



Thank you for being a

Research Action Partner

You're helping our research to go further



Burnet
reach for the many

Message from the CEO:

Thank you for being part of the Burnet family

At Burnet, we often say that our donors are our partners in everything we do. But even that doesn't quite capture it.

As far as we're concerned, you're part of the Burnet family.

Some of you are literally family—proud parents, partners, brothers and sisters of our dedicated researchers. Others have become family by sharing our commitment to building better health, stronger communities, and a fairer world.

And every monthly gift made, no matter how big or small, has a direct impact on people's lives. It's driving our research to go further.



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Because of you, our team in Papua New Guinea can now reach remote mountain villages safely in a new 4WD that's only a few weeks old and has already clocked thousands of kilometres on rugged roads.

Because of you, people living with HIV in Fiji are set to receive life-changing support from trained peer counsellors who truly understand their experience. This newly launched initiative has a long way to go to address the HIV epidemic, but with your ongoing support we feel optimistic for the future.

And because of you, world-class research is reaching the people who need it faster than ever. Your support at key stages of development is helping our researchers deliver solutions to some of the most urgent and complex health challenges of our time, in Australia and around the world.

This newsletter shares just a few achievements we're proud of from the past year—milestones made possible because of your immense generosity and kindness.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Brendan Crabb". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial 'B'.

Professor Brendan Crabb AC
Director and CEO

Thanks to you:

Keeping health research programs on the move in PNG

Your generous response to our 2024 end of year appeal powered past our target, providing our team in Kokopo with a new vehicle, equipment, and running costs to help keep vital programs moving.

You're keeping us on the road!

Thanks to you, a new and much-needed 4WD has been delivered to our team in Kokopo, keeping them connected to the communities who need their support most.

When we launched our 2024 end of year appeal, we asked for help with a very practical goal: replacing one of our worn-out work vehicles with a reliable new 4WD. Without it, our researchers in East New Britain risked being grounded, unable to reach the remote villages where they support mothers and babies, diagnose and treat infectious diseases, and deliver life-saving health programs.

We set a bold target of \$80,000 and thanks to your extraordinary generosity, we didn't just meet it, we smashed it. An incredible \$150,000 was raised, and with the additional funds we have been able to equip the vehicle with vital equipment and cover its running costs for up to a year.

"It means our teams can be out there doing what they do best," says Amy Williamson, Deputy Country Director for Burnet PNG. "Thank you so much from all of us! You've made such a difference."

Why it matters

In Papua New Guinea, even short trips can be a challenge. Our teams travel hours—sometimes days—along rugged mountain roads to reach isolated villages. And when our old work vehicles break down due to the treacherous road conditions it means communities are left waiting for the support they need.



Now, thanks to you, things are looking much brighter.

This new vehicle will allow our team to run research activities, mobile clinics and health workshops more regularly and reliably. It means more check-ins for women during pregnancy, better early detection of diseases like tuberculosis and malaria, and greater support for children's growth and development.

It's a very real and immediate impact. And it's made possible through your monthly support.

Keeping the wheels turning

Your enthusiastic support meant every dollar went further and faster, helping our research to go further. Whether you gave a little or a lot to our end of year appeal, your contribution helped bring us closer to that moment when we handed over the keys to our very grateful team. And your ongoing support as a Research Action Partner will help keep them on the road, delivering health and hope where it's needed most.

Thank you again for being part of this journey. Every kilometre travelled is thanks to you.



Scan the QR to see a heartwarming message from the team (pictured above).

Hope on the horizon:

Research that goes further to protect the immune system



We might not be able to stop the passage of time, but Dr Raffi Gugasyan and the Healthy Ageing Research team may have found a way to slow the progress of something else—the detrimental, biological process of ‘inflammageing’. It’s all thanks to the continued support of our Research Action Partners.

Inflammageing is the chronic build-up of low-grade inflammation in your body over time. It doesn’t just accompany ageing; it speeds it up as we get older, increasing the risk of age-related conditions like heart disease, arthritis, cognitive decline and type 2 diabetes.

For some time now, Raffi and his team have focused on understanding exactly what it is that causes inflammageing. We know, for example, that when we’re young, our immune system is rich in ‘Naïve B cells’, which protect us from infection, enhance the work of vaccines, and help keep us healthy. Over time, these beneficial B cells are transformed into harmful ‘Aged B cells’ which act to weaken our immune system and trigger chronic inflammation.

The breakthrough was the discovery that certain key biomarkers, called ‘cytokines’, are released as B cells age, and that one or more of these cytokines are responsible for triggering the development of overactive Aged B cells that fuel inflammageing.

It’s a very exciting insight that could transform how we approach ageing in the 21st century, paving the way for therapies that target Aged B cells and ultimately slow or prevent the impact of inflammageing.

With findings recognised as a strong candidate for future treatments, Raffi and his team are working to safeguard the discoveries they’ve made, ensuring they remain available to benefit as many people as possible. Their next phase of work will focus on collaborating with partners to transform this cutting-edge discovery into real-world treatments that promise not just a longer life, but a healthier one.

Together, we are securing the future health of families and communities, here at home and across the globe. Thank you for helping our research to go further. We simply couldn’t do it without you and the role you played in making this possible!

Want to know more?

To learn more about this pioneering research and how you can support the next phase of this work, get in touch with Shannon O’Brien, Major Gift Specialist on **0409 357 307** or via email at shannon.obrien@burnet.edu.au

Grow Strong, Grow Healthy: Helping children grow strong from the very start



Matupit Ward 1 and 3 Community Nutrition Advocacy Group meeting 17 March 2025.

With your help, more mothers, fathers and health workers are coming together to learn, share and act – changing the health outlook for children across East New Britain.

In the remote mountain villages of East New Britain, momentum is building. Every month, more parents are attending our workshops on nutrition and child development—and it's all thanks to your support for *Kamap Strong Tru, Kamap Gut Tru* (Grow Strong, Grow Healthy), our program to help reduce childhood stunting.

Nearly half of all children in East New Britain are affected by stunting, a condition with long-term effects on growth, learning and health. Your ongoing support for the Grow program as a Research Action Partner is helping shift that story.

Because of you, Onawuta Kesuwao and Mary Kuam from our Kokopo office can keep making regular trips to these communities, gathering

with families under mango trees or in community halls, sharing knowledge about maternal and child health, passing around bilingual factsheets and games, and keeping the conversations flowing over snacks and chilled drinks.

Through regular community workshops like these, as well as training sessions for local health workers, families are gaining the knowledge they need to help their children grow and thrive.

More parents, more impact

Already this year, over 100 parents have taken part in Grow workshops, with more and more fathers turning up to sit alongside their partners to learn about family nutrition, maternal health and shared parenting. At a recent session, fathers and mothers attended in equal numbers—a first for the project.

"It is so encouraging to see that fathers are prioritising learning about family health, child nutrition and maternal health," says Onawatu.

In response, the team is now tailoring workshop content to better engage men, covering topics like responsible alcohol use and the important role fathers play in raising strong, healthy children.

You're part of this journey

Every trip into the mountains. Every educational workshop. Every healthy child. It's all part of a stronger future for PNG—and you've helped make it happen.

By walking alongside us as a Research Action Partner, you're helping our research to go further. Thank you.

From family ties to global impact: Pennie Vogel's journey with Burnet as a Research Action Partner



Pennie Vogel first learned of Burnet through her son, the internationally renowned perinatal epidemiologist and public health researcher, Professor Josh Vogel. At the time, he was working with the World Health Organization in Switzerland, but the incredible work and extraordinary reputation of Burnet were a compelling argument for a return home.

Today, Josh helps lead Burnet's Global Women's and Newborn's Health Group, working to improve the health and wellbeing of mothers, babies, and families across the Asia-Pacific region. As a proud mother, Pennie couldn't be more inspired by his work, or more grateful to be part of it through her ongoing support.

“

Josh has always been passionate about research and public health,” Pennie shares. “I remember when he was just a young medical graduate, he told me, ‘with good research, we can deliver programs that will have an enormous impact on so many people.’ That really stuck with me.”

For Pennie, being a Research Action Partner is about more than just giving monthly—it's about being connected to a cause she believes in. “My donations are relatively modest, but I know they help provide ongoing support for research and projects that are critical to the health and wellbeing of many thousands of people,” she says.

That sense of purpose became even clearer when Pennie had the chance to meet some of Josh's colleagues at a recent birthday celebration. “I was struck by how they all shared a deep desire to help their fellow humans. These are people who have dedicated their lives to others, and I feel so proud to support them,” she says.

For Pennie, being part of the Burnet community is deeply rewarding. “There's a real feel-good factor in knowing I'm supporting such good people doing such important work,” she says with a smile. “I'm grateful to play even a small part in Burnet's impact, helping research to go further.”

Tell us your story!

We really enjoy hearing from our Research Action Partners – the stories of how and why people first came to be a monthly giver are so varied and so interesting. If you'd like to be featured in an upcoming edition, we'd love to hear from you.

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

A lasting impact: Standing together in the fight against HIV



Thanks to your support, we're one step closer to developing a powerful new model of care to be rolled out in Fiji. Led by peers, grounded in empathy, and built to last.

A vital new peer-led HIV program is in development in Fiji, aiming to bring care, connection, and hope to people who urgently need it—and it wouldn't be possible without your support.

When we launched our end-of-financial-year appeal, we shared the sobering truth that HIV is on the rise in the Pacific, with devastating consequences for those living in communities already challenged by limited access to care.

In Fiji, new HIV cases more than tripled between 2023 and 2024, making it the fastest-growing epidemic in the region. And while first-line treatment is available, there is still no formal support for people beyond diagnosis.

In the face of this growing emergency, we asked for your help to establish Fiji's first-ever network of HIV peer counsellors—trained individuals with lived experience of HIV who are uniquely positioned to provide support and empathy through every aspect of care.

Within weeks, you helped raise more than \$150,000 to help bring this community-led model to life. Now the real work begins.

A proven approach based on empathy and insight

Burnet's research in Australia, Papua New Guinea and around the world shows that peer-led support works. It empowers people to manage their health, stick to their treatment plan, and stay connected to care. It also plays a critical role in challenging stigma, which remains one of the greatest barriers to ending the epidemic.

"Peer counselling creates a safe space where people living with HIV can open up without fear of judgement," says Mark Lal, Founder of Living Positive Fiji. "When people talk to someone who understands their experience, they feel empowered. They can access care, get the information they need, and ultimately, lead a better quality of life."

Thanks to your support, you've helped our research to go further, and we can now work with local partners, like Mark, to build out a network of peer counsellors that will reach right across the country.

It's a powerful change—and it's only just beginning.

Laying the foundations for lasting impact

Scan the QR code to
watch a heartwarming
video of Mark and his
journey with HIV.



When every disease is cured,
when every person has access
to fair healthcare, we will stop.

Until then we will
take action.

This newsletter has been printed on FSC accredited stock

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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.

