James Richard Whenan Walkley (Jim) was born at Moonta on SA’s Yorke Peninsula and early-on developed a lifelong passion for Australian Rules football. Jim always liked to remind people that he was part of the 1963 Premiership team for Moonta. He was a loyal follower and Member of Essendon Football Club throughout his life. Jim graduated from the University of Adelaide with a B.Ag.Sc. in 1968 and in 1970 married Ursula (Uschi). Jim and Uschi’s children are Ingrid, James and Carl. From 1969 to 1977 Jim worked with the late Scott Dolling as a Livestock Research Officer in the SA Department of Agriculture managing research projects to estimate phenotypic and genetic parameters for Merino sheep and to extend technical information on sheep breeding to wool growers. During 1977/78 he studied for a Master of Science (Animal Breeding) at the University of Edinburgh, and supervised by the late Prof. Charles Smith prepared a thesis on the use of traits measured in males and females to estimate breeding values for reproductive rate in sheep. During the 1980s he was Executive Officer, Woolplan the national sheep performance recording scheme developed on behalf of Animal Production Committee/Standing Committee of Agriculture. In 1987 he was a member of the Organising Committee for the Australian Wool Corporation’s “Merino Improvement Programs in Australia” conference at Leura which advised their Production Research Advisory Committee on R, D and E priorities for Merino breeding and genetics. Jim held various research management positions in the SA Department and SARDI from 1987 to 1994 including: A/Principal Livestock Research Officer leading the sheep and wool research group consisting of six scientists and their technical staff. He was also Principal Officer, Research Management and a foundation member of SARDI’s “Management Committee” and briefly their Interim Chief Livestock Scientist managing 36 State and 12 externally funded staff.

To quote Raul Ponzoni, an AAABG Fellow and close colleague and friend ‘Jim was very special, his inclination was more towards management and administration than towards methodical repetitive scientific endeavors. However, he had a tremendous capacity to ‘see through’ things, to detect weaknesses, loose ends, in projects and in papers. It was great to have someone like him in the group, if you gave Jim a manuscript to read and he said it was OK, you could rest assured that it had no loose ends. If there were any, Jim would pick them and give you a clear reply in his usual, very colorful language.’ To quote another close colleague and friend of Jim’s, Dave Kleemann of SARDI ‘Jim was a solid friend to many, including myself having known him and his wife Ursula since the start of his career in the early 1970’s. There was a whole group of early career researchers that started around the same time including Dennis Gifford, Simon Walker, Jim Egan, Paul Stephens, Roger Polkinghorne, Dick Davies, John Stafford, Peter James, Mike Round to name a few. Jim started his career establishing genetic research programs at both Turretfield Research Centre and on the Weapons Research Establishment property. I remember he and I doing a study tour of research centres in NSW soon after we started. I recall the first night in Broken Hill playing the one arm bandits (big new experience for both of us) – second coin, Jim got a flush of money – he thought it was Christmas! Another story stemmed from his “Booroola” research program with Simon Walker, Raul Ponzoni and Darryl Smith at Cape Borda on Kangaroo Island. Jim and Simon camped in a caravan near the house but Jim’s snoring was just too much so Simon exited with his sleeping gear in tow, threw it in the back of a ute, put it in angel gear and slept down by the shearing shed. Jim woke up next morning and said something like “Simon, what’s wrong with you!”. So many good stories and memories – he was a colourful character, had sharp intellect and communicated with everybody, irrespective. He supported me at various stages during my research career, of particular note, he was instrumental in securing a job for myself with DPI in Queensland when jobs were hard to get. Thank you Jim and Uschi for supporting me as a friend during this time. You’re sadly missed by all of us, Jim’.
In May 1995 Jim started work with the Queensland Department of Primary Industries (QDPI) as a Principal Geneticist then was Acting Industry Manager, Beef and Sheep for several years responsible for some 80 staff and then as a Program Leader in the Queensland Beef Industry Institute and its successors. From mid-2002 till the end of 2011 he was involved in Beef CRCs as a Program Manager, a member of the Re-bid Team for the CRC for Beef Genetic Technologies and again as a Program Manager.

Jim at a "CRC project planning meeting" during AAABG in Noosa 2005

During his career he has been actively involved with both the sheep and later the Northern beef industries in the use of genetic technologies. He assisted the SA Stud Merino Sheep Breeders’ Association organise conferences in regional SA and Broken Hill and in Queensland he was Secretary of the South and SE Regional Beef Research Committees which provide advice on R, D & E priorities to the Northern Australian Beef Research Council and on project funding to MLA’s Northern Beef Program Industry Committee. Jim joined AAABG in 1979 attending 13 conferences up to and including 2009. He authored/co-authored and refereed papers and in 1984 was on the Editorial, Newsletter and Social Committees. Until he left SARDI in July 1994 he was Secretary of the 1995 conference Organising Committee. For the 16th AAABG conference in Noosa he was Vice-President and was a member of the Organising Committee for the 2009 meeting in South Australia. Jim provided an outstanding example through his commitment to our employers, professional associations and livestock industries and in mentoring junior staff and was awarded an honorary member of AAABG at the 2009 conference (see photo below of Jim receiving his award from Wayne Pitchford)
Following Jim’s return from Queensland in 2007, he worked for QDPI but was based at Roseworthy Campus, undertaking work for the Beef CRC up till his retirement in 2011.

Jim’s strong and colourful character and his friendly and humorous nature made him the ‘life of the party’. He will be sadly missed by all who knew him. Condolences and best wishes to Jim’s wife Uschi and family.

**Prepared by** Dr Forbes Brien on behalf of the Association for the Advancement of Animal Breeding and Genetics.

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