

Continuing his work

College benefactor Rowan Nicks left a very important legacy



In his lifetime Rowan Nicks gave generously as a surgeon and a friend to many around the world. He believed fervently in his mantra of 'teaching the teacher to teach others' and established the Rowan Nicks Scholarships and Fellowships to support young, promising surgeons from underprivileged backgrounds to become the surgical leaders of the future in their home countries.

Made as a bequest to the College in 1991, the Rowan Nicks Scholarships and Fellowships are designed not only to enhance the surgical skills of young surgeons, but also to provide leadership skills such as teaching, research and administration.

The suite of scholarships reflects Rowan's desire to improve the surgical care offered to the people of developing nations and to create strong professional links between the Australasian and the UK and Irish surgical communities. The Program has provided training

opportunities for more than 50 young surgeons from 21 countries.

The success of the Rowan Nicks Scholarship Program is due as much in part to Rowan's financial contribution as it is to his vision that even a small investment in education through international exchange can reap significant benefits.

And just as Rowan had hoped, many of the scholars who have spent time in Australia, New Zealand and selected overseas training centres under the dedicated mentoring of local senior surgeons, have now become leaders in surgical care in their home nations – a testament not only to Rowan's generosity, but his great vision and care for others.

The current Chair of the Rowan Nicks Committee, Mr John Masterton described Rowan as an "enormously generous and engaging man".

"The general plan when Rowan first approached the College was that surgeons from Africa and India be assisted to come

to Australasia not just to increase their surgical skills, but to help them to learn how to run a department as a potential leader in their own country," Mr Masterton said.

"These were lofty aims yet while he was one of the most charming people I have ever met, he was also a most determined and single minded person and while he was still physically able, he travelled repeatedly, and sometimes with his great friend Weary Dunlop, to maintain links with some of these scholars.

Over the past 20 years, Rowan's legacy has continued to grow, long after the earliest scholarship recipients have returned home. Each Scholar is encouraged to share their skills and knowledge with their colleagues upon return to their home countries. Some of the first recipients of the award from Bangladesh and Zimbabwe have gone on to become professors in teaching positions and leaders of surgery in their regions, publishing widely.



Foundation for Surgery

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"More recently we in the committee have turned more to our closer neighbours in the Pacific Islands and South East Asia, bringing scholars from Vietnam, Myanmar, Cambodia, Laos, Nepal, the Philippines and as far afield as Mongolia," Mr Masterton said.

Between 2011 and 2013, the Program has helped train the Solomon Islands' first Urologist and Fiji's first Neurosurgeon, broadening the scope of specialist services available in some of our closest neighbouring countries.

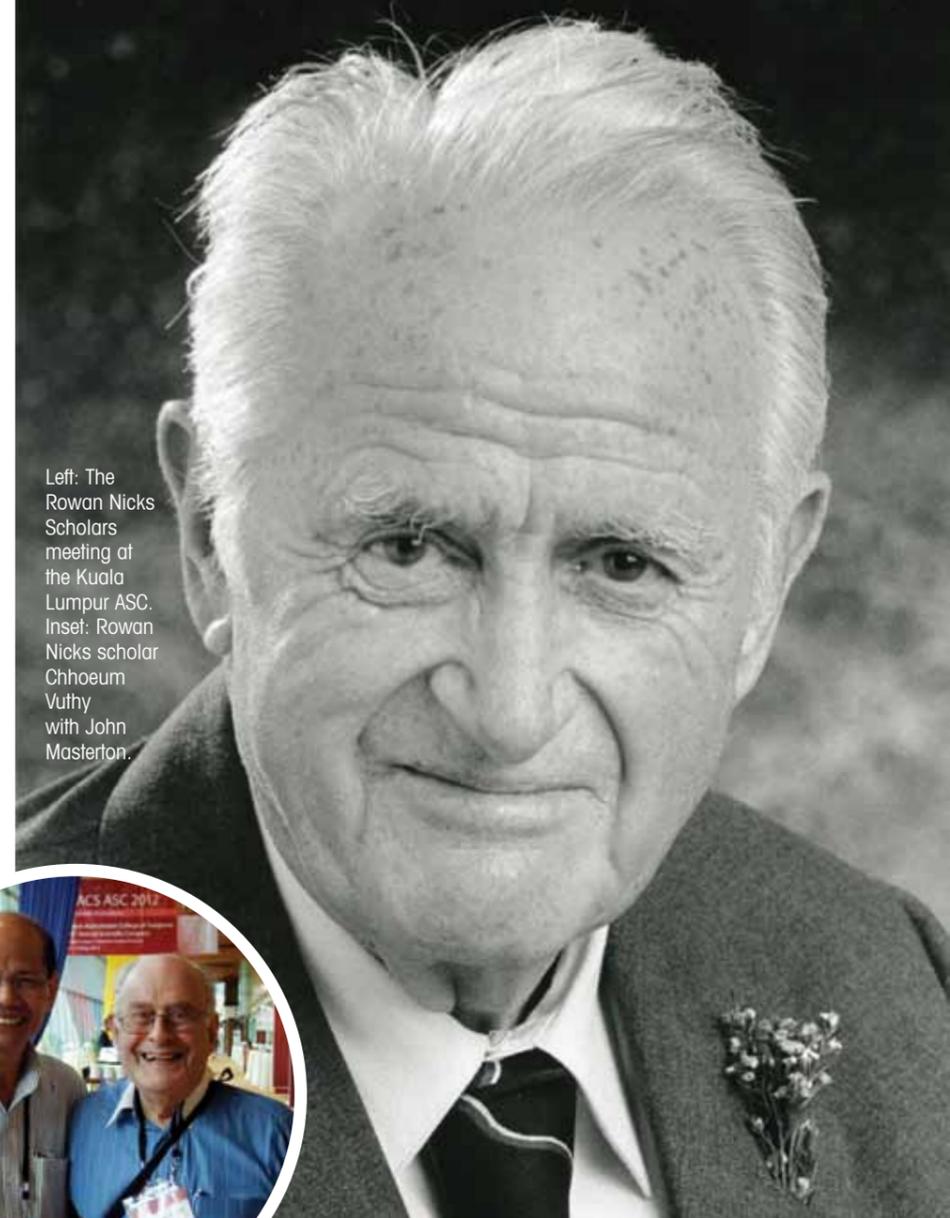
Since his death in 2011, Rowan's estate has continued to support the Rowan Nicks International Scholarships, the Rowan Nicks Pacific Islands Scholarships, the Rowan Nicks Australia and New Zealand Exchange Fellowships and the Rowan Nicks United Kingdom and Republic of Ireland Fellowships.

All the scholarships are administered through the College as part of the College's Foundation for Surgery.

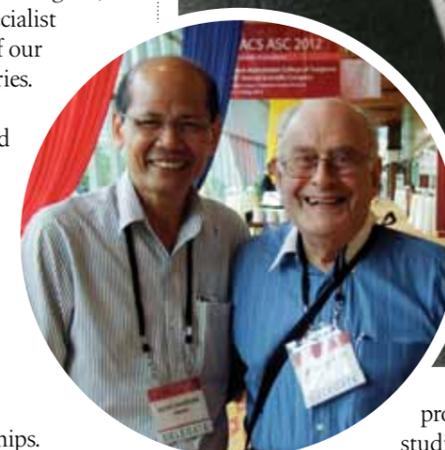
Through generous and thoughtful donations from Fellows and others, the Foundation itself has dispensed millions of dollars to support surgical research and aid work since it was established in 1981.

In addition to the international surgical scholarships administered through the College, Rowan and his close friend the late Russell Drysdale, established the Rowan Nicks Russell Drysdale Fellowship in 2005 to support individuals wanting to make a contribution in the area of Australian Indigenous health and welfare.

With generous bequests from both Rowan and Russell, and later from their estates, the Nicks/Drysdale Fellowship, which is administered by the Faculty of Medicine of Sydney University, has supported 13 Fellows to undertake



Left: The Rowan Nicks Scholars meeting at the Kuala Lumpur ASC. Inset: Rowan Nicks scholar Chhoeum Vuthy with John Masterton.



projects and studies that have tangibly improved Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health and welfare.

The Nicks/Drysdale Fellowships have been held mostly by Indigenous men and women, but there have also been a few non-Indigenous recipients. One of the first to hold a Nicks/Drysdale Fellowship was Associate Professor Louise Lawler, a charming and very capable nurse and school teacher, now at the University of Wollongong.

Her work was with Indigenous adolescent youth in Dubbo with the aim, which was successful, to encourage them to complete secondary schooling to Year 12. Louise is now the administrator of the Nicks/Drysdale Fellowship Program.

"All of these achievements stand as an on-going testament to the generosity, care, determination and vision of one extraordinary man – Rowan Nicks," as Mr Masterton attests.

The Chair of the Board of the Foundation for Surgery, Professor Kingsley Faulkner, said the surgically-focused Rowan Nicks Scholarships now formed part of the \$24 million invested by the Foundation, with interest generated used to support not only international aid projects, but world-class research.

He said that each year, Fellows contributed approximately \$200,000 to the Foundation and he particularly thanked them for their support of the annual 'Pledge A Procedure Week' fundraising campaign that is held each June.

"Some of this new money has been used to support the development of emergency medicine in Myanmar," Professor Faulkner said.

"It has been wonderful to see the support of Fellows for this and other fundraising campaigns run by the Foundation. I think we should be proud that we have chosen to show both the surgeons and the people of Myanmar that we care about the provision of quality health care in their country." ▶

