



OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR  
VICTORIA

## **CHAIR AND PATRONS DINNER FOR BURNET INSTITUTE**

**Thursday 25 October, 2018**

**The Honourable Bill Shorten MP**, Leader of the Federal Opposition and **Mrs Chloe Bryce-Shorten**

**Dame Carol Kidu DBE, Lady Primrose Potter AC and Mrs Maria Myers AC**, Patrons, Burnet Institute

**Mr Rob Milne**, Chair, Burnet Institute

**Professor Brendan Crabb AC**, Director and CEO, Burnet Institute

**Distinguished guests**

**Ladies and gentlemen**

First, I acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the land upon which we are gathering and pay my respects to their Elders past and present and to any Elders here with us this evening.

I am pleased to be here with you, as your proud Patron-in Chief. Tony is also pleased to be here, as a committed supporter of the Burnet.

I want to start by saying something I never say. That is, that this evening I want to talk to you about my school motto. My school motto.... in LATIN!

Please don't be alarmed. A long career in the law, with a steadfast commitment to access to justice, means that expressing myself in Latin is not something that I often do. Not often at all. In fact, probably never.

And although I know that when you see me standing here, you might assume that my schooldays were just a minute ago, of course they were a very long time ago and, nowadays, I really don't pass a great deal of time reflecting on those 'olden days'.

But the motto came to me because it is so very pertinent to the work of the Burnet.  
It is a motto that talks of 'greatness' and 'goodness'.

*Nil Magnum Nisi Bonum. Nothing is great unless it is good.*

I want to say a few words this evening on the twin topics of greatness and goodness.

And let me start a little way back, because an appreciation of the goodness around me is not something recent.

My whole life, I have known I was blessed to live in Australia and, of course, in Victoria.

That was encoded in me, as part of my earliest memory, by my father who had left pre-war Europe, for the safety of these shores.

I experienced good fortune on a number of levels.

My childhood was kind to me, wrapped in a safe, secure and happy family.

My professional life exposed me to luxuries like the rule of law and fairness and a respect for human rights.

And an association with a variety of community organisations across the years, exposed me to many kind, caring, talented and generous people.

But, it has been in my role as the Governor of Victoria, that I have especially appreciated both the widespread greatness and goodness that reside here in our State.

When it comes to greatness – to cleverness and innovation – nowhere is it more apparent than when it comes to our healthcare and research, bioscience and medical technology sectors.

Melbourne's top universities are ranked amongst the best in the world. Indeed, we are one of only three cities in the world to have two universities ranked in the global top 30 for biomedical science. We are side by side with London and Boston.

Melbourne is home to a flourishing bio-science network that clusters those highly ranked universities, large teaching hospitals and research institutes.

For almost two decades now, Victoria has received more than 40% of NHMRC grants money. And, we are home to more than 40% of Australia's ASX life science companies.

And so, we have much of which to be proud, including that, amidst this research rich environment, the headquarters of the Burnet Institute is located right here.

Even though it is aged just in its 30's.....really quite young for such a renowned Institute....the Burnet is already acclaimed for its work in infectious diseases such as malaria, HIV, viral hepatitis B and C and TB, and in infant mortality, drug and alcohol abuse amongst young people, healthy ageing and health security.

Quite a roll-call! And so, it is not hard to see the importance and cleverness in the Burnet's work.

Your Disease Elimination Program is just one proof of that.

You are successfully working to change the fact that, at present, each 60 seconds, a child somewhere in the world dies from malaria, that more than 10 million people contract TB every year and that a further 650 million people live with a chronic infectious disease, (130 million of them, living with chronic hep C).

Your work on the health of mothers and babies is another example.

Papua New Guinea has one of the highest infant mortality rates in the world. Your 'Healthy Mothers, Healthy Babies' program has seen seven hundred mothers recruited and their health followed through from delivery. Significant health issues such as anaemia and infectious diseases are being revealed. Thus the challenges and the solutions for better outcomes for them and their babies are being unlocked.

It is outstanding work.

But, as I said a little earlier, nothing is *great* unless it is *good*.

The work of the Burnet is good.

You work not just for the sake of science, but for the sake of people.

Achieving equity through better health is at the heart of what you do. It underpins all that you do. It is your vision.

None of us here can help but be drawn to your passion for social justice and equality, and your premise that health is a basic human right – that everyone should have access to high quality health care.

We know the need.

We know that vulnerable populations across the globe – and indeed right here in Australia – do not have the same health outcomes as others.

We know from World Health Organisation data that more than half of all deaths in low-income countries are caused by mostly preventable diseases – including malaria and TB, and complications during pregnancy and childbirth.

And that, in contrast, less than 7% of deaths in high-income countries are due to such causes.

And so we know the demonstrable goodness of your commitment to health equity across the globe.

I want to acknowledge your Director and CEO, Professor Brendan Crabb AC.

Now the fact that Brendan was made a Companion of the Order of Australia in 2015 for his contributions to medical research and global health – amongst the youngest recipients ever to receive that honour – speaks volumes about the esteem in which he is held.

But the finest testament to his leadership and vision is that there are also many other excellent leaders within the Burnet. Individuals and teams, leading within their broad range of disciplines, and out in the field, from Timor Leste to Zimbabwe.

These are scientists and researchers who have signed on to a task with an endless horizon.

These are not 9 to 5 jobs. They demand the capacity for a big vision, and the patience to master every small detail.

And the field throws up personal discomfort and exposure to danger, in the aftermath of natural disasters, or when living in and treating communities at risk of highly infectious diseases.

May I also take this opportunity to acknowledge and thank the Chair, Mr Rob Milne, and the Board members for their important work. Board members are often the best and most generous volunteers in an organisation, as you give freely of your time and your expertise.

In that regard, I note the extraordinary contribution of the former long-time Chair, the late Alastair Lucas AO, in whose memory the Alastair Lucas Prize for Medical Research was established. We shall hear more about the prize shortly. In the meantime, I acknowledge his family members who are present this evening.

And then, there are the generous donors who give so much to the Burnet Institute. Your contribution is far greater than just a donation. You genuinely support the vision. And your support encourages those charged with this important work. You add drive when the going gets tough. You are the lifeblood of the Institute.

Tony and I are so pleased to have the opportunity this evening to wish everyone connected with the Burnet continuing success. And to thank you, collectively, for ensuring that the Burnet's contribution to the health needs of Victorians, Australians, and the wider global community is good and, therefore, truly great.