

# Accepting no limits

## Dr Di Cox

MB BS, FRACGP, Dip Obst.

1951 - 2020

**D**iana Margaret Cox (Di) was born in Liverpool in the United Kingdom (UK) where her father Lloyd Cox was completing his post graduate studies in Obstetrics and Gynaecology (O&G). The family returned to Dunedin in 1952 where her father worked as an obstetrician until 1958 when he and the family moved to Adelaide as he had been appointed as the foundation Chair of O&G at Adelaide University.

In 1969 Di enrolled in Medicine at Adelaide University and over the next six years made very many close, lifelong friends.

Di did well academically but not at the expense of social interaction. She was active in the university water-ski club, organised snow ski and houseboat trips, and was a regular at medical dinners and balls.

Graduating at the end of 1974, she moved to Auckland where she completed her intern year before a brief stint at the St George hospital in Sydney.

She then – boldly for a time with no phones or internet with which to keep in touch with family and friends – undertook a solo trip through Southeast Asia and the Middle East on her way to the UK where she gained a Diploma of Obstetrics before returning to Adelaide. She gained her Fellowship of the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners (FRACGP), and joined a general practice in Woodville close to the Queen Elizabeth Hospital (QEH) and she was appointed a senior visiting specialist in the department of O&G at the QEH where she worked in the antenatal clinic.

During her working life, Di put her leadership skills and enthusiasm to good use becoming an examiner for the RACGP and she helped set up the South Australian Shared Care obstetric program.

She was a passionate advocate for women's health and represented the College of GPs on a large number of committees and task forces concerned

with cervical screening, shared care obstetrics and maternal and perinatal mortality.

In 1996 she joined a general practice in Blackwood where she was much loved by her patients and fellow practitioners and where she worked until her retirement.

Throughout her busy professional life, Di was an active committee member of the Australasian Medical Graduates for Further Education (AMGFE), which ran annual eclectic medical meetings in the ski fields and she was a driving force within her medical class reunion committee.

While skiing in Colorado in 2012, Di experienced what she thought was an exacerbation of asthma triggered by the high altitude. On returning to Adelaide, investigations told another story – that she was suffering from idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis (IPF), a condition of unknown aetiology with no known treatment and a mean survival of just three years post diagnosis.

Di's initial reaction was disbelief. She was a strong believer in preventative medicine, encouraging her patients to exercise and eat sensibly – a mantra she practised herself.

She determined not to give up but to adapt her lifestyle to the limits imposed by her condition. There were no more trips to the snow, these being replaced by camping and walking trips with her husband Max throughout Australia.

She developed a passion for the Australian Wildlife Conservancy, a group devoted to the preservation of endangered wildlife and their habitats. She took up painting and continued playing golf, resisting using a cart until she could no longer walk the course.

Although acknowledging that it was unlikely to help her, she made a generous donation to Lung Foundation



Dr Di Cox

Australia to establish the Diana Cox PhD Scholarship in IPF research.

Last November was the 45th anniversary of our graduation from Medical School and, despite her deteriorating health, Di worked tirelessly to organise a hugely successful function. Not many at that function knew of her condition and only a very few of us knew just how much her pulmonary function had deteriorated and how close she was to needing a transplant.

Due to the travel restrictions of COVID-19, Di and Max moved to Melbourne earlier this year in case a donor became available. Sadly, she passed away on 10 July 2020 before this was possible.

Using the database Di had painstakingly assembled, our classmates were informed of her death via a group email. Most replied with tributes and condolences, commenting on her vibrant and dynamic personality, and many described her as the anchor of our cohort. The most poignant comment came from one of her very many close friends who commented 'I have nothing to add but tears'.

Di is survived by her loving husband, Max Klubal, brother David, nephews Samuel and Alexander, and cousin Margaret Blackmore.

She will be sadly missed.

Dr Glen Benveniste