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# Travel Medicine and Infectious Disease

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## Vale Emeritus Professor Peter A Leggat



A leader in Travel and Tropical Medicine, Professor Peter Leggat AM, passed away peacefully in Brisbane on 20 September 2023 surrounded by family. Born in Brisbane on 2<sup>nd</sup> December 1961 he spent his working life in Townsville, initially with the military and then at James Cook University, teaching and researching tropical and travel medicine.

Peter was a much respected and beloved friend and colleague in the world of travel medicine and tropical medicine, and stands as one of Australia's greatest contributors to these fields. Prior to his passing, Peter had published over 550 journal articles, contributed to more than 30 books, written over 100 book chapters and delivered over 450 presentations. His legacy lives on through the continued publication and presentations by the students, clinicians, and researchers that he mentored. Peter's dedication and expertise have left an indelible mark on the fields he passionately served.

Peter was a lifelong learner, undertaking multiple degrees over the years, including a PhD from the University of Adelaide in Occupational Medicine, a DrPH from James Cook University in Travel and Geographic Medicine, and an MD in Medicine from The University of Queensland. His interests were diverse, having also studied clinical nutrition, education, addiction studies, aerospace medicine, aeromedical evacuation, astronomy and management.

Peter's life was much recognised for the impact that he had on Travel and Tropical Medicine. He was especially proud of being appointed a Member of the Order of Australia (AM) for "Significant service to medicine as a specialist in the fields of tropical and travel medicine" on the 10<sup>th</sup> June 2013. This recognition was incongruous to the person that was Peter. He was softly spoken, had time for all, especially his students and those starting out in the field and was supportive of all whom he called a friend. Through the appointment of the AM, he also had the opportunity to be an Australia Day Ambassador and used this to travel throughout regional Queensland to talk to the public about public health, and travel and tropical medicine.

He has also been a wonderfully supportive and inspirational mentor for many in Australia and around the world. Always a gentleman, Peter's quiet wisdom and calm guidance will be sorely missed. Peter was a

medical doctor, scholar, teacher, enabler, innovator, and most of all, a great leader. He had many talents, skills, areas of expertise, and countless accolades – A few are highlighted below.

As a Founding Fellow of the Australasian College of Tropical Medicine (ACTM) in 1991, Peter contributed enormously to the College over many decades. He served five terms as President of the ACTM (1996–1998, 2002–2004, 2006–2008, 2016–2018, and 2020–2022), and held Executive positions as Honorary Secretary, Honorary Treasurer, and Dean of the ACTM Faculty of Travel Medicine. In 2016, he was instrumental in establishing the ACTM's peer-reviewed journal, *Tropical Medicine and Infectious Disease*, and as Deputy Editor-in-Chief, led the journal to achieve its first impact factor, an impressive 3.711. Peter presided over many ACTM meetings and conferences over the years and was delighted with the highly successful Southern Cross Travel Medicine and Tropical Medicine Conference in Sydney in September 2023, where many of his friends and colleagues last had the pleasure of spending time with him.

Peter had over 30 years of service at James Cook University (JCU), starting as an academic staff member in 1992 and included many leadership roles, such as being on the Council (2005–2018), Head of the School of Public Health, Tropical Medicine and Rehabilitation Sciences (2007–2010 and 2013–14), inaugural Dean of the College of Public Health Medicine and Veterinary Sciences (2014–2016), Directors of the Anton Breinl Centre for Public Health & Tropical Medicine (2011–13) Director of the World Safety Organization Collaborating Centre for Aerospace and Travel Health Safety (2009–2023) and Co-Director of the World Health Organisation Collaborating Centre for Vector borne and Neglected Tropical Diseases (2017–2023). Peter recently retired as Professor Emeritus, and Director Emeritus of the World Health Organization Collaborating Centre for Vector-borne and Neglected Tropical Diseases at JCU.

In addition to his leadership roles at the ACTM and JCU, he was Immediate Past President of the International Society of Travel Medicine (ISTM), member of the Australasian Public Health Medicine Council, member of the Expanded Board of the International Federation for Tropical Medicine, Dean of Education for The Australasian College of Aerospace Medicine, Director of the World Safety Organization Collaborating Centre for Aerospace and Travel Health Safety, Distinguished International Fellow of the American Society of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene.

Peter's life of service was also with St John Ambulance, where he was a volunteer, serving as a first responder Medical Officer and having held a range of leadership positions including Director of Training (Qld 2008–16 and National 2013–19), Chair of the Medical Advisory Panel (2013–2019), Board of Directors (Qld 2008–17; National 2014–2021). In 2021, Peter was honoured as a Knight of Grace of the Order of St John and presented with the award at Government House in Canberra.

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Peter was a Colonel in the Australian Army, Active Reserves as a Medical Officer and an Honorary Aide-De-Camp to the Governor-General of the Commonwealth of Australia; he saw active service in Timor and received the Australian Active Service Medal Clasp E Timor in 2013 and also received an Australia Defence Medal in 2007. Peter started in the military while still at Medical School in 1987 and had various postings including at the Australian Embassy in Bangkok, Thailand in 1990. Peter was also a Fullbright Scholar (2002), Fullbright Ambassador (2016-18) and Fullbright Campus Advisor at James Cook University (2016–2023), and a Fulbright Alumni Adviser to the Australian-American Fulbright Commission.

Despite so many impressive achievements in such diverse fields, Peter was always unassuming, humble, gracious, congenial, and ready to share his wisdom. In his element when tackling medical challenges, Peter found fulfillment in guiding students and colleagues through the intricacies of travel and tropical medicine. A quiet mentor, he played an instrumental role in shaping the careers of those around him. Peter embodied true leadership, possessing a keen understanding of systems and tirelessly working towards a world that is not only healthier and safer but also more interconnected. His legacy is one of dedication, compassion, and a profound commitment to the betterment of global

health.

#### **CRedit authorship contribution statement**

**Richard Franklin:** Writing – review & editing. **Colleen Lau:** Writing – original draft.

#### **Declaration of competing interest**

No conflicts of interest

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