Rotary Melbourne Annual Thomas Baker Oration

Professor Sharon Lewin AO, FRACP, PhD, FAHMS

'From HIV to COVID and Beyond: What's Needed for the Future?"

The Oration looks to commemorate Thomas Baker, Philanthropist and our 9th President by showcasing Australians who have demonstrated leadership and innovation in the fields of medicine/science/technology/industry and philanthropy. His legacy as an entrepreneurial industrialist with a concern for humanity has been emulated through many distinguished Australians.

Sharon Lewin is the inaugural director of the Peter Doherty Institute for Infection and Immunity. She is an infectious diseases physician and basic scientist whose research focuses on HIV infection. She is President of the International AIDS Society (IAS) and co-chairs the IAS Global Advisory board for the Towards an HIV Cure initiative. She also leads the Australian Partnership for Preparedness for Infectious Diseases Emergencies (APPRISE), an NHMRC funded Centre for Research Excellence. Scientists from the Doherty Institute were the first to isolate and share SARS CoV2 outside of China in January 2020 and have played major roles in all aspects of the COVID-19 response.

"Looking to the future, tackling pandemics needs science and innovation but also community engagement and evidence-based political leadership."

Until 2020, HIV was considered the most significant pandemic of the modern era. Infecting over 70 million people and resulting in 33 million deaths.
In contrast to HIV, COVID-19 is a short lived illness but with the potential for long lasting medical complications. Given the global scale of disruption and health impacts from COVID-19, unimaginable resources were mobilized resulting in several highly effective vaccines within 12 months. Both viruses have shone a light on equity as we have seen vulnerable groups disproportionately infected and affected by these two viruses. Hopefully, the silver lining in the COVID-19 response will be in galvanising transformative advances to other global health challenges such as HIV.
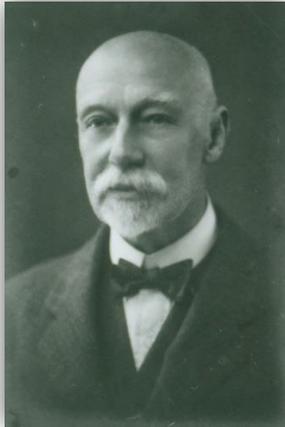
Rotary

Melbourne

Wed 19 April 2023
12.30 for 12.50-2.00pm
At Level 1 Sofitel
$60 (2 course lunch)
Reservations click here

THOMAS BAKER
ROTARIAN, SCIENTIST, PHILANTHROPIST

Thomas Baker (1854–1928)
Source Museum Victoria

The Oration has been delivered by:

2016	Dr Alan Finkel AC
2017	Dr Ziggy Switkowski AO
2018	Professor Fiona Wood AM
2019	David Thodey AO
2021	Professor Margaret Gardner AC
2022	Dr Cathy Foley AO PSM

Thomas Baker Membership Application
Source Rotary Melbourne Archive

In 2015 Rotary Melbourne decided to commemorate the contribution of its 9th President, Thomas Baker, to the fields of medicine, science, technology, industry and philanthropy. The inaugural address was made in July 2016 by Australia's Chief Scientist, Dr Alan Finkel.

Thomas Baker was born in England in 1854 and migrated to Australia at age 10. After gaining practical skills by working with his father, Thomas soon trained in pharmaceutical chemistry and spent 5 years working as a chemist in Queensland. He then studied medicine for a year at the University of Melbourne but decided to pursue a career in the emerging technology of dry plate photography through inventing his own formulae and manufacturing the plates to sell through the community. This company was the Austral Plate Company which soon was awarded a licence from Kodak to sell a broader range of photographic supplies. It became so successful that Kodak Limited joined with Austral to become Australian Kodak Limited in 1908. Of note is that this firm produced the first X Ray film here in 1924

Thomas Baker amassed a large fortune due to the success of what was later known as Kodak Australasia Pty Ltd and when he died suddenly in 1928, midway through his Presidency of Rotary Melbourne, he left a will which very generously supported medical research and philanthropy. This led to the establishment of what became the renowned Baker Institute and the Baker Foundation which provides further medical research funding and general charitable grants. Both these organisations continue the connection with Rotary Melbourne through the appointment of Baker Foundation Trustees and support for Baker Institute medical initiatives.

Look around at the results of Mr Baker's public service, of his community service, of his service to the cause of humanity: There you have his monument." ...Mr Baker lived to a motto: "Deeds not Words" .... The Vice – President, Mr C A Hack said of Thomas Baker at Rotary Melbourne, 5th December 1928

The Oration looks to commemorate Thomas Baker by showcasing Australians who have demonstrated leadership and innovation in the fields of medicine/science/technology/industry and philanthropy. His legacy as an entrepreneurial industrialist with a concern for humanity has been emulated through many distinguished Australians.