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Australia Day Honour for Burnet CEO Professor Brendan Crabb

Director and CEO of Burnet Institute, Professor Brendan Crabb has been awarded a Companion of the Order of Australia (AC) in the Australia Day Honours for his contributions to medical research and global health.

Professor Crabb is widely recognised for his significant contributions as a malaria research scientist; for his leadership of Burnet Institute, one of Australia’s leading medical research and public health institutions; and for his work in promoting medical research through the Association of Australian Medical Research Institutes (AAMRI) of which he is immediate past president.

Professor Crabb’s dedication and passion for improving the health of poor and vulnerable populations was influenced by growing up in Papua New Guinea, a poor country that has many health challenges not faced in the developed world.

His life experience led to a career in medical research where he quickly established himself as a major international contributor to the field of malaria, especially in the development of vaccines and new treatments for the disease.

Professor Crabb described the award as an unexpected delight and tremendous honour.

“I accept it recognising that any achievement I have made has relied extensively on others; particularly on colleagues and family. I am indebted to them all, especially to my wife Carol, son William and daughter Sophie,” Professor Crabb said.

“I also acknowledge that the award is as much about the issues I care about and the people I work for as it is about me. My focus is on the poorest, most marginalised and vulnerable people in our community and around the globe. Any award to me recognises them.

“I am, principally, a scientist - a medical researcher. I am passionate about innovation that leads to improving the human condition, particularly for those most in need.

“Human progress, whether it be through addressing epidemics in the West or the alleviation of extreme poverty in the developing world, will continue to be totally dependent on innovations in health.”

Burnet Patron and former High Court Justice, The Hon Michael Kirby AC CMG, paid tribute to Professor Crabb as a passionate and effective advocate for practical science.

“What I like most about Brendan Crabb is that he is always concerned to interpret the complex scientific work in which he is involved to the Australian public,” Justice Kirby said.

“A lot of fine scientists do not feel the obligation to do this. They think it is enough to do their brilliant work in an ivory tower, but not Brendan.

“Combined with outstanding research in priority directions, his approach has helped to keep the Burnet Institute before the consciousness of the Australian public. This, in turn, has helped attract political support and government funding for scientific research in difficult economic times.

“His voice has been important for all medical institutes. It is good for us all that he has been honoured by our country in such a distinctive way.”

Former Burnet Chairman, Alastair Lucas AM said Professor Crabb’s AC was richly deserved.

"The entire Burnet family is incredibly proud of Brendan's achievements and this recognition is just reward for Brendan's extraordinary contribution to the community," Mr Lucas said.

"I can't congratulate Brendan highly enough".

Professor Crabb is a molecular biologist with a particular interest in infectious diseases and in health issues of the developing world. His personal research is the development of a malaria vaccine and the identification of new treatments for this disease. He is the current Chair of the US-based Malaria Vaccine Science Portfolio Advisory Committee. He is also Chairman of Alfred Medical Research and Education Precinct (AMREP) Council in Melbourne.

Professor Crabb holds Professorial appointments at The University of Melbourne and Monash University. Until his appointment as Director of Burnet Institute he was a Senior Principal Research Fellow of the National Health & Medical Research Council of Australia, and an International Research Fellow of the US-based Howard Hughes Medical Institute.

He serves on the Scientific Advisory Boards of the UK-based Sanger Institute’s Malaria Program and the Monash Institute of Pharmaceutical Science. Professor Crabb was the Editor-in-Chief of the world’s leading parasitology research journal, the International Journal for Parasitology, from 2006 to 2009.

Professor Crabb has a strong interest and longstanding involvement in education. He was a full-time teaching academic at the University of Melbourne and is currently involved in educational and curriculum development activities for high school students and teachers through the Gene Technology Access Centre (gtac.edu.au).

In addition to his own research, education and research leadership roles, Professor Crabb is passionately committed to science and medical research advocacy, and in particular to drawing attention to the critical role health innovations have had, and will continue to have, on the development of mankind.

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