



VICTOR TRIKOJUS

Class of 1920

Victor Martin Trikojus (“Triik”) a professor of biochemistry, was captain of Sydney Technical High School in his final year – 1920. After leaving school, he studied at the University of Sydney (BSc – 1925, DSc – 1956) and gained first class honours in organic chemistry. An 1851 Exhibition Scholarship took him to Queen’s College at Oxford University where he gained a DPhil in 1927 – the second Australian to receive same. He spent nine months in 1927 working on the structure and synthesis of alkaloids with Professor Heinrich Wieland in Munich, before returning to a lectureship in 1928 at Sydney University.

Appointed lecturer in 1934 in medical organic chemistry in the medical faculty, Trikojus began developing an interest in thyroid metabolism. This led to several publications and a return to Germany at the University of Freiburg in 1936. Back in Sydney from 1940, he chaired the drugs sub-committee established by the Australian Association of Scientific Workers to ensure that Australia had access to essential pharmaceuticals during World War II. He developed a process for synthesising sulphaguanidine, a drug urgently required by troops in New Guinea to combat dysentery as well as mersalyl to aid the control of sepsis in wounds, and the use of merthiosal to prevent fungal growth on medical instruments being used in the tropics.

In 1943 Trikojus was appointed professor of biochemistry at Melbourne University, working on control of triiodothyronine (T₃), the active major molecule in thyroid metabolism. He became a foundation member (1955), chairman (1956) and honorary life member (1964) of the Australian Biochemical Society and a fellow (1954), then vice president (1964-1966) of the Australian Academy of Science.

Victor Trikojus was Melbourne University’s first professorial Dean of Graduate Studies (1963-1965) and a foundation member of the Australian Research Grants Committee (1965-1966), as well as working for the United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) and the International Union of Biochemistry.

Victor Trikojus was appointed a Commander of the British Empire (CBE) in 1971 and in 1982 had a lecture theatre at Melbourne University named after him.

He died in 1985 – aged 83.