

Autumn 2026



Burnet
reach for the many®

Thanks to You

Your support is unlocking new discoveries and changing lives.



End-of-year appeal wrap-up ▪ HMHB – 10 years of impact ▪ World AIDS Day

Message from the CEO

Your commitment, in action

I'd like to begin, as I so often do, with gratitude.

Everything you'll read about in this edition of *Thanks to You* exists because of your belief that health equity is something we build together – across communities, across borders and across generations.

In the pages that follow, you will see story after story of partnerships in action. Partnerships that are grounded in respect, shared purpose and local leadership, and sustained by generous people like you.

You'll also see what a decade of patient, donor-backed investment has achieved through the *Healthy Mothers Healthy Babies* program. We are proud of the work this program has done to strengthen research, services and leadership in Papua New Guinea, so the country is better placed to sustain the health of communities not just today but for generations to come.

Our commitment to locally led change underpins the opening of our office in Vanuatu. With a dedicated, in-country team working alongside government and regional partners, Burnet's role will be to support the workforce, share expertise and help build resilient health systems ready to meet current and future challenges. Australia is part of the Pacific family, and our wellbeing is deeply connected. When our neighbours are stronger, we are stronger, too.

You'll also read about the work underway in our virology laboratories, where your support is enabling essential research into emerging viruses before they become global threats. It is careful,



sometimes unseen work, but it is exactly what protects us all.

This edition also marks an important leadership transition. I want to thank Mary Padbury for her extraordinary 15 years of dedicated service on Burnet's Board, including seven as Chair.

Her steady, principled leadership strengthened our foundations at a time of enormous global challenge. And I'm delighted to welcome James Flintoft as our new Chair. With deep experience across finance, government and the private sector, he brings valuable insight that will guide Burnet confidently into our next chapter.

In every story you'll find the same truth – that progress happens when people come together and commit for the long term. Thank you for standing with communities across Australia, our region and the globe, helping our research to go further so that no-one is left behind.

Professor Brendan Crabb AC
Director and CEO

Honouring our former Chair and welcoming new leadership at Burnet

Earlier this year, Burnet marked an important leadership transition – honouring an extraordinary legacy while welcoming new leadership for the future.

In February, Mr James Flintoft was appointed Chair of the Burnet Board, following the retirement of Ms Mary Padbury after 15 years of dedicated service, including seven as Chair.

Mary was Burnet's first female Chair and led the Institute through a period of remarkable growth despite much global uncertainty. With clarity and care, she strengthened our commitment to creating a more equitable world through better health.

During her tenure, and with the support of donors like you, Burnet delivered significant milestones. These included launching our ambitious 2030 Strategy, responding to the COVID-19 pandemic, and completing major initiatives such as the commercialisation and sale of 360 biolabs. Together, these achievements strengthened our financial sustainability and expanded our impact in Australia and globally.

We thank Mary sincerely for her wisdom, integrity and enormous contribution to Burnet during her time with us.

We have strong foundations on which to build with the support of our exceptional incoming Chair, James Flintoft.

James brings extensive experience across business and government, including senior roles with McKinsey and Co, ANZ and the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet.

An experienced Non-Executive Director, James currently serves on the boards of Transport Accident Commission, Development Victoria, Foundation for Regional and Rural Renewal,



Images from left: James Flintoft, Chair, Burnet Institute and Ms Mary Padbury

Foundation House for Refugees, Victorian Comprehensive Cancer Care (VCCC) Alliance and Epworth Healthcare Group.

His leadership will help guide Burnet through a rapidly changing global health landscape and ensure we are well positioned for a long and sustainable future.



Thanks to you, young people in Myanmar have somewhere to turn

Your generous support of our end-of-year fundraising appeal raised more than \$75,000 to expand Burnet's *Youth for Youth* program, creating safe community spaces where young people can feel seen, supported and connected.

Late last year, we asked for your help to fund a community-based mental health program for young people in Myanmar – and the strength of your response was a powerful show of support.

Like us, you recognised the enormous challenge of growing up in an environment shaped by political, social and financial instability. And you shared our belief that, with the right kind of help, Myanmar's youth can recover, reconnect and move forward with real hope for a brighter future.

That belief is at the heart of Burnet's *Youth for Youth* program, a grassroots initiative that creates community safe spaces: places where young people can feel seen and supported, learn practical skills for self-care and find connection at a time when so much around them feels uncertain.

Together, we have raised more than \$75,000 in donor funds – an extraordinary result that will

help expand these safe spaces and strengthen community-based mental healthcare for young people across Myanmar.



Myanmar country office staff:
Pwint Thazin Hlaing, Theint Theint Maung Aye
and Dr Zay Yar Swe



Images from left and below: Mrs Pa Pa, Mrs Yu Yu Mon, Mr Kan Nyunt and Ms Su Lin Phyo. Mr Aung Htoo Thu and Mrs Soe Soe. Dr Phone Myint Win, Burnet Country Representative, Myanmar

What you made possible

Because of you, over the next 12 months, more than 3,000 young people will have access to 40 community safe spaces – welcoming places where they can take part in workshops, peer support sessions and training programs that will teach them how to care for their own mental and physical wellbeing. Your support will also help provide access to counselling and medical care in the areas of highest need.

Importantly, you're also helping build support that lasts. Your gift will enable the training and mobilisation of 90 youth leaders, and fund home visits to 500 households, helping parents and caregivers better understand and respond to the pressures young people face.

"Young people deserve healthcare that truly understands and supports them," says Burnet's Country Representative in Myanmar, Dr Phone Myint Win. "Your help has been so important to create new, safe and inspiring groups; to meet young people where they are so they're seen and heard; to give them a voice and ensure they have the tools to lead healthier lives."

At Burnet, we know that, for young people, social and emotional wellbeing is built through communities, in the relationships and spaces they shape for themselves. And we know that when young people are supported to heal and



To watch a message of thanks from Dr Phone Myint Win visit bit.ly/mya-ty or scan the QR code.



thrive, the impacts are felt not just by the individual, but by their families and communities – and by the nation they will one day lead.

From all of us at Burnet – and from the young people you are standing beside – thank you.

To learn more about youth and adolescence in Myanmar or to donate visit myanmar-youth-appeal.burnet.edu.au



Because of you

Ten years of healthier beginnings

Launched in 2013, *Healthy Mothers Healthy Babies* set out to do things differently in Papua New Guinea, guided by communities, grounded in evidence and made possible by donors like you who believed lasting change takes time.

For decades, Papua New Guinean women, families, health workers, community leaders, researchers and long-standing supporters of Burnet's work, have recognised that progress in improving the health and wellbeing of mothers, babies and families has not been as fast as it should be.

Despite genuine commitment and goodwill, creating lasting change remains an ongoing challenge for local and international organisations.

By the time Burnet and PNG partners and donors came together to launch the groundbreaking *Healthy Mothers Healthy Babies* (HMHB) program in 2013, it was clear that the usual way of doing things was not going to be enough. Instead, they chose a different path, committing to a long-term approach grounded in genuine partnership, rigorous research and local capability. It was an ambitious choice – and it was only possible because generous donors were willing to back

it from the start, recognising that complex, interrelated issues needed time to be understood, so that solutions could be designed and tested. The HMHB program took shape through a broad and deeply connected collaboration.

It brought communities and families in East New Britain together with local health workers, provincial and national health leaders, PNG researchers, and long-standing partners including the PNG Institute of Medical Research, the National Department of Health, church-run and government health services, and universities in PNG and Australia.

From the outset, the work was organised around three foundations. First, collaboration: taking the time to listen and learn from mothers, families, health workers and community leaders, and shaping the work around what they said mattered most. Second, research: carried out in hospitals, clinics and villages – including hard-to-reach places – to build a clear picture of the challenges people faced and why support wasn't always reaching those who needed it. And third, building for the future: working alongside PNG partners to strengthen the workforce, establish new research infrastructure and put in place the skills and relationships needed for progress to last.

Over more than a decade, this approach led to real improvements across maternal and child health, infectious disease, nutrition and child development, immunisation, anaemia, and sexual and reproductive health.

The program reached its conclusion in 2025, but the work is far from finished. The next phase of work will see Burnet take a further step back, supporting PNG communities, health services and government partners as they lead what comes next.

For donors, that long-awaited sense of momentum – shaped by a belief in doing things properly, listening deeply and trusting local leadership – is the proof of success. Together, we've helped build the foundations for a new era of health and wellbeing in Papua New Guinea.

Six ways HMHB turned evidence into action



Hidden infections in pregnancy exposed

HMHB revealed that 50% of pregnant women were living with a treatable sexually transmitted or reproductive tract infection, most without symptoms or access to testing. This important finding showed how much preventable harm was going undetected and strengthened the case for access to testing and treatment. Our findings are now enabling strategies to target these infections more effectively.



Clear links between infection and low birth weight

The program demonstrated that specific infections during pregnancy, notably *Mycoplasma genitalium* and *Neisseria gonorrhoea*, significantly reduce birth weight, increasing the risk of newborn death, developmental delays and lifelong health problems. Our data provided the first global evidence that *Mycoplasma genitalium* infection is associated with reduced birthweight and harm to the fetus.



Childhood stunting: identifying causes and reducing prevalence

HMHB showed that most causes of stunting (impaired growth and development due to chronic undernutrition) occur during pregnancy and in the first year of life. This shifted prevention efforts

to women's health, nutrition and infection prevention before and during pregnancy. In response to these findings, we implemented programs in communities and health centres to strengthen nutrition, prevent and treat infection, increase immunisation, and improve monitoring and management of child growth and development. In our most recent survey (completed 2025), stunting had reduced to 25% compared to previous surveys reporting 45–50% prevalence.



Immunisation strengthened through practical solutions

HMHB revealed low coverage of childhood immunisation and identified gaps in services and barriers to routine immunisation. Working with health authorities and services, changes were implemented and we co-developed strategies to strengthen immunisation. This has led to a substantial increase in uptake and coverage of essential childhood immunisation in East New Britain Province.



Postnatal care strengthened for newborns and mothers

HMHB studies revealed major gaps in postnatal care of mothers and newborns, with just 17% of newborns receiving postnatal care. Together with the Provincial Health Authority, HMHB designed and implemented a new model of postnatal care to increase coverage and care, improving discharge checks, parent education, umbilical cord care and follow-up home visits.



Quality of maternal and newborn care improved

Through the Gutpela Helt Sevis Stadi (Quality Health Services Study), HMHB delivered programs that led to better-trained staff, upgraded maternity spaces and safer care during pregnancy, childbirth and after birth, and the establishment of quality of care teams and activities in health centres.

To learn more about women and adolescent health visit [women-adolescent-health.burnet.edu.au](https://www.women-adolescent-health.burnet.edu.au) or scan the QR code.





No one left behind

Why the HIV response still matters

When HIV emerged, tools were scarce and answers fewer. Today, hard-won progress faces new challenges – and your support matters more than ever.

When Professor Gilda Tachedjian joined Burnet as a young research assistant in the late 1980s, the AIDS pandemic was just beginning to unfold. Working at Fairfield Hospital, she saw the virus's impact up close at a time when there were no effective treatments and little understanding of the virus.

"We saw people ravaged by the virus, but we couldn't help them," she recalls.

In the lab, Gilda and her colleagues pursued answers, transforming knowledge into drugs, diagnostics and prevention tools.

"That motivation is the Burnet ethos – and it stays with me to this day," she says.

In the years since, that determination has driven extraordinary progress. With your support, Burnet researchers have helped steer advances in HIV testing and treatment, contributed to prevention breakthroughs and strengthened the evidence base that has shaped policy and practice in Australia and beyond.

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Together, these advances have transformed what HIV means for millions of people – yet reductions in international HIV funding now threaten those hard-won gains, particularly in communities where access to care remains uneven. The theme of last year's World AIDS Day, *No one left behind*, speaks directly to this moment.

Professor Mark Stoové, Burnet's Head of Public Health, witnessed the impact of the funding

cuts during recent visits to Tanzania, Botswana, Zimbabwe and South Africa.

"It's devastating," he says. "People are not getting access to drugs, education and prevention services."

Burnet modelling, published in The Lancet, suggests that funding cuts could result in up to 10 million additional cases of HIV globally by 2030. In December, Burnet's Director and CEO, Professor Brendan Crabb AC, shared that sobering assessment with leaders at the World AIDS Day Parliamentary Breakfast – adding that the moment calls for resolve, not retreat. Achieving the elimination of HIV transmission in Australia and across our region will require continued investment, he said, particularly in the Pacific where sustained, community-led action remains essential.

In Fiji, for example, HIV cases have more than tripled in just 12 months. With donor backing, Burnet is working alongside local partners to establish Fiji's first peer-led HIV counselling network, led by people with lived experience, grounded in empathy and trust.

As Burnet marks its 40th anniversary in 2026, we recognise four decades of commitment to tackling HIV. This kind of progress doesn't happen by chance. It happens because people like you choose to stand alongside communities when it matters most. With your partnership, Burnet will continue to respond where the need is greatest, and work towards a future where truly no one is left behind.

To find out more about our disease elimination please visit disease-elimination.burnet.edu.au

Images clockwise from left:

Professor Brendan Crabb AC speaking at Parliamentary Breakfast at Parliament House, Canberra.

Professor Gilda Tachedjian Head, Life Sciences Discipline; Head, Retroviral Biology and Antivirals Laboratory.

Professor Mark A Stoové, Head of Public Health.



To watch a moving account from Gilda about the early days of HIV visit bit.ly/hiv-gt or scan the QR code.



To watch Mark discuss the impacts of global funding cuts visit bit.ly/hiv-funding or scan the QR code.





Image: Nancy Wilson, Burnet PhD Student

The research you set in motion

With sustained backing from donors, Burnet has built a specialist team to investigate emerging bat viruses, assembling the knowledge and tools we need to confront the next pandemic – before it takes hold.

Bats live alongside viruses that can devastate humans – and yet they continue to thrive. Unlocking the secrets at the heart of that unique resilience could reshape the way we prepare for the next pandemic – and thanks to you, our Retroviral Biology and Antivirals group is well on the way to doing exactly that.

In recent years, generous donors like you have contributed close to half a million dollars to the team led by Professor Gilda Tachedjian and Dr Joshua Hayward. That generosity has allowed the group to grow in depth and capability, pushing this work further and faster than would otherwise have been possible.

With your backing, the team characterised the first infectious bat retrovirus ever discovered, the Hervey pteropid gammaretrovirus (HPG), found in Australian black flying foxes. Laboratory studies showed that HPG can infect both bat and human cells under controlled conditions. This places it within a group of retroviruses the World Health Organization classifies as “Pathogen X” – viruses recognised as potential

future pandemic threats. The next step is to determine whether HPG poses a threat to humans in a suitable laboratory model. Equally important is understanding why bats don't get sick and how this could help protect humans from viruses now and in the future.

But the story doesn't end there. HPG was recently detected in a grey-headed flying fox diagnosed with lymphoid leukaemia. That finding has opened an urgent new line of inquiry: could this virus contribute to blood cancers in bats, and what might that mean for human health?

These are complex questions, and your support has helped expand the team pursuing answers. In 2025, Nancy Wilson joined the team to investigate the potential cancer risks of HPG. Now undertaking her PhD, she is carrying this work into its next phase.

Discovery science at its most foundational, it is the kind of work that keeps our communities safe, equipping us with the knowledge and tools to respond with speed and confidence when new viruses emerge.

This progress wasn't by chance – your belief in preparation helped build the team to deliver it.

To learn more or support this great work visit bat-virus-research.burnet.edu.au



Locally led, regionally focused

Burnet opens Vanuatu office

Images from top: Burnet staff, Vanuatu. Aleesha Kalulu, Research Officer, Burnet Institute and Kali Ameara, Country Representative, Vanuatu.

As part of our commitment to improving health outcomes across the Pacific, Burnet Institute has officially opened a office in Vanuatu.

Over recent years, Burnet has worked closely with regional partners to address critical health priorities through strong local collaboration. This commitment has now led to the establishment of a dedicated team in Port Vila, working alongside the Vanuatu Government and regional partners to deliver technical expertise, data collection and research support.

The office is led by Kali Ameara, Burnet's Vanuatu Country Representative, who brings more than 20 years of experience in medical and public health sectors both internationally and in Vanuatu.

"Burnet's Vanuatu country office is locally led – not just in name, but in practice," Mr Ameara said. "Our work will be driven by health needs and local priorities, building research capacity that lasts beyond any single project."

The team will collaborate closely with the Ministry of Health to help shape the nation's health research agenda.

Burnet-supported projects focus on pandemic preparedness and disease surveillance, triple

elimination of HIV, hepatitis B and syphilis, immunisation, and antimicrobial resistance under the One Health framework.

"When communities drive their own health solutions, the impact is transformational," Mr Ameara said.



To learn more about our work or to donate please visit disease-elimination.burnet.edu.au or scan the QR code.





Standing with PNG

What 30 years of partnership has made possible

In 2025, Papua New Guinea marked 50 years of independence, a milestone that invited reflection on what long-term partnership has made possible, and the role you've played in supporting a proud nation to strengthen health and wellbeing on its own terms.

Throughout 2025, Papua New Guinea marked 50 years of independence with an outpouring of national pride. Celebrations large and small were a joy to behold – and an invitation to reflect on five decades of sustained progress.

For Burnet, that reflection draws on more than 30 years of collaboration with PNG communities, government agencies and health services. Today, the work is powered by more than 135 local staff, with clinicians, researchers, project officers and community educators working together to build expertise and strengthen systems from within.

This vibrant nation is deeply loved by the team, and by the many Burnet staff and supporters who have lived, worked and walked alongside communities there over the years. Together, we can be proud of the contribution our long-standing partnership has made to the health and wellbeing of communities across the country.

"PNG is a very special place – special in every positive sense, but also in terms of its needs," says Burnet's Director and CEO, Professor Brendan Crabb AC. "Working in PNG is fundamental to Burnet's purpose. There's probably no greater Australian and regional endeavour than supporting the people and communities of PNG to achieve health equity."

Across more than three decades, Burnet's work has focused on health challenges that have historically limited the ability of communities to thrive – including tuberculosis, HIV, malaria and the health of mothers and babies. Working closely with local people, in line with their priorities, has always been central to this approach.

In the mid-2000s, as PNG faced a rapidly intensifying HIV crisis, Burnet was part of an Australian-funded bilateral response, ensuring

that young people had a say in how the program was rolled out.

A decade later, as multidrug-resistant tuberculosis emerged as a critical threat, Burnet worked with partners in places like Daru to test new ideas and technologies, introducing peer counselling grounded in empathy and encouragement, paired with breakthrough innovations including mobile X-rays, AI-assisted diagnosis and shorter, more effective treatments. These advances have shifted the outlook from managing tuberculosis to the real prospect of eliminating PNG's deadliest infectious disease.

That same partnership-driven approach underpins Burnet's work in maternal and child health through the *Healthy Mothers Healthy Babies* program. When early research revealed childhood stunting as a major issue, the evidence was shared with local stakeholders who then led the design of solutions that communities wanted – and could lead themselves.

Burnet remains committed to PNG for the years ahead, but the nature of that relationship is evolving as local leadership and expertise continue to grow.

Thanks to your generosity, this long-term, respectful partnership has helped PNG reach a point where progress is real, capacity is strong and the foundations for future wellbeing are firmly in place.

Supporting Women's Leadership

In Papua New Guinea, senior health leadership roles were once held mostly by men – reflecting the times and opportunities then available.

Today, Burnet is proud to support a growing generation of women leaders across the health sector.

Together, we're building a more balanced and inclusive workforce – where everyone's strengths can thrive.



To see Burnet's work in Papua New Guinea, visit bit.ly/50-years-png or scan the QR code.



Images left and below: Dr Delly Babona with local healthcare staff. Burnet staff and guests at the inaugural Burnet PNG Symposium.



How one donor's lifelong connection to PNG led her to Burnet

A childhood book sparked Florine Simon's enduring bond with PNG – a commitment that now inspires her generous support for Burnet's work and long-term vision.

In a hot and humid Brisbane classroom in the 1950s, two friends turned the pages of a book that would influence the course of their lives.

The book, *Danger Patrol*, was set in Papua New Guinea (PNG) – a place that, for the two young Queenslanders, was tantalisingly close but just beyond reach.

After school, one would go on to become a teacher in PNG's regional provinces, sending letters brimful of detail to her childhood friend, Florine. For her part, after graduating, Florine joined the Department of Territories in Canberra.

There she prepared material for ministerial briefs as the government managed PNG's transition to independence – and she met the man who would become her husband, Edmund Simon.

In 1978, the couple – by then married with two young boys – were posted to Port Moresby for Edmund's role at the Australian High Commission.

Life in PNG in the early years of independence was rich with contrasts. The family lived in a suburban community where their boys made friends with classmates and the children next door. Weekends were often spent exploring what could be reached by road from Port Moresby: the cooler highlands, the busy markets and coastal villages known for their pottery.

"It gave our children a grounding in what it's like to live in a country that does things differently to what they were used to at home," says Florine.

Years later, after her husband's passing, Florine found her thoughts returning to the continuing

challenges facing PNG, especially those affecting women and children.

"It was still difficult for remote villagers to ensure that mothers and babies could have safe births," she says. "That was one of the main areas of interest for me."

Recognising the impact Burnet was having in PNG, Florine began making occasional donations. Over time – as she read Burnet's reports, watched webinars and listened to updates from team members in the field – her sense of connection deepened.

"I came to realise what makes Burnet's work so effective – it's collaborative. Their world-class research is harnessed to tackle specific community needs by providing programs developed in conjunction with local expertise."

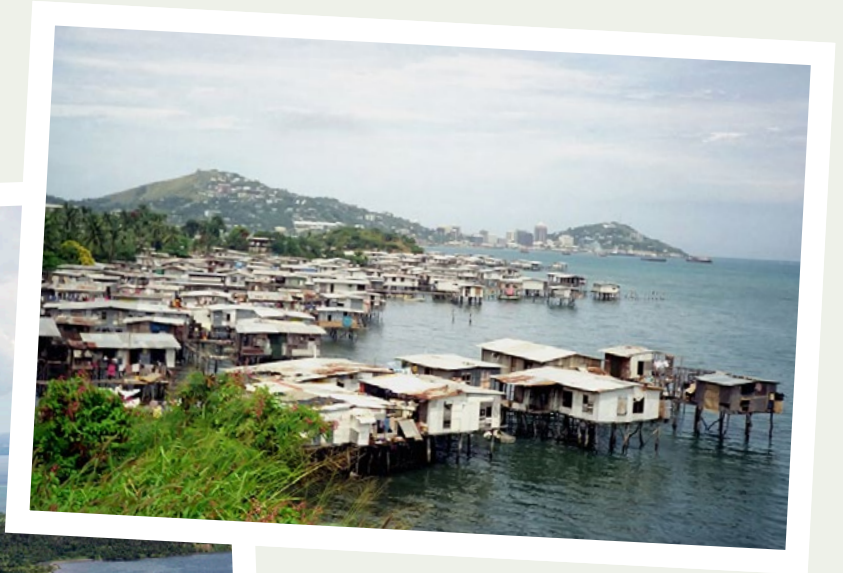
More recently, Florine began looking for a way to make a more sustained contribution, something with more immediate impact than a bequest could provide. After careful consideration, she chose to establish a named sub-fund within the Burnet Endowment Fund. Interest accrued by her sub-fund will be used to support research fellowships, traineeships and health programs in PNG.

Florine plans to continue giving to grow her gift into a substantial source of support in the years ahead and enjoy seeing the impact of her support for the people of PNG.



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Being a supporter makes me a link in the chain that is working towards better health outcomes for everyone.”



Images clockwise from top: donor Florine Simon. Port Moresby, PNG. *Healthy Mothers Healthy Babies* wrap-up presentation at St Mary's Hospital, PNG. East New Britain, PNG.



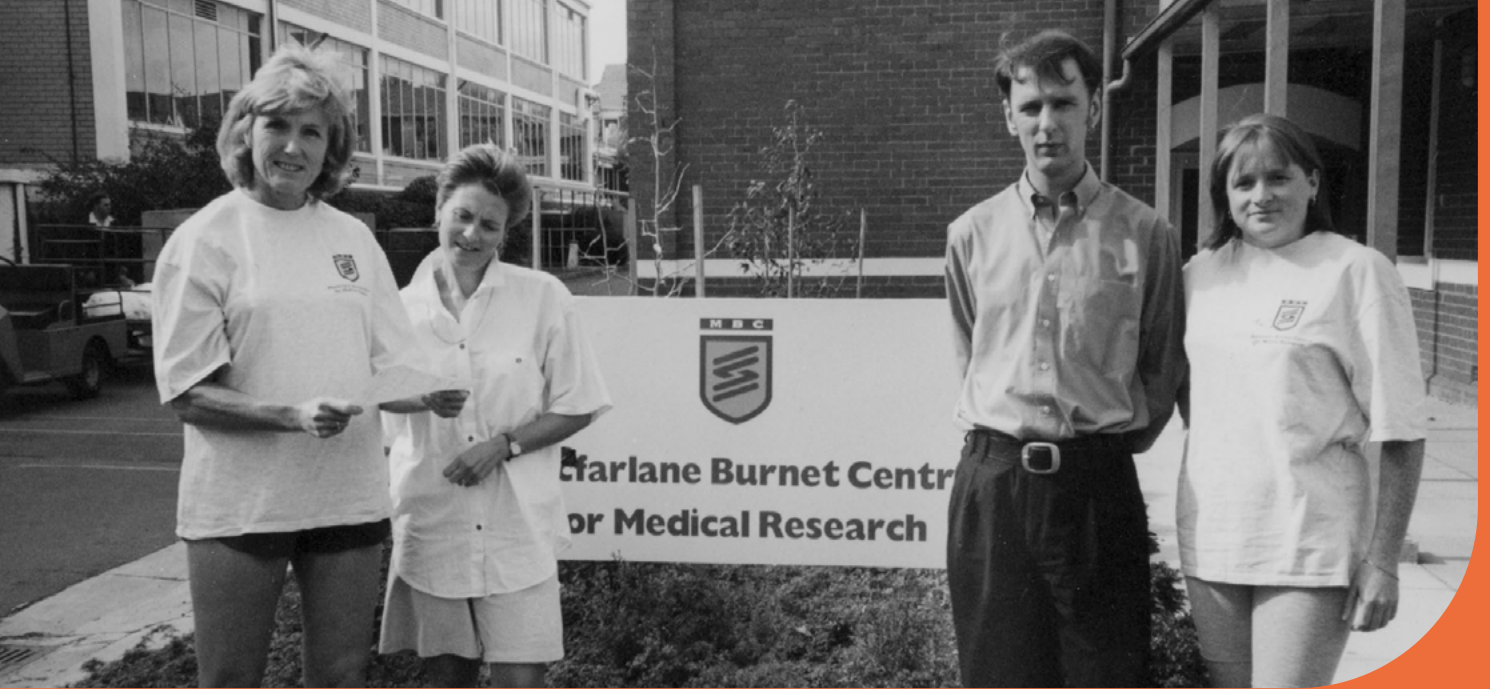
Tell us your story!



We really enjoy hearing from our supporters – the stories of how and why you first came to support us are so varied and interesting.

If you'd like to be featured in an upcoming edition of *Thanks to You*, we'd love to hear from you.

Please get in touch via giving@burnet.edu.au



In 2026, we're celebrating 40 years of global impact and innovation as a leading health and medical research institute.

Since 1986, we've worked to address emerging and existing health needs. Always with health equity at the forefront.

Our legacy has been built by you, our people and partners who work together to turn research into real world health outcomes.

We're building on our success with momentum, purpose and understanding that there's still so much more to do.

Please keep an eye out for our updates throughout the year as we celebrate 40 years of working together with supporters like you to advance health equity.

40 | YEARS OF
IMPACT
1986-2026

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Overseas

Burnet has offices in Papua New Guinea, Myanmar and Vanuatu, and also contributes to research and public health programs in many other countries across Asia, the Pacific, Africa, Europe, and North America.


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