

Retirement of David Dawson

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The publication of the Australian Tuberculosis Laboratory data for 1998 and 1999 in the current issue of *Communicable Diseases Intelligence (CDI)* marks the final contribution from Mr David Dawson, the Chief Scientist at the Queensland Diagnostic and Reference Laboratory for Mycobacterial Diseases at The Prince Charles Hospital, Brisbane.

David's leadership has been a crucial element in the reporting of tuberculosis (TB) laboratory data in Australia. In 1986, the Commonwealth Department of Health, Housing and Community Services ceased maintaining detailed national statistics on TB. David, as the then Convenor of the Special Interest Group in Mycobacteria within the Australian Society for Microbiology, believed that this action was a retrograde step and organised for laboratory data from the five State reference laboratories in Australia to be collated on an annual basis to report details of new bacteriologically positive cases of tuberculosis. These data were the only detailed source of information available in Australia until the publication of Tuberculosis Notification rates in *CDI* in 1992. A timely commentary 'Tuberculosis in Australia: an unfinished fight' in the *Medical Journal of Australia (Med J Aust 1991:154)* by David reiterated the need for accurate, comprehensive, and up-to-date statistics as part of an

effective Tuberculosis Control Program. The State and Territory TB Directors, and others, were crying out for the same action, and finally, the surveillance system for tuberculosis was revised under the auspices of the Communicable Diseases Network Australia.

David has also been at the forefront in the laboratory diagnosis of mycobacterial diseases. He has published widely, particularly in investigations of atypical mycobacteria, and was among the first to identify and characterise clinical strains of *Mycobacterium haemophilum*. His knowledge of mycobacteria is encyclopaedic, and many scientists owe much to David for his enthusiasm for the topic and his readiness to impart that knowledge. His laboratory is part of the World Health Organization's Supranational Reference Laboratory Network and is also a WHO Collaborating Centre in Tuberculosis Bacteriology in recognition of his expertise in tuberculosis.

On behalf of the Australian Mycobacterial Laboratory Network, the Special Interest Group in Mycobacteria, and all your colleagues in Australia and overseas, we wish you all the best in your retirement, and many happy days at the beach house.