



ROYAL AUSTRALASIAN COLLEGE OF SURGEONS

# MEDIA RELEASE

## Distinguished surgeon to be honoured in his 98<sup>th</sup> year

**Friday 22 October, 2010**

Surgeons and friends from around the world will gather at the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons on Monday evening to honour Mr Douglas Stephens AO who, in his 98<sup>th</sup> year, is a giant in the field of Paediatric Surgery and an inspiration to generations of surgeons.

An opportunity to acknowledge and thank Douglas for his work over the years, the evening will also enable guests to make a contribution towards the Douglas Stephens' Paediatric Surgery Research Prize, an award to be presented biennially under the auspices of the College and the Australian and New Zealand Association of Paediatric Surgeons.

To be awarded for original research by a Paediatric Surgery Trainee or a Paediatric Surgeon within ten years of obtaining a Fellowship of the College, the prize will enable the recipient to undertake further research or facilitate overseas travel for the purpose of study or research. Many of those attending Monday's function have stated their belief that it will be the world's most prestigious prize in the field of Paediatric Surgery.

Douglas Stephens graduated in Medicine from the University of Melbourne in 1936. On completing Residences at the Royal Melbourne and Royal Children's Hospitals he served with great distinction in a Forward Operating Team in the AIF, 6<sup>th</sup> Division, 2/3 Field Ambulance in the Middle East, the siege of Tobruk and in the South West Pacific. At El Eisa in 1942 he was awarded a DSO in the field for exceptional bravery attending wounded under heavy enemy fire.

After the war Douglas returned to the Royal Children's but his enquiring mind was recognised by the award of a Nuffield Research Fellowship at the Hospital for Sick Children in London. It was here that he began his enduring study into the area of major congenital abnormalities affecting the quality of life of children.

On his return to Australia in 1950 he was appointed as a Consultant Surgeon at the Royal Children's, combining research with clinical practice. As Director of Surgical Research he became recognised as the master of patho-embryology – the study of abnormalities in the foetus and newborn. His work led to major advances in the treatment of bowel, urinary and genital organ abnormalities.

In the 1970s, remarkably, every practicing adult urologist in Victoria had sought and obtained an appointment under Douglas Stephens' leadership, such was his reputation for originality. At the age of 61 his international reputation was recognised when he was appointed Chair in Paediatrics and Surgery at Northwestern University and the Children's Hospital at Chicago. There he trained another generation of surgeons. As recently as 1996, Douglas was publishing monumental works on the subject of Paediatric Surgery.

Monday's event, running from 5:30pm at the College's Melbourne building, is a fitting way of acknowledging this extraordinary man.

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