

Obituary of Dr Andrew Noel Fraser

*Born 1916
Died 2008*

Andrew was born in Kew, Melbourne, the only child of Ruby and Andrew, a homemaker and an electrical engineer. After his father was posted to Canberra, Andrew boarded at Melbourne Grammar, then studied medicine at Melbourne University and graduated with first class honours in 1939. During his undergraduate years Andrew was a resident of Trinity College, and rowed in the first crew at both the college and university. He maintained a close connection with Trinity throughout life.

In 1940 Andrew was a junior resident medical officer at the Royal Melbourne Hospital, where he met a young nurse named Ellen Rutter. From 1940 to 1945 he served in the Royal Australian Army Medical Corps (RAAMC), Field Ambulance. He became a Major and was posted to the Middle East, including Gaza and Tobruk, and New Guinea. He found time to marry Ellen in 1943.

After the war Andrew was keen to get into general practice and went to Yarram, in rural Victoria, as a replacement for his deceased father-in-law and practised alongside his brother-in-law, Jack Rutter. After gaining valuable experience and following the birth of daughter Anne, the Fraser family returned to suburban Melbourne in 1947 and Andrew continued to practise in Brunswick.

In 1950 he joined doctors Littlejohn, Simpson and Associates in Ivanhoe, which was started by Leslie Latham in 1906 in part of the family home and became the Ivanhoe Medical Clinic (IMC) in 1960. Leslie went on to become a leading physician and was a co-founder of the Royal Australian College of Physicians. Euan and Charles Littlejohn had taken over the practice in 1919 and George Simpson, famous for undertaking the first Royal Flying Doctor Service (RFDS) flight from Alice Springs, joined them in 1926. Many doctors of that era worked in general practice while, or before, pursuing a specialist career. Euan was a physician, Charles an orthopaedic surgeon and George a consultant obstetrician and gynaecologist at the Royal Women's Hospital. Others, such as physician Margaret Henderson and ENT surgeon Clive Pyman, worked at IMC. Andrew and Ellen settled in Darebin, in Melbourne's northern suburbs.



Andrew was one of 50 founding members of The Royal Australian College of General Practitioners (RACGP) in 1958. These GPs had been members of Australian state faculties of the Royal College of General Practitioners (RCGP), which had been founded in London in 1953. He worked tirelessly to further the development and aims of the RACGP, in spite of a very busy GP workload. Andrew gained a Fellowship of the RACGP in 1968 and of the RCGP in 1972. He was RACGP Victoria Faculty Chairman from 1966 to 1968 and Provost from 1973 to 1974. He worked at the IMC for 46 years, leaving in 1996 following some disability from a stroke in 1995. Andrew was already 80 at the time, but continued to work as a locum in other practices and at the staff clinic at the Northern Hospital, only stopping in his late 80s due to frailty and deteriorating speech and hearing.

Andrew's wife Ellen died in 1988 after a long battle with the family scourge of breast cancer. Andrew married the warm, wonderful and wise Diana later in 1988. They enjoyed a full life for almost 20 years, with involvement in the arts, their loving blended family and good friends. Andrew continued to enjoy his connection to the Melbourne Club, Trinity College, the Melbourne Cricket Club (MCC) and the Cyclops Lunch Club (which had been running since the Second World War). He was a long-term member of the Melbourne Scots and had a love of all things Scottish. As one speaker at his Trinity College funeral said, 'The only event that would keep him from the St. Andrew's dinner, the Robbie Burns night, a malt whisky tasting or the mid-year dinner dance was the event for which we are here today.' His frailty became a concern for family, friends, medical attendants and local shopkeepers, but Andrew refused to curtail his activities, even during his final weeks.

Andrew was conservative to the laces of his polished shoes. He was driven, determined, dogged and tenacious. He was tireless, but somehow famous for falling asleep at almost every meeting he attended. He was evangelical about proper intellectual, ethical and moral standards in medical practice. He was obsessive, particular and meticulous, all traits required by any doctor to perform at a high standard. He was rigid and brusque about his firmly held beliefs, but could surprise with his mischievous humour. His Scottish stoicism was tested by his family tragedies. He was adored by his faithful patients, who couldn't bear to see any other doctor in the practice. One lady who rang to see him urgently was told that he had just gone on long service leave for 3 months; she elected to wait.

Prepared by

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