elhilali, initiated the original collaboration with *Urology*, which has, of course, now evolved to the *SIU Journal*.
- Scholarships—the scholarship scheme was an idea that fitted his concept of what defines the SIU perfectly and he did everything he could, through his various positions in the SIU, to help establish this endeavour. Joe Thuroff, of course, was the long-time chair and a huge driving force behind this initiative.
- Training—Michael long held the belief that the most effective method of helping upgrade skills was to assist individual urologists within their local environment. He was always extremely proud of the support the SIU provided to centres in Kilimanjaro, Mozambique, and Wad Madani.

This short summary of Michael Rochford's contribution to the SIU is certainly not comprehensive, but hopefully it gives a perspective on his contribution to the organization's evolution. Those who might only have heard of him have some idea of the vision, philosophical bent, and imagination of the man who helped shape the SIU as we now know it, as well as his drive and financial skills that helped make it possible. He is one half of the "dynamic duo" that directed and facilitated the emergence of the modern SIU.

Michael is enjoying his well-earned retirement, although lamenting he does not get to play as much golf as he would like (by the way, he was depressingly good at that too). There are many who would consider it an honour to follow in Michael's footsteps—myself most definitely included in that category.