UTAS farewells leader in Tasmanian health

The former Dean of the University of Tasmania’s Faculty of Health Science, Professor Allan Carmichael, passed away on Saturday after a short illness.

UTAS Vice-Chancellor Professor Peter Rathjen said the university community extends its heartfelt sympathy and support to Prof. Carmichael's wife Beryl and his children, Heather and Glenn, and their families.

He said Prof. Carmichael demonstrated a quiet dignified manner, both in the community and towards his colleagues during his career.

“His personal qualities, coupled with his outstanding professional and administrative abilities and his thoughtfulness and respect of the opinion of others, marked him as a trusted and respected colleague and a true leader.

“Prof. Carmichael made a fine contribution over a lengthy period to the development and life of the University, to health provision in Tasmania and to health policy and practice in the state and beyond.”

Prof. Carmichael arrived in Tasmania in 1992 to take up appointments as Professor of Paediatrics and Child Health, State Advisor in Child Health Services in the Department of Health and Human Services, and Senior Consultant in the Department of Paediatrics at the Royal Hobart Hospital. Over the subsequent two decades he has made outstanding contributions as an academic, clinician, policy maker and academic leader.

He was appointed Dean of the Faculty of Health Science and Head of the School of Medicine in 1997, overseeing the establishment of the University Department of Rural Health in Launceston and the Rural Clinical School in Burnie, the significant expansion of the School of Nursing and Midwifery, and the creation of paramedic programs and postgraduate programs in pharmaceutical science and clinical pharmacy.

Prof. Carmichael led the development of the new five-year MBBS degree, and in thirteen years as dean, provided outstanding academic leadership and administrative management that not only ensured the faculty operated on a sound financial basis, but grew very substantially in size and diversity.
Prof. Carmichael also worked closely with the Menzies Research Institute to deliver an impressive research output in the health arena on behalf of the University.

The graduation ceremony in December 2011 at which Prof. Carmichael was awarded his honorary degree of Doctor of Medicine, *honoris causa*, recognised the two decades he spent making outstanding contributions as an academic, clinician, policy maker and academic leader.

As a small boy living on a dairy farm in Victoria, Prof. Carmichael did not aim to study medicine. At Melbourne University he lived in a residential college with other students, many of whom were studying medicine. Interest piqued, he switched from agricultural science to science then transferred to Monash University to study medicine.

But his early years on the farm gave him an abiding interest in rural health and he made a significant contribution to Tasmania in this area.

When he stepped down from his role as Dean of Health Science Prof. Carmichael’s more official roles were replaced by those of home renovator, bush walker, restorer of vintage motor bikes and devoted grandfather to twins. But he also aimed to work three days a week on faculty projects, national medical education, paediatric education and research.

He also continued some work as a clinician and throughout his career delivered a high-quality clinical service in the area of paediatrics. He has an outstanding reputation not only for his professional skills but also for his compassion and humanity.

Until recently Prof. Carmichael continued to play an active role in the relationship between UTAS and the Tasmanian Health Department through his membership of the Partners in Health, of which he was a founding member.

In 2007, Professor Carmichael received the Medal of the Order of Australia ‘for service to medicine and as an educator and administrator through a range of government and professional organisations, particularly in the field of paediatrics’.

He was well loved by his fellow clinicians as well as by his academic colleagues and students.