

Trust provides an enduring link

Brothers and former Newcastle residents Steve and Bill Burges have established a trust fund at the University in memory of their parents Bill and Iris.

The Bill and Iris Burges Trust funds a chair (or professorship) in medical science at the University of Newcastle.

Director of the Hunter Medical Research Institute (HMRI), Professor Michael Nilsson has been appointed the first Burges Chair of Medical Science.



Bill (Senior) and Iris Burges

Professor Nilsson is an internationally acclaimed neuroscientist with more than 20 years of experience researching brain repair and stroke recovery. He has moved to Newcastle from Sweden to fulfil the dual roles.

Bill Burges said the trust is named after his parents in honour of their wishes to make a difference to society as a whole.



Bill Burges (Jnr) and Professor Michael Nilsson, the Burges Chair

"My brother and I wanted to honour our parents and their tireless efforts in the community.

Both Bill and Iris devoted much of their working lives to the betterment of Newcastle, with Bill becoming Town Clerk in 1950, a position he held until his retirement in 1977. He was also instrumental in much of the post-war municipal development in the city and the region and played a major role in establishing the University of Newcastle.

Both Bill and Iris also played a part in the construction of the Great Hall at the University, with Iris baking cakes to sell as part of the fundraising efforts.

While neither Bill nor Iris had the opportunity to attend university, they valued education and both their sons studied at the University's predecessor, the University of NSW College, at Tighes Hill.

Bill completed his metallurgy studies and his Diploma of Education in 1967. Steve graduated in 1967, the second year to graduate from the University of Newcastle, with degrees in physics/mathematics and civil engineering. Steve is now a Professor of Civil and Environmental Engineering at the University of Washington in Seattle in the US.

"Medicine wasn't initially a part of the University and it was a couple of years before we were able to study it here. The frontiers of study today appear to be in the health sciences area."

"The community, including Mum and Dad all fought hard to get a Faculty of Health at the University of Newcastle," Bill said.

"Mum and Dad did a lot for Newcastle during their lifetimes. The Bill and Iris Burges professorship at the University will provide an enduring link between their names and the city they served so well."