

Plueckhahn, Vernon D (1921-2019)

Professor Vernon D. Plueckhahn AM, OBE, ED, MD.MS(Adel), Hon.MD.(Monash), FRACP, FRCPA, FAACB, FRCPath., FCAP, FAACB, FAMA, MIAC, was born on 25 March 1921 at Riverton, SA.

He initially worked as a Research Assistant at the Institute of Medical and Veterinary Science from 1938 to 1940. He then served with the 2nd AIF in Singapore, Middle East, Italy and South West Pacific from 1941 to 1945. He graduated in medicine from the University of Adelaide in 1949 and was a resident at the Royal Adelaide Hospital and the Adelaide Children's Hospital. He then specialised in Pathology. He moved to Victoria in 1952 to become a pathologist at the Royal Melbourne Hospital, then to Geelong Hospital in 1954, where he became Director and Chairman, Department of Pathology and Blood Bank, a post he held until 1986.

While at Geelong he gained professional experience in the pathology field as well as academic qualifications. Concurrently with his work at Geelong Hospital he served as Senior Pathologist to the Geelong and District Coroner. He gained his FRCPA in 1956, MD from the University of Adelaide in 1961 and the FRACP in 1963.

Dr Plueckhahn was President of the Victorian Branch of the AMA in 1968. Since 1966 he had been a member of the Medico-Legal Joint Adjudication Committee of the Victorian Branch. He was a representative on the Medical and Scientific Committee of the Anti-Cancer Council of Victoria, and representative on the Pathology Subcommittee of Schedule Revision of the Australian Health Department, and a member of the Federal Assembly of the AMA. He became a Fellow of the AMA in 1971.

He was appointed Director of Medical Services at Geelong Hospital in 1970. He was a Senior Lecturer and Examiner in Forensic Medicine at the University of Melbourne from 1974 and appointed as Associate Professor (Honorary) of Pathology and Immunology at Monash University in 1983.

Dr Plueckhahn was Vice President of the Royal Australian College of Pathologists from 1974 to 1975 and from 1976 to 1977. He was elected President in 1977.

Upon leaving the Geelong Hospital in 1986 he was appointed Acting Director of the Victorian Institute of Forensic Pathology and, in the following year, Associate Professor of Forensic Medicine at Monash University. In that year he also became a Consultant to the Health Insurance Commission, Canberra and heavily involved in a large number of forensic specialist committees.

From his medical graduation in 1949 Dr Plueckhahn maintained his involvement with Citizen Military Forces until 1967. He became Lieutenant Colonel and Commanding Officer, 4th Field Ambulance, from 1956 to 1959. Promoted Colonel 1960 and appointed Assistant Director of Medical Services 3rd Infantry Division. Seconded as an observer for the Royal Australian Army Medical Corps to the United States, Great Britain and the British Army on the Rhine during 1961. He was awarded the Efficiency Decoration in 1962, OBE in 1979 and Member of the Order of Australia in 1989.

He married Ann Roark at Trinity College, Melbourne, in 1953 and they had four children. Ann predeceased him in 2012. Vernon died in 2019 at the age of 98.

Last updated 31 March 2025.

Main sources: Obituary, Sydney Morning Herald, 2/12/2019; Professional CV.

