

Thanks to you...

Autumn 2024



Burnet
reach for the many



Our safe and healthy
births initiative is
delivering hope for
mothers and babies
in Papua New Guinea.

MESSAGE FROM THE CEO

Our most successful end-of-year appeal ever - thanks to you

Welcome to the first edition of the Thanks to You newsletter for 2024. I hope you are having a healthy and happy 2024 so far, and that you enjoy reading about a few of the things we've been up to, thanks to your support.

In our 2023 end-of-year appeal we asked donors to support Burnet initiatives in Papua New Guinea in the area of safe and healthy births. This included phase two of the adaptation and roll-out of the Safe Delivery App, an app that puts life-saving obstetric information into the hands of those who can best use it to save lives. I'm happy to report that this was one of our most successful end-of-year appeals ever – THANK YOU to everyone who gave.



On the page opposite you can read a few words from my colleague Dr Delly Babona about what this incredible result means to her personally.

In this edition, you will also hear from Professor Mark Stoové with an update on just a few of our current HIV programs. Many of our longest-standing supporters joined us at a time when Burnet (or Fairfield Hospital as we were known then) was at the forefront of the fight against the HIV/AIDS epidemic. As you'll read, even though the landscape has changed a great deal, we're as dedicated to the elimination of HIV as a health threat as we have always been – something we're only able to do thanks to your support.

Also included in this edition are feature stories on two of our supporters, Fay Bock and the late Robert Cheffers. One of my favourite things is hearing from you, our donors. I love understanding a little bit about who you are, how you first came to be involved with Burnet, and what drives your incredibly generous support. So can I please encourage you to contact me if you're interested in sharing your story? I'd love to hear from you.

With best wishes

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read "B. Crabb". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Professor Brendan Crabb AC
Director and CEO

YOUR GIFTS IN ACTION

Saving lives with a phone

A personal thanks from Dr Delly Babona

In 2021 we raised funds to adapt the Safe Delivery App for use in PNG and test it in the field. Now, thanks to your most recent support, and entirely funded by you via one of our most successful appeals ever, we're ready for Phase 2 of the project: getting it into the hands of the people who need it! **It's an incredibly exciting time, and we couldn't be doing it without you.**

Dr Delly Babona, the Lead Investigator for the Adapting the Safe Delivery App in PNG project offers you her personal thanks (see below).

Dr Babona studied a medical degree and then obtained specialist qualifications in Obstetrics and Gynaecology at the University of Papua New Guinea. She is currently based in Australia, completing a Master of Public Health as an Australian Award Scholarship recipient and working at Burnet as a Senior Research Officer.

Below: Dr Delly Babona and part of the Maternal Child Health team at St Mary's Hospital Vunapope in Kokopo, PNG. L-R: Sr Dorcas (Paediatric Nurse), Nurse Elizabeth (Community Health worker), Dr Delly Babona (OBGYN) and Sr Rose (Midwife).

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On behalf of myself and the Maternal Child Health team in PNG, I offer a heartfelt thank you to everyone who supported the Burnet project to roll out the Safe Delivery App in Papua New Guinea. Your support will have such a huge impact, especially for rural health workers. It will empower them with quick access to crucial information for maternal and newborn care. Thank you for championing compassion and advocating for a healthier world.

DR DELLY BABONA



Scan the QR code to download the Safe Delivery App



AN UPDATE FROM THE FIELD:

Burnet's HIV Prevention Programs

We talk to Professor Mark Stoové about HIV as a health threat here in Australia and around the world. It's a story of extreme inequity.

“ I think the key thing that I'd like Burnet's supporters to know about our work in the HIV area is the vast differences between HIV in Australia and HIV in other countries where Burnet has a presence.

PROFESSOR MARK STOOVÉ

IN AUSTRALIA

“In the last five years HIV diagnoses in Australia have halved, from roughly 1000 a year to about 500. So we've been really successful in Australia with our HIV strategies. Burnet has played a part in that, and that means that you, our supporters, have also played a part.

“Australia has one of the best health care systems in the world. That means we've also got excellent access to testing and high quality models of care for those diagnosed with HIV. When people are diagnosed in Australia, they generally start treatment straight away, which also reduces transmission. Similar to PrEP, HIV treatment lowers virus levels, preventing transmission. Additionally, Australia provides ample access to pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP), an antiviral medication taken to prevent infection.

“The biggest issue here in Australia can be found in the cracks where access to our world-best health system falls short. What we're finding is that community members in outer suburbs or regional areas, where there are fewer specialist clinics, are sometimes reluctant to disclose risk factors because of fear of stigma and discrimination in health settings and the community. This means they miss out on testing, early diagnosis, or access to PrEP. The migrant and international student community in Australia is another area where this stigma exists, and accessing services is also complicated by the fact that these groups do not have access to Medicare.

“To address these gaps it's really important to look at ways to take our best practice response and make it more accessible. Australia's first shopfront, community-based and peer-led HIV testing service for gay men was established by Burnet in collaboration with the Victorian AIDS Council (now Thorne Harbour Health) and the Victorian Government. This is a place where people can access free HIV services in a safe environment. **The next challenge for us is developing self-testing and virtual clinics here in Australia.”**

AND AROUND THE WORLD

“Unfortunately, the response to HIV is going backwards in some countries. This is due to a range of reasons – resource constraints, conservative governments, widespread stigma and criminalisation of at-risk groups, internal political issues, military strife, and so on.



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Burnet projects are currently underway, each focused on addressing a different aspect of eliminating HIV.

“Burnet’s biggest strength now lies in taking our expertise, developed through our local and international programs, into more countries to share our learnings and help create strong support networks and strengthen HIV health systems. We are able to add value as we have a history of building relationships in challenging environments, and can help educate at-risk communities and health care workers to navigate delicate issues. This sort of capability building is core to Burnet’s mission of health equity, ensuring no-one is left behind.”

“Thanks in part to the very generous ongoing support of donors since the earliest days of the HIV/AIDS epidemic, Burnet has made a substantial contribution to Australia’s success in the HIV space. We’re now one of the lowest diagnosing countries in the world – but so many countries don’t have access to the expertise and the programs that we’ve been able to develop here. The challenge we set ourselves is to do something about that.”

PROFESSOR MARK STOOVÉ

ROBERT CHEFFERS:

Supporting HIV research in perpetuity

Robert Cheffers dedicated his life to the comfort and health of others.

After many years as a nurse at the Alfred Hospital, he decided to make his legacy ongoing support of research into infectious diseases, especially HIV, and improvement of public health in Australia and overseas.

Although Robert suffered from multiple health issues in his later life, he found great solace in his beloved dogs – Margo, Bonnie and Emma – so much so that he set up a charitable trust in their name with Burnet as the sole beneficiary.



Above Left: Robert Cheffers, graduating, and later in life with one of his beloved pets.

As a result, every year Burnet is grateful to receive a disbursement from The Margo, Bonnie and Emma Memorial Trust.

We wish to acknowledge Robert’s many years of work in health services, and his vision and generosity in supporting health equity and research through the creation of this trust.

LEAVING A BEQUEST TO BURNET

Thank you to everyone who has recently made the incredibly generous decision to leave a gift in their Will to Burnet. You’re joining a very special group of supporters. Welcome!

If you would like to know more about leaving a gift in your Will to Burnet, please contact Penny Burke, Planned Giving Manager, on **0429 461 661** or via email at penny.burke@burnet.edu.au.

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I think it's important for Burnet to have a consistent income through monthly giving, rather than dealing with the uncertainties of government funding and seasonal giving patterns. I'm happy I can help in this way.

FAY BOCK



Fay Bock, participating in the Melbourne City Romp with her middle daughter.

FAY BOCK

An active and engaged supporter

One of the fondest memories Fay Bock has with Burnet Institute is participating in The Melbourne City Romp. Part treasure hunt, part 'Amazing Race', part puzzle, the Melbourne City Romp was a popular Burnet fundraiser run between 2007 and 2014. Fay participated a number of times with her daughter and says she 'had a ball'.

Since then she's been a regular at various Burnet events, and always enjoys hearing from our scientists. She's been to International Women's Day events, a tour through the Burnet laboratories, and most recently attended the Burnet Oration.

As well as being an incredibly engaged supporter, Fay is also a very generous one.

For her 70th birthday, Fay asked her friends to give a donation to Burnet Institute in lieu of a gift to herself - an incredibly generous and very much appreciated gesture.

She has also been a Research Action Partner since 2012, providing a very generous gift every month. She supports around a dozen charities in this way, across a range of areas - animal welfare, medical research, capability building in Africa - but she's especially committed to supporting children. It's Burnet's Maternal Child and Adolescent programs that she is most drawn to.

Fay is the very picture of an engaged, involved and very loyal supporter - and we love her for it. We look forward to seeing you again soon, Fay!

If you'd like to share a little bit about yourself and your connection to Burnet, we'd love to hear from you.

You can reach us by phone on **03 9282 2111**, or via email at **giving@burnet.edu.au**.



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My favourite part of my job here at Burnet is talking to donors. I have a real passion for helping people out and solving problems. I also love a chat, and am fascinated with the different stories our donors have to tell. So, if there's anything I can do for you, or if you're interested in becoming a Research Action Partner, please get in touch.

EMMA COLINDRES-LIRA

EMMA COLINDRES-LIRA:

A passion for helping people

Emma Colindres-Lira is a valued member of Burnet's small fundraising team. As the first point of contact for Research Action Partners like Fay Bock, she plays a pivotal role in donor care, ensuring that our supporters have a smooth and satisfying experience with Burnet, and that queries are dealt with promptly.

Hailing from Nicaragua, Emma now lives in Australia with her young son, Chadrick, and their dog Nellie. After dedicating herself to caring for the most vulnerable in her birth-country, Emma honed her donor care skills here in Australia at the Baker Institute, the Asylum Seeker Resource Centre and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

Emma Colindres-Lira
Phone: **0407 007 727**
Email: giving@burnet.edu.au



SPECIAL OCCASION GIFTS TO BURNET

Would you like to know more about arranging special occasion gifts to Burnet? We have helped people organise gifts in lieu of flowers at memorials, birthdays, and other significant events. Get in touch to find out more and talk to one of our friendly staff.

Phone: **03 9282 2111**
Email: giving@burnet.edu.au



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The 2023 Burnet Oration

Dr. Ziyad Al-Aly urges action for long COVID treatment

Thanks to all the Burnet supporters who turned out to see our first in-person Burnet Oration in many years. It was a fascinating address by world-renowned COVID-19 physician-scientist Dr Ziyad Al-Aly, highlighting that COVID is not just a respiratory virus, but a multi-system disease that can affect the cardiovascular system, kidney, brain, and gastrointestinal system. We look forward to more in-person events throughout 2024.



Clockwise from top left: Caroline Jacoby (donor) with Lorelle Lake (Burnet), Professor Heidi Drummer (Burnet), Marlene Krelle and Jerry Koliha (donors) and Dr Ziyad Al-Aly.

Scan the QR code to watch the 2023 Burnet Oration



AUSTRALIA

85 Commercial Road
Melbourne, Victoria, 3004
t + 61 3 9282 2111
e giving@burnet.edu.au
w burnet.edu.au
ABN 49 007 349 984

OVERSEAS

We have offices or representatives in Australia, Papua New Guinea and Myanmar, and also contribute to activities in other Asian, Pacific and African countries.

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