



04 May 2016
Daily Telegraph, Sydney

Section: Other • Article type : News Item • Classification : Capital City Daily
Audience : 256,835 • Page: 26 • Printed Size: 181.00cm² • Market: NSW
Country: Australia • Words: 400 • Item ID: 587597478

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Greens stalwart had great depth of learning and passion



POLITICIANS generally speak out about matters to do with sustainable energy and the environment only after a detailed briefing from staffers. But John Kaye was uniquely qualified to speak about such matters based on his postgraduate degrees from Melbourne University and Berkeley.

Kaye, who died yesterday after a short battle with cancer, matched his erudition with passion, compassion, drive and commitment.

Born on October 23, 1955, in Melbourne, Kaye gained bachelor and masters degrees in engineering from the University of Melbourne, and went on to work for the State Electricity Commission of Victoria as an engineer.

There he learned that an energy industry based on fossil fuels was

unsustainable. His growing interest in alternative energies and greenhouse gases took him to the University of California, Berkeley, where he earned a PhD. Returning to Australia, he became a post-doctoral fellow at the ANU and taught electrical engineering at the University of NSW.

But after a career of teaching about changing the world's fossil fuel

dependence, and acting as an adviser to the Greens in the late '90s and early 2000s, he decided he could do more good in the political arena across a range of things he was passionate about, such as workers' rights, public utilities and public education.

He was deeply involved with the Greens campaign during the 2003 state election but stood for the Senate during the 2004 federal election, narrowly missing out on a seat.

Electoral success came in 2007 when he and Lee Rhiannon were both elected to the Legislative Council.

With relatively few members, Kaye and his Greens colleagues all handled a broad range of portfolios. Among Kaye's were education, energy, treasury, consumer affairs, finance and services, water, hospitality gaming and racing.

When he first arrived in parliament he noted the corruption that beset the Labor Party and worked against their desire to privatise electricity. He also campaigned successfully against the Tillegra Dam in the Hunter Valley. He sought to rid cruelty in the greyhound racing industry and his Steel Industry Protection bill to protect workers in the industry is still before parliament.

His colleague, Greens NSW MP David Shoebridge, paid tribute to Kaye yesterday saying: "The Greens NSW will continue to benefit from John's work in establishing a clear path to NSW becoming the first state with 100 per cent renewable electricity."

He is survived by his partner Lynne.

TROY LENNON