

AUTUMN 2022

# Thanks to you...

The Safe Delivery App  
is coming to  
Papua New Guinea,  
thanks to you

[DONATE NOW](#)



**Burnet Institute**  
Medical Research. Practical Action.



# Happy New Year

**Happy New Year to all our supporters and thank you for your generosity throughout 2021.**

2022 is set to be a big year. We will be launching an ambitious new 2030 strategic plan, which will drive our commitment, direction and impact over the coming years.

An important milestone in the next few years will be the establishment of the Australian Institute for Infectious Disease (AIID) in which Burnet Institute, Doherty Institute and University of Melbourne will remain independent entities, but co-locate and collaborate in one facility.

The AIID is being established to harness the collective power of Victoria's world-leading research excellence in infectious disease to support scientific discovery, quickly respond to future pandemics and safeguard the state, nation and region.

**The possibilities this partnership presents are far greater than the sum of its parts. It's a very exciting development and a crucial part of our future.**

We remain committed to our flagship research and public health programs, and your ongoing and very generous support remains critical. We could not do this without you, and as the world changes around us, your support is more important than ever.

Finally, thank you to everyone who completed our 2021 Supporter Survey. It was fantastic to hear from so many of our incredible donors, especially about how you were coping throughout COVID-19, and the associated public health measures. I'm pleased to share with you a brief snapshot of some of the results on page 8.

With best wishes for 2022.

**Professor Brendan Crabb AC  
Director and CEO**

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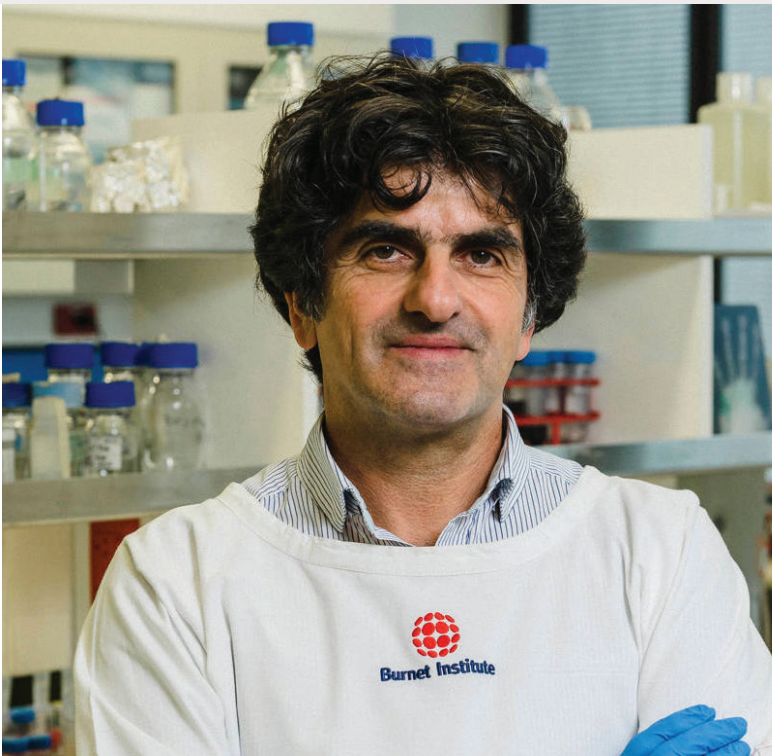
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Cover: Ms Joylene Vanahe, health worker in Papua New Guinea



“

Thanks to your incredible support, we have been able to develop the Burnet COVID-19 Vaccine Initiative, and the Adenovirus Production Laboratory.

**Your gifts of a year ago or more continue to have a really important impact on our research right now, and will be felt for the life of the project.**

DR ANDY POUBOURIOS

## *New developments* in our COVID-19 vaccine laboratory, thanks to you ”

**COVID-19 vaccines have been remarkably effective in reducing COVID-19 spread and severe disease. Unfortunately, our immunity wanes after several months and new variants such as Omicron can evade our immunity allowing them to spread, necessitating the development of boosters.**

Current booster vaccines use the original vaccine strain isolate, which is only partially protective against Omicron. Therefore an Omicron variant-specific booster is being developed. This illustrates that variant-matched boosters will lag behind the variants' emergence, enabling spread and further evolution of the virus.

**Our solution is to develop a 'universal' COVID-19 booster vaccine based on our engineered Spike (BVI Spike).** Our preclinical studies have found that the BVI Spike generates broadly protective antibodies that neutralise even the most difficult vaccine evading variants.

Your kind support has helped us establish the Burnet COVID-19 Vaccine Initiative. The goal of the Initiative is to develop our novel Spike vaccine technology into three vaccine platforms:

- **The adenovirus** vaccine platform is relatively cheap to produce and does not require ultra-cold storage and distribution infrastructure.

This vaccine platform is ideal for low-to-middle-income countries where such infrastructure may be absent. Your support has helped us to establish an Adenovirus Production Laboratory and to develop the techniques and reagents required to produce adenoviruses encoding the BVI Spike.

- **mRNA** has proven to be the gold standard COVID-19 vaccine platform in countries where ultra-cold storage and distribution infrastructure is established. We are in the process of engaging commercial companies to produce and formulate mRNA encoding our BVI Spike. We will then subject the formulated Spike to a preclinical evaluation.
- **Purified protein** has been used successfully for several vaccines such as tetanus. Purified protein vaccines are our key area of expertise. We are in the process of engineering further improvements in our BVI Spike to improve its yield, temperature stability and immunological properties.

**The work we've been able to progress thanks to your support is very exciting, and I look forward to continuing to keep you up-to-date in the future.**

**Thank you again  
Dr Andy Poubourios**

# Thanks to you, the Safe Delivery App is coming to PNG in 2022



A huge thank you to our donors for supporting the project to adapt the Safe Delivery App for use in PNG, especially during the tough times we've all had over the last couple of years. It will make a really big difference to the provision of education to health workers in PNG.

We are in planning phase at the moment, getting ethical approval for the project, and will start the first part of the evaluation and rollout in the next three months. Thanks to you, our very generous donors, it's all systems go!

PROFESSOR CAROLINE HOMER

CO-PROGRAM DIRECTOR, MATERNAL, CHILD AND ADOLESCENT HEALTH

## Thanks to Joylene Vanahe for telling her story

**As you will remember, last year we shared with you the story of community health worker, Joylene Vanahe, involving the loss of a young mother, Laila (name changed for privacy), and her baby, and how the Safe Delivery App may just possibly have changed the devastating outcome.**

Joylene spoke to us about the need for better communication and travel infrastructure in rural areas, and more staff resources. She felt there was also a clear need for more information and training for healthcare workers, especially in rural areas.

She said of the Safe Delivery App: "It would be good for more training and refresher courses for rural staff. It will take some time. But now that I have heard about the Safe Delivery App, I think it will come, and it will quickly help us nurses. And I will be so happy if such help comes."

Joylene is based in an extremely isolated health facility in Marunga, a very remote area of East New Britain in PNG. We have been trying to get in touch with Joylene for the last couple of weeks to let her know how successful the Christmas appeal has

been. But sadly, due to the isolation of Joylene's health facility, the difficulties in communication, and yet another wave of COVID-19 causing major issues in PNG (we have been told that many health workers are sick and a small number of hospitals are facing closure for indefinite periods) we have been unable to get in touch with her.



**We know you will join us in wishing Joylene well. As soon as we can get in touch with her, we will let her know of your incredible generosity, and the good news that the project to adapt the Safe Delivery App for PNG is going ahead.**

## The Finkel Foundation

For Dr Elizabeth Finkel AM, there was a very simple reason for The Finkel Foundation’s support of the project to adapt the Safe Delivery App for use in Papua New Guinea (PNG). “There’s nothing like being there,” she said.



“On my visit to East New Britain, I went to a birth centre where a mother had just lost a baby. It gave me a visceral understanding of the challenges Burnet Institute faces delivering perinatal care in remote, under-resourced settings and immense admiration for the tailored approaches



I am so happy that I am part of this, because it will make a huge difference for our remote rural health facilities and help with managing complications that can save the lives of mothers and babies. Without such generous and kind-hearted donors I don’t think we could improve our maternal and infant health indicators. Thank you so so much. We appreciate it very much.

PELE MELEPIA, BURNET STAFF MEMBER BASED IN KOKOPO, PNG

they are developing. The Safe Delivery App clearly has great potential in this context.”

The Finkel Foundation, established by Dr Alan Finkel AC and his wife Elizabeth, has supported Burnet’s work in PNG for many years. They have supported the Healthy Mothers, Healthy Babies program since it began, and in 2021, their support of the Safe Delivery App project took the shape of a \$50,000 pledge to match gifts, dollar by dollar, given by other donors.

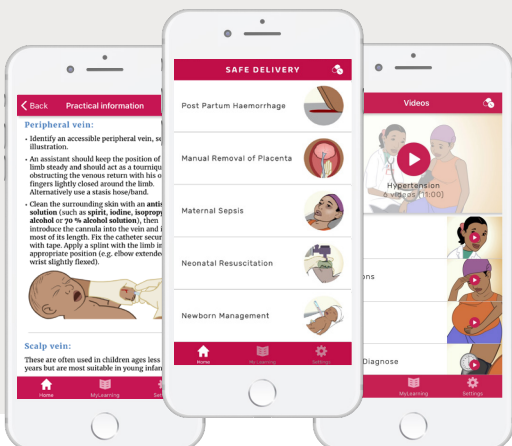
Matched giving lets donors know that others are standing alongside you in support of a project. It also adds value to your own gift, by making it go twice as far and have twice the impact.

“I’d like to thank other donors who came on board alongside us to get this project up and running. Thank you for doing your bit to try and help the terrible disparity in childbirth outcomes for women who live just a couple of hundred kilometers from Australia across the Torres Strait.”

**Burnet Institute would like to express our thanks for the long-standing support of the Finkel Foundation, and for all the donors that joined them in supporting the adaptation of the Safe Delivery App for use in PNG.**



The Safe Delivery App, developed by Maternity Foundation (Denmark), is a smartphone application that provides skilled birth attendants with direct and instant access to evidence-based and up-to-date clinical guidelines on Basic Emergency Obstetric and Neonatal Care. It will be adapted for use in PNG by Burnet Institute.



DONOR PROFILE

# A life *greatly enhanced* by giving

Trish Richards was one of those vibrant, enthusiastic people who loved a chat. She loved shopping for beautiful things, and buying gifts for others. Alongside this giving, generous nature, she had a deep sense of compassion for those less fortunate than herself, so it's not surprising she spent a great deal of her life doing volunteer work and getting involved in charitable giving.

The youngest of 11, Trish never married or had her own children, but she loved children, and in her mid-40s became a mothercraft nurse after two years of full-time study. She then worked in various roles looking after babies and toddlers.

Trish had a big circle of friends and travelled widely, at a time when single women often didn't travel. She visited 44 countries over the years including China, Russia and Antarctica, with her last big trip to the



United Kingdom a few years ago. She appreciated her life, and her many travels overseas reinforced her view that she was lucky to live in Australia.

Trish always looked for ways of giving to others, such as her work as a mothercraft nurse, her support of charities, and her volunteering. Trish supported Burnet through regular monthly donations for many years, and she also left part of the proceeds of the sale of her Caulfield North flat to Burnet via a gift in her Will.

Trish attended many of Burnet's supporter presentations and during an interview in 2019 explained why she liked being a part of our community.

“

I love the Institute's focus on helping vulnerable communities in Australia and overseas – particularly improving the health of children and young people in disadvantaged or 'at risk' circumstances. It is so important to help children and young people, as they are the future.

”



Each edition we will feature a story from one of our supporters, like you. If you have a story you would like to share, please email: [ashley.sievwright@burnet.edu.au](mailto:ashley.sievwright@burnet.edu.au).

# SOLD

Through her support of Burnet and other causes Trish told us she felt she was making a significant contribution to the welfare of others. As she herself said during that 2019 interview, her enjoyment of life was greatly enhanced by sharing what she had.

**Her niece Amanda Tattam describes Trish as a fun-loving aunt, who made family and community a high priority. “She had such a love of life, a wicked sense of humour. She was happy pottering in her garden, browsing in op shops and talking to her beloved cat. We miss her greatly but are so pleased she has chosen to support an organisation like Burnet.”**



All of us here at Burnet remember Trish fondly for her warmth and her passion, as much as for her generosity. Thank you, Trish, for a lifetime of generosity, and for your enthusiastic and giving nature. You are much missed, but your legacy will live on at Burnet Institute.

After many years of support, Trish Richards left part of the proceeds of the sale of her Caulfield North flat to Burnet via a gift in her Will.

McGrath Estate Agents, St Kilda, sold the flat and donated a significant portion of their commission back to Burnet and one other charity.



As Melanie Walden, agent responsible for the sale of Trish’s property, said:

Any contribution we can make to help our client’s experience be a better one, made it a natural decision to donate part of our fee to Trish’s choice of charity. It is never about us, but about what is important to our client’s needs, and if it meant we could also help support two great causes, well that was just a cherry on top. We are always delighted to support our community and our clients in any way we can.



Our thanks to everyone at McGrath St Kilda for their fantastic generosity. It is much appreciated.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

# 2021 Supporter Survey

**Thank you for making our 2021 Supporter Survey a great success.**

Support from committed donors like you is critical to everything we do, which is why we wanted to know more about how you feel about our work, what interests you most, how you'd like to support us, and how you prefer to be contacted.

In this year's survey we also asked how you were coping during the COVID-19 pandemic, and below are just some of the things you told us you were doing during lockdown.



IT skills were definitely improved, with many learning how to video chat for the first time (including for Burnet donor information sessions, church services and fitness classes) and discovering online games like Scrabble and Bridge. Music, cooking, gardening and woodchopping featured. And for the donor that restored a 120-year-old window, we want to see a photo!

**It wasn't all sunshine and roses unfortunately. The toll of isolation from friends and family carried a heavy load on our mental health. If you or someone you know is struggling please remember to talk to friends and family, and reach out to helpful services such as Lifeline (13 11 14), beyondblue (1300 22 4636) or Kids Help Line (1800 55 1800)**

**50%**

of you have been personally affected by areas of research covered by Burnet.

**70%**

of you do not use social media. If that is you, please make sure you subscribe to our newsletters and Impact magazine to keep up-to-date with important news and information about the impact of your support. Please email [giving@burnet.edu.au](mailto:giving@burnet.edu.au) to subscribe.

**97%**

of you intend making a future gift to Burnet. Thank you so much for your generosity!

**100%**

of you support Burnet because, amongst other reasons, you believe in the importance of science. We are very grateful to have you with us on this journey to make the world a more equitable place through better health.

**Thank you again for participating in the 2021 Supporter Survey.**

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