

■ **Obituary** · Ewen Campbell Laird CBE · Architect and Apex co-founder

**Son of the founder of what became Australia's largest architectural practice, he was honored in his profession and recognised for his community service.**

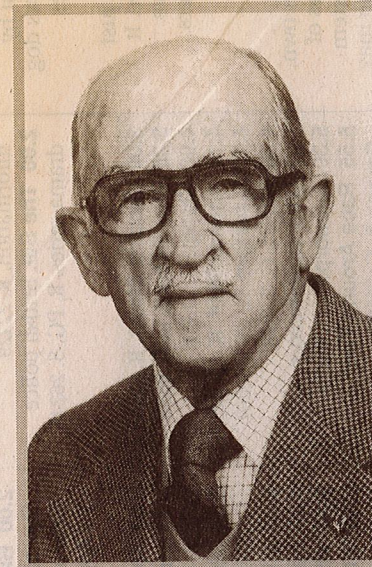
**Born: 18.12.1906  
Died: 18.7.1999**

By **NICHOLAS WALTER**

Renowned Geelong architect and the last surviving co-founder of Apex, Ewen Laird CBE, Hon D.LITT, LFRAIA, died on 18 July aged 92.

His life was one of distinguished service to both his profession and the community. He knew from the age of eight that he wanted to become an architect, following in the footsteps of his father, John Angus Laird, the founder of Laird & Buchan, which grew to become The Buchan Group, Australia's largest architectural practice.

A student at Geelong Grammar School, the young Ewen Laird spent his weekends visiting building sites with his father. The practice was a leading force in regional Victoria, responsible for many of the prominent buildings of Geelong



and the Western District.

Mr Laird commenced his architectural studies at Geelong's Gordon Institute in 1925 and in 1929 went on to the University of Melbourne. He began his professional association with Laird & Buchan while still a student, but later worked for other practices before undertaking an extensive overseas study trip. His travels exposed him to the work of modernist European designers such as the German Bauhaus school, which remained a strong influence throughout his career. He also travelled widely in the United States.

Ewen Laird rejoined Laird & Buchan on his return to Geelong in 1934. Among his more notable projects in these early years were the Geelong Grammar Music

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School, a project won in competition in 1937, and the Pilkington glass factory on Melbourne Road, Geelong, recognised as one of the finest examples of contemporary industrial architecture in Australia at this time.

He designed major public housing developments, such as Geelong's Newtown estate, and led the practice on the design of woolstores for Elder, Smith & Co and Dennys Lascelles. His work on schools and hospitals was widely recognised, and he designed many private residences.

In addition to his professional commitments, Mr Laird was also active in many areas of the

community. In 1930, together with colleagues and fellow architects John Buchan and Langham Proud, he founded a club aimed to promote fellowship and community service among young businessmen in Geelong. Known originally as the Young Men's Business Club of Geelong, the name was changed in 1931 to become the Apex Club. Mr Laird designed the badge which has come to represent Apex internationally.

In 1935, Mr Laird became a partner of the practice, along with John Buchan. Together, these two architects were to guide the firm successfully through Victoria's most prolific period of expansion and development. When, in the postwar years, Buchan wanted to open a Melbourne office, Mr Laird stayed in Geelong to maintain the firm's position as the pre-eminent regional practice in the state.

In 1936, Ewen Laird married Effie Cant, a member of the practice. They shared 52 years of true partnership and had three children, two of whom became architects. The family lived in Geelong, where his community involvements widened.

In the Queen's Birthday honors of 1970, Mr Laird was made a Commander of the British Empire (CBE) in recognition of his role as a co-founder of Apex and for his community service.

Ewen Laird's wife, Effie, died in 1987. He is survived by his three children, Craig, Heather Lloyd and Alison Lawson, nine grandchildren and three great-grandchildren.

*Nicholas Walter is a director of The Buchan Group Melbourne.*

■ **Obituary** · Pamela Wills · Scientist, radiologist