Emeritus Professor Raymond A. Jarvis
(from the Australian Robotics and Automation Association)

The Australian Robotics and Automation Association on behalf of its council and members would like to express their sincere condolences to Irene and family over the passing of Ray.

Ray's contributions to the Australian and international robotics communities were truly remarkable. In fact, he has been described as the “Father of Australian robotics” by his peers.

Since his professional robotics career started in 1968, Ray was instrumental in leading Australia to the international recognition it currently celebrates in so many areas of robotics research. Ray's contribution to theoretical frameworks in computer vision, intelligent robotics and path planning are still being cited by both new and established researchers globally.

However, Ray was more than a theoretical roboticist, he was hands on, and had an early desire to see robotics applied to do public good. These applications include bush fire fighting, search and rescue, security robotics for public transport terminals, and assistive robots for the disabled and elderly.

It was through his excellence in theoretical and applied robotics research that Ray was appointed many senior roles throughout his career such as Director of the Australian Research Council Centre for Perceptive and Intelligent Machines, Director of the Intelligent Robotics Research Centre at Monash University, and Director of the Computer Vision and Robotics Laboratory again at Monash University.

Ray was more than a pioneering researcher. He was also a strong advocate for the education and mentoring of students, and building of a viable robotics community within Australia. It was Ray that engaged Australia in Robotics and helped put Australia on the map in robotics internationally. He was instrumental in the development of the Australian Robotics Association, which later became the Australian Robotics and Automation Association. Ray was one of the three co-founders of the Australian Robotics Association in 1984. He was President from 1989 to 1990 and from 2000 to 2002. Ray used his involvement in the association to help guide many undergraduate, Masters and PhD students to become world-class researchers, by encouraging them to present at the annual conference. In fact Ray was one of the only Researchers in the history of Australasian Conference Robotics and Automation to have had a paper accepted every year since it started in 1999. Uniquely, over the past 13 years, Ray had 34 papers accepted and presented at this conference alone, a truly impressive feat.

Ray was also instrumental in attracting international robotics conferences to Australia, including the International Symposium and Exposition on Robots in 1988, which he was
Program Chair, and the International Symposium of Robotics Research in 2001, which he co-chaired with Dr Alex Zelinsky.

It was Ray’s dedication and outstanding contributions to robotics research and education that earlier this year he was nominated for a Lifetime achievement award by former ARAA presidents Dr Alex Zelinsky and Dr Jonathan Roberts. The council approved this award with the intention to present it personally to Ray at this year’s Australasian Robotics Conference being held in Sydney in December.

It is with regret we were unable to bestow this award to him personally. However, we would like to announce that Raymond A. Jarvis has been awarded the first ever Australian Robotics & Automation Association "Life-time Achievement Award for leadership, education and pioneering contributions to the field of robotics and automation worldwide".

This life-time achievement award is to honour Ray personally. However, the importance of Ray’s contribution deserves national recognition and with this the Australian Robotics & Automation Association, with the blessing of his family, would like to also honour Ray with the "Raymond A. Jarvis Best Paper Award" to be presented perpetually with a trophy at the Australian Conference on Robotics and Automation for which Ray was a great supporter.

Ray’s passing has clearly left a massive void within the Australian and international robotics communities. We have so much to thank Ray for since embarking on his illustrious journey in 1968. Ray was one of the nice guys. He always listened intently to new ideas, was always the one to ask questions to students starting out in their careers at conferences, and showed an unrivalled passion for new technology, a desire to understand new ways of thinking and new fondness for making new friends.

So on behalf of the Australian Robotics and Automation Association, past and present councils and members, friends, colleagues and students nationally we say thank you. Thank you for your pioneering contributions to robotics. Thank you for your leadership in education, and thank you for the inspiring legacy.