

Tribute to

Laureate Professor Emeritus Peter Doherty AC, FAA, FRS, FMedSci

Peter Doherty has contributed to agriculture in the University of Melbourne as an animal scientist. He has the distinction of sharing the 1996 Nobel Prize for Physiology or Medicine 1996 with Swiss colleague Rolf Zinkernage, for “Discoveries concerning the specificity of the cellular immune defence”. Now retired after a 60-year research career spent in the UK, the USA and Australia (beginning with a decade studying infectious diseases of domestic animals) he has been a member of Melbourne’s Department of Microbiology and Immunology for the past 23 Years.

A graduate of the University of Queensland Vet School, Peter started out as a pathologist at The Queensland Department of Primary Industry’s Animal Research Institute where he completed a UQ MVSc on bovine leptospirosis. Moving on to a position as a diagnostic and experimental neuropathologist in Scotland’s Moredun Research Institute, his experimental dissection of louping-ill encephalitis earned him a PhD from the University of Edinburgh Medical School. Returning to Australia to work on viral immunity at ANU’s John Curtin School of Medical Research, he and Zinkernagel made the discovery that earned them the Nobel award. He remains the only veterinarian to be so recognized.

Peter’s many awards include: the Albert Lasker Award for Basic Medical Research; Fellow of the Australian Academy of Science; Fellow of the Royal Society; 1977 Australian of the Year; Companion of the Order of Australia, and National Trust Australian Living Treasure. He is the patron of the eponymous Peter Doherty Institute for Infection and Immunity, The Doherty Institute, a joint venture between the University of Melbourne and Melbourne Health.

He is also Patron of the International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI), for whose predecessor, the International Laboratory for Research on

Animal Diseases (ILRAD), Doherty served for several years as a board member overseeing the science program.

When he came to the University of Melbourne in 1999, Peter presented the Dean's Lecture for the Institute of Land and Food Resources. As an animal scientist, Peter continues to proffer advice on One Health, which unifies the life sciences across the university with animal science as a major component.

Peter regularly devotes time to delivering public lectures, writing articles for newspapers and magazines and participating in radio discussions. His several books include: "The Beginners Guide to Winning the Nobel Prize", "A Light History of Hot Air", "Sentinel Chickens: What birds tell us about our health and the world", "Pandemics: what everyone needs to know" and, written in the time of COVID, "An Insider's Plague Year".

