

Health, health care and healing: introduction to the Festschrift for Professor Ken Donald

THE CITATION for Ken Donald's recent and well deserved award of an Order of Australia reads "For service to medicine as an academic and administrator, particularly as a contributor in the fields of pathology and community health". A true enough statement but hardly sufficient for such a diverse career and lifetime of contributions in so many different fields. In this issue of *Australian Health Review* we include a collection of papers to honour Professor Donald.

This paper provides an introduction to Professor Donald. Ken was born in Ipswich, Queensland, in 1936, educated at Ipswich Grammar, and qualified in medicine at the University of Queensland in 1962. He was awarded a PhD in 1973 for his work entitled "Effects of a tubercule bacillary lipid on reticulo-endothelial tissue" and undertook post-doctoral training at Erasmus University in Rotterdam and the University of Edinburgh. His first postgraduate career was in pathology where his research and publications focused upon lymphocytes and macrophage functions. He was subsequently appointed as a Senior Lecturer and the Reader in the University of Queensland Department of Pathology, and Director of the Department of Pathology North Brisbane Hospital Board.

In 1981 he moved into the second phase of his career in senior health service administration when he was appointed as Deputy Director General of Health and Medical Services, Queensland Department of Health, a post he held until 1989 when he moved to Newcastle as CEO and General Superintendent of John Hunter Hospital.

In 1992 he made the third change, returning to Queensland to positions of academic leadership, initially as Chair and Head of Department in Social and Preventive Medicine, and subsequently in 2000 as Head of the School of Medicine, a post he held until his retirement in December 2006. During these last 5 years he steered the School of Medicine through the turbulence of financial stringency, the dissolution of

the departments, and the major reorganisation associated with the introduction of the graduate medical program. Throughout all this turmoil he maintained an open and active intellectual interest in the future of medical education, as exemplified by his leadership contributions to IVMEDS — the international virtual medical school.

His academic contributions include numerous peer-reviewed publications and text book chapters, as well as acting as advisor and mentor for many research higher degree students. His skills in national health leadership have been widely appreciated and used in his roles as Chair of more than 20 government advisory groups, panels and committees including the Repatriation Medical Authority, the NHMRC Public Health Research Development Committee and the AIDS Control Council of Queensland, and as President of the Australian Cancer Society. His major reports to government covered diverse topics ranging from doping in race horses to the effect of herbicides in Vietnam veterans.

Given this list of accomplishments it is not surprising that more than a hundred of his colleagues, friends and current and ex-students gathered to celebrate his lifetime contributions at a Festschrift held in his honour on 2–3 February, 2007. The diversity of their contributions is reflected in the breadth of the topics collected here as a permanent record of some of the presentations made at the Festschrift. Perhaps more important to record, however, was the other celebration on the day — of Ken's cheerful wit, generous loyalty, courage in the face of adversity, and his ability to provoke stimulating conversation on practically any topic. This has always been the mark of the man and will be long remembered.

Michael Ward

Senior Director
Clinical Practice Improvement Centre
Queensland Health