

# MENZIES FOUNDATION

Annual Report 2000

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## **CHAIRMAN'S REPORT 2000**

Sir Daryl Dawson, AC, KBE, CB

I am pleased to report that during 2000 the Menzies Foundation has continued with many successful activities which reflect its original charter. The task of the Sir Robert Menzies Memorial Trust in 1978 was to "create and then maintain and administer a form or forms of permanent memorial to Sir Robert Menzies". Sir William Vines, in his Chairman's report of 1984, stated that "... the Trust sought not so much a physical monument as themes or topics providing us with lines of activity essentially and popularly linked to Sir Robert Menzies' own thoughts on national benefit. And since it is a leader of a nation and not a political party whom we honour, we have sought also to be non-political". The themes chosen for the memorial activities, to be brought to fruition through the Sir Robert Menzies Memorial Foundation, were health, scholarship and education.

In 2000, support for health related activities included:

Continued support for the Menzies medical research centres. The Menzies School of Health Research in Darwin and The Menzies Centre for Population Health Research in Hobart are two outstanding and on-going memorials which continue to develop strong reputations for excellence in Australia and internationally. Sponsorship of workshops, seminars and public lectures on health related themes. This year's very successful Third Menzies Scholars Symposium, entitled "Human Genome Research: How far should we go?", and two public Menzies Foundation Lectures upheld the Foundation's reputation for supporting debate on important, contemporary public health issues. The Foundation continues to support scholarships - which are much sought after and highly valued - as well as educational activities:

The Sir Robert Menzies Memorial Research Scholarship in the Allied Health Sciences; which provides support for scholars from such disciplines as nursing, physiotherapy, occupational therapy, speech pathology and clinical psychology; The Sir Robert Menzies Memorial Scholarship in Law tenable at Universities in the United Kingdom (in association with the UK Sir Robert Menzies Memorial Trust and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office); The RG Menzies Scholarship to Harvard (in association with the Harvard Club and the Australian National University); The CJ

Martin/RG Menzies Fellowship (in association with the National Health and Medical Research Council);The Menzies Centre for Australian Studies, London. As reported last year, extensive financial support for the Centre - which has been the major recipient of our funds since 1988 - concluded in October 2000. From 2001, the Foundation will provide \$25,000 per annum for a Menzies Foundation Fellowship at the Centre.Melbourne University Oration on Higher Education. Professor Sir Alec Broers, Vice-Chancellor of the University Cambridge, delivered the Oration entitled "University Partnerships - Sustaining International Competitiveness".I was privileged to Chair the Selection Committee for the Sir Robert Menzies Memorial Scholarship in Law and I am again pleased to report that the quality of the scholars is outstanding. This year at the annual dinner for the Menzies Memorial Scholars Association held at the new Melbourne Museum, scholars were presented for the first time with a Menzies medallion. Two of the Foundation's Council Members, Mr Bob White and Mr Paul Sheahan were also presented with Life Membership medallions in recognition of their longstanding association with the Foundation. The Menzies medallion was struck in 1969 by Andor Meszaros in honour of Sir Robert Menzies and the Foundation expresses its gratitude to the Meszaros family for the use of the die.

On the financial side in January 2000 the Foundation allocated its portfolio to three investment managers: Credit Suisse Asset Management (\$6 million); JB Were Asset Management (\$4 million); and Westpac Investment Management (\$4.2 million). The average return for the 12 months ending 31 December, 2000 was 10%. This compares with a return in 1999 of approximately 6%. Accumulated funds at the end of the financial year were \$14,583,432 (1999: \$14,128,573) and the net surplus of income over expenditure was \$454,859.

Since its inception, the Foundation has been supported by outstanding Australians and we congratulate five of them on recent public recognition of their achievements. In the special Federation edition of the Medical Journal of Australia an article entitled "A half-century of Australian health and medical research" paid tribute to our Executive Director, Professor John Coghlan for his work on hybridisation histochemistry at the Howard Florey Institute and to Professor Terry Dwyer and his colleagues at Menzies Centre for Population Health Research for their work on sudden infant death syndrome. In the Queen's Birthday Honours,

Professor Chris Silagy, a Menzies Memorial Scholar in Medicine, was awarded an AO and in the 2001 Australia Day Honours, Mrs Jean Trethewey, Chair of the Menzies Centre's Board of Management and a Director of this Foundation was awarded an OAM and Professor Bob Porter, a Council Member of the Foundation, was awarded an AC. On behalf of the Menzies Foundation, may I offer them all our warmest congratulations.

The Honourable Sir Daryl Dawson, AC, KBE, CB

Chairman

## **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT 2000**

Professor John Coghlan, AO

Despite the general financial constraints the broad aims of the Foundation are being reinforced and the Menzies Foundation is recognised as a memorial to Sir Robert on an increasingly broader base. I reported last year that diminishing income from our investments prompted the Board as its first remedial action to call for tenders from the most successful fund managers. The details of the outcome are set out in the Chairman's report. The first call on income is always to protect the corpus of the funds against inflation. Our changes in fund management have paid off in the short term and our yearly average income for 2000 was 10% after fees; 1999 was only 6%. Accumulated funds sat at \$14.5 million on 31 December, 2000. The investment market is full of uncertainties and the outcomes are not clear enough for us to make a major innovation, for example a "new centre" with a longer commitment of three years, but modest changes continue. Our upgraded organisational chart is in the centre pages of this report.

The major support for the Menzies Centre for Australian Studies in London - now in its new home at Kings - expired in October 2000. The joint Fellowship program was developed between Professor Carl Bridge and myself during his visit in 1999 and my visit to the Centre in mid-2000. The program has had an auspicious start with the appointment of Dr Mark McKenna from the Australian National University. Further details are included in Professor Bridge's report for the Centre.

Joint meetings and joint public lectures are now a major feature of our program, often encompassing health, scholarship and education. The first public, plenary Menzies Lecture with ScienceNOW! was given by Ms Laurie Garrett in 1999 entitled "The Coming Plague". World plagues are a feature of every day news reports with the worsening AIDS situation in Africa, BSE and foot and mouth disease in Europe. As Ms Garrett predicted, TB is emerging as a serious public health problem in rich as well as poor nations and especially in the collapsing health care systems of Russia.

The joint public lecture program in 2000 also added to the stature and reputation of the Foundation in the public health area. This year's ScienceNOW! Menzies Foundation Lecturer, Professor Susan Greenfield, spoke to an Australia-wide

audience when the lecture was televised by the ABC. Recently she presented her very popular series on the brain on the Compass program for the ABC. A second Menzies Lecture entitled "World Blindness and the Global Initiative" was given by the most eminent American scientist, Professor Al Sommer. A commentary on these lectures appears later in this report.

The Menzies Foundation's general web site is continually updated and used mainly by scholarship applicants who are seeking information on how to apply. The majority of candidates now download the application forms from our web site and this represents a considerable saving in time and postage for the Secretariat. In this scholarships/grants field the Menzies Foundation has been on the 'web' since 1995 - long before government agencies and other philanthropic trusts. The site is maintained at a high level utilising the newest technologies in order to maintain our leading edge position. The Secretariat also maintains the site for the Menzies Memorial Scholars Association which allows prospective candidates to find information on the previous scholars.

The major educational web site based on the "Life and Times of Sir Robert Menzies" is in progress. In 2000 the Foundation entered into an agreement with Museum Victoria to support their Outreach Program. As a corollary to this project, several "hot buttons" to the Foundation's web site will be inserted into the Museum Victoria web site, including the home page which has on average 1,300 visits each day. It will make the Foundation a partner in a formal educational program accessible not only to Victorian schools but internationally. Progress was slow during 2000 because of the opening of the new Melbourne Museum and the availability of key staff. This time has been spent wisely in planning and design.

The staff of the Secretariat are computer literate and the General Manager, Ms Sandra Mackenzie, is to be congratulated for her orchestration of a seamless transition to fully computerised accounts in readiness for the introduction of the GST and the new tax system. There is a further advantage in that the accounting software is also utilised by the auditors thus making the annual audit a faster and easier process. Our small Secretariat also employed its computer skills when it undertook the administration for the Third Menzies Scholars Symposium including the registration of delegates. The symposium coincided with the processing of the law scholarship applications and again the high level and standard of work would

not have been possible without state-of-the-art computer equipment and skilled personnel. Our repertoire for seminars and workshops now includes the early production, within a month, of a CD-ROM of the whole proceedings of the meeting; an invaluable record.

Our headquarters building, Clarendon Terrace in East Melbourne, continues to serve us well. Not only does it provide office accommodation for our Secretariat but the function rooms on the first floor provide excellent space for the Foundation's meetings and symposiums. It was, for example, a splendid setting for a welcoming dinner for speakers at the Third Menzies Scholars Symposium. Income from the tenancy in the northern terrace helps to maintain this beautiful National Trust building. I am also pleased to report that the building is now hired on a regular basis by the East Melbourne Group, the East Melbourne Historical Society and the East Melbourne Community Bank Steering Committee for their meetings. This local use has made the building much more accessible to the community and has enhanced the profile of the Foundation.

Professor John Coghlan, AO

Executive Director

## FELLOWSHIPS AND SCHOLARSHIPS FOR 2000

### NH MRC/RG MENZIES FELLOWSHIP



In 1996, the Foundation made the inaugural contribution of \$50,000 per annum to the National Health and Medical Research Council's (NH MRC) CJ Martin/Neil Hamilton Fairley Fellowships with one of the Fellowships to become known as the NH MRC/RG Menzies Fellowship. These Fellowships are available for postgraduate medical study at approved overseas institutions with tenure for up to four years. Two years are spent in the overseas country followed by two years back in Australia. The Foundation has also made available a supplementation of \$5,000 for each of the four years of the award for activities associated with the NH MRC/RG Menzies Fellowship, e.g. conference travel.

The 2000 NH MRC/RG Menzies Fellowship was awarded to Dr John Hooper of the Centre for Biotechnology, Queensland University of Technology. He will carry out a study entitled "Investigation of new proteolytic targets for inhibition of tumour induced angiogenesis" at the Scripps Research Institute, La Jolla, California.

### SIR ROBERT MENZIES MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIPS IN LAW

The Sir Robert Menzies Memorial Trust in London, with the support of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and of the Sir Robert Menzies Memorial Foundation in Australia, offers to Australians one or two post-graduate scholarships in law for tenure at universities in the United Kingdom.

There were 30 applications for the one law scholarship that was available this year. Four applications were returned because three candidates had not completed their law degree at the time of application and one applicant did not meet the Australian Citizenship requirements.

Twenty three candidates held their law degree with First Class Honours or its equivalent and references were taken up for this group. Their applications were then forwarded to a panel for ranking. The six most highly ranked candidates were

invited for interview in Melbourne on 19 October, 2000. The Selection Committee was the Honourable Sir Daryl Dawson (Chairman), the Honourable Justice Susan Kenny (previous Menzies Memorial Scholar in Law), Professor Michael Bryan (University of Melbourne) and Mr Peter Innes, the British Consul-General, representing the Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

The Sir Robert Menzies Memorial Scholarship in Law was awarded to Mr Patrick Flynn who holds the degrees of BSc (1994) and LLB (1997) from the University of New South Wales. Mr Flynn was placed equal first in his graduating class of 224 and was awarded the University Medal in Law.

Mr Flynn will take up his one-year scholarship at Cambridge University where he will study for a Master of Laws commencing in October 2001.

#### SIR ROBERT MENZIES MEMORIAL RESEARCH SCHOLARSHIP IN THE ALLIED HEALTH SCIENCES

This research scholarship, which is valued at \$24,000 per annum for each of two years, is open to graduates in any of the health sciences who have enrolled for a PhD in an Australian University and who have completed the first stage of their doctoral program. As in previous years, the Foundation is grateful for the support of the final selection committee and the assessors who are nominated by the respective disciplines to grade the applications in terms of topic, relevance and methodology.

In 2000 the scholarship attracted a field of 41 candidates, and the disciplines included physiotherapy, speech pathology, psychology, nursing, podiatry, human movement studies and occupational therapy. In addition to the grading by the discipline assessors, the academic qualifications and publication record of each candidate as well as the scientific validity of the various projects are carefully considered.

Three candidates were invited to attend for interview in Melbourne on Tuesday, 22 August, 2000. The interview panel consisted of Professor John Coghlan (Chair),

Professor Alison Perry (La Trobe University) and Dr Susan Paxton (University of Melbourne).

The Sir Robert Menzies Memorial Scholarship in the Allied Health Sciences for 2001-2002 was awarded to Ms Marie Andrew who holds the degree of Bachelor of Arts (Hons) in Psychology with First Class Honours from Flinders University of South Australia. Ms Andrew's PhD project is entitled "Psychosocial outcome after cardiac surgery: Application of a coping model to understand predictors and the role of neuropsychological dysfunction" and is being carried out in the Department of Psychology, Flinders University of South Australia.

#### ROBERT GORDON MENZIES SCHOLARSHIP TO HARVARD

The Harvard Club of Australia, the Australian National University and the Sir Robert Menzies Memorial Foundation jointly sponsor the Robert Gordon Menzies Scholarship to Harvard University. The Scholarship is administered by the Australian National University. Mr Mike Codd (Deputy Chairman of the Menzies Foundation) and Ms Renée Leon (previous Menzies Memorial Scholar in Law) represented the Foundation on the Selection Committee.

The 2000/2001 RG Menzies Harvard Scholarship was awarded to Mr Quang Nguyen. Mr Nguyen is a graduate of the University of Technology Sydney (with a bachelors degree in maths and finance) and a graduate of the University of Sydney (with a Masters in Commerce). He will further advance his education at Harvard Business School.

## **REPORT FROM THE MENZIES CENTRE FOR POPULATION HEALTH RESEARCH, HOBART**

The year 2000 was a very significant one for the Menzies Centre. New funding support was received resulting in an increase in total income of 17% over 1999. This equates to \$3.5 million, including \$500,000 from the NHMRC for five new studies and two continuing research projects. Core funding increased by 37% to a total of \$852,000. This represents an important area of growth for the Centre, a major component of which is an increased contribution from the University of Tasmania.

Donations continued to grow in 2000 with over 500 individual contributions, the highlight being the inaugural "Tree of Life" campaign, a statewide appeal, which will continue on an annual basis. During the year the State Premier, the Honourable Jim Bacon, honoured the Menzies Centre as a Tasmanian Icon. This award includes an annual grant of \$500,000 to further the development of commercial opportunities resulting from genetic research at the Centre.

Amongst the major new research initiatives for the Centre is the development of the Cohort Studies Unit which has arisen from the Tasmanian Infant Health Survey database that continues to provide valuable information for many of the Centre's studies. Dr Alison Venn formally from the Centre for the Study of Mother's and Children's Health, La Trobe University directs this Unit which is conducting follow-up studies into cardiovascular disease and the metabolic syndrome, along with projects measuring physical activity in children.

During 2000 the Menzies Centre collaborated with the International Diabetes Institute to conduct the Tasmanian component of the National Diabetes, Obesity and Lifestyle Study (AusDiab). Findings from this population study have provided reliable data indicating that over one in four Tasmanian adults either have diabetes or are at high risk of developing diabetes and heart disease.

The Tasmanian Multiple Sclerosis Research Program continued with a focus on identifying genes that increase a person's susceptibility to MS. The Study's researchers are also focusing on environmental factors enabling examination of

gene-environment interactions. The data collection phase has been completed and the analysis phase has started. To date, analysis of 'candidate' regions reported by other groups has been conducted on 45 MS families. As this only represents a small proportion of the total number of families (~25%) in the study, it is difficult to draw any concrete conclusions at this stage. However, it has been confirmed that one of the four candidate regions is associated with susceptibility to MS.

During 2000 the Centre's Director Professor Terry Dwyer was awarded a prestigious WHO Fellowship that saw him travel to Geneva where he spent four months studying the increased incidence of cardiovascular disease in developing countries. The specific countries that were investigated included the Pacific Islands where there are problems of heart disease related to diabetes, countries in East Asia where there is high blood pressure and stroke and the Middle East where the incidence of heart disease has increased as the countries there have developed.

While in Geneva, Professor Dwyer and an international team of five people prepared the necessary documentation on how to cost effectively measure risk factors of cardiovascular disease and diabetes and how to collect relevant information in developing countries. As a result of Professor Dwyer's research the Menzies Centre will coordinate a program of activities in the Pacific Islands which will examine problems of cardiovascular disease and diabetes.

A major issue for 2000 was progress with the Incorporation of the Menzies Centre. Following discussions with the Menzies Centre Board, the Menzies Foundation and meetings with the Tasmanian government and resolution by the Council of the University of Tasmania, it was determined that the Menzies Centre would be incorporated as a separate legal entity to enable it to function effectively in a commercial environment. The timetable for Incorporation is June 2001 and significant progress towards finalisation of the Constitution has been made.

## THE MENZIES FOUNDATION LECTURES

In 2000, the Menzies Foundation sponsored two Menzies Lectures, both given by eminent international scientists.

Professor Susan Greenfield is an impressive scientist and science communicator and at the ScienceNOW! Menzies Foundation Lecture given on 4th May, 2000 at the National Science Forum, she provided some thought provoking and challenging material on her theme "The Future of the Mind".

Susan Greenfield is an Oxford University neurobiologist and is the first female director of the Royal Institution. She is, by her own account, something of a maverick. She was the first woman to give the Royal Institution Christmas Lectures, and has written a book about the brain designed for ordinary people to understand. She writes a column in a Sunday newspaper about science and pops up in every appeal to get more women into science. The media love her.

Greenfield talks about the brain the way other people talk about fine art or football; it is a thing of endless beauty and fascination, adorning her walls like pictures of prize-winning cauliflowers. It is mindboggling, stunning, brilliant, she says. "All you are, you see, is your brain". The last bit of this is self-evidently true. It is also, though, an infuriatingly unfathomable concept, for how can you think objectively about your brain when the only thing you can use to think about it is the thing itself? This is one of the reasons why you might expect a conversation with a brain expert to be somewhat confusing. Another is the fear that an Oxford scientist is going to talk in language you do not understand. What makes Susan Greenfield so remarkable is that she can tell you about your brain without baffling it.

Does she believe men and women have fundamentally different brains? Well, she says, if you put hers and the male photographer's on the table in front of us, you wouldn't be able to see any difference. Studies show there are some gender differences - but in her view, the individual trumps all of that.

She does not just try to take science to 'the tabloid readers' but to bring something of the outside world into the lab. She has set up her own company with venture capital money, and the company then awards her with a grant for research. She

concedes that being a woman in an overwhelmingly male world makes it easier to be noticed, but speaks out repeatedly on the need to get more girls interested in science. "One of the problems is that women have always had more complex lives, so are more interested in weighing things up. Science is taught in a fact-oriented way, and boys are happier going for facts and getting something right or wrong. If only schools showed what you could do with the facts, girls would be more interested. Everyone knows that if you learn Greek grammar you can read Homer. Nobody says what you can do if you learn your science grammar". She also worries about girls lacking role models and confidence, and suffering from 'impostor syndrome'. Extracted from an article by Decca Aitkenhead in The Guardian newspaper (June 8 1998).

The ABC's national telecast of the lecture the following Wednesday night provided the Foundation with valuable exposure in both the scientific world and with the general public, and led to many positive comments in the ensuing days.

The second Menzies Foundation Lecture for 2000 was entitled "World Blindness and the Global Initiative". It was held on 10 August, 2000 in association with the Centre for Eye Research Australia and the Ophthalmology 2000 conference. The lecturer was Professor Al Sommer, Dean of the School of Medicine and Public Health at the Johns Hopkins University. He is a practising ophthalmologist who has an international reputation as a leader in epidemiology and in public health ophthalmology.

Currently, Dr Sommer's academic interests include outcomes assessment, clinical guidelines, cost containment, blindness prevention strategies, child survival, health interventions in developing countries and the growing interface between medicine and public health.

Dr Sommer's landmark work on Vitamin A has been credited with saving the lives of millions of children around the world. This pioneering work has earned him numerous awards, including the Helmut Horten Medical Research Award and the Charles A Dana Award for Pioneering Achievements in Health. In 1997 he was the winner of the Lasker Prize which is the most prestigious prize in medical research in the United States. The citation reads:

Throughout the developing world, in Indonesia and Tanzania, in South Africa and Nepal, in virtually all countries where vitamin A deficiency was once common, millions of children owe their eyesight and their very lives to a visionary, persistent doctor from Baltimore. Alfred Sommer, winner of the 1997 Lasker award for clinical medical research, discovered that vitamin A, known to prevent blindness from xerophthalmia, also gives children the biochemical strength to recover from life-threatening infections that are common in most of the poorest nations on earth.

Xerophthalmia often begins with nightblindness, which in some cultures is called "chicken blindness" because afflicted children mimic chickens' inability to see at dusk. As xerophthalmia progresses, "Bitot's spots" appear on the eyes - white, foamy or cheesy accumulation of tissue that is known as a sign of vitamin A deficiency. If vitamin A deficiency progresses untreated, the patients deteriorate and may develop eye ulcers that, as Sommer puts it, "eventually turn the cornea to mush."

Vitamin A deficiency is one of the oldest recorded medical conditions. The ancient Egyptians treated nightblindness with animal liver (where vitamin A is stored) 3500 years ago. By the early 1900's, the connection between xerophthalmia, overall resistance to infection and vitamin A was well-documented by American and Danish nutritionists who treated their patients with cod liver oil, butter, and whole milk. For all practical purposes, xerophthalmia was erased from the medical map in Europe and North America.