By Marie Holohan, Namo Valley Independent

He was named the Greek Australian of the Century but to the people of Collarenebri, Dr Archie Kalokerinos was so much more, with his groundbreaking research saving the lives of hundreds of Aboriginal children.

The 20-year-old contract doctor’s death in Sydney, on March 1, at the age of 84, has closed a chapter on an amazing story of a medical pioneer whose work was scorned and rejected by his peers.

The son of hardworking Greek immigrants from Kythera, Nicholas and Mary Kalokerinos, Archivdes Kalokerinos was born on September 28, 1927, at Glen Innes where his parents ran the Paragon Cafe.

Nicholas Kalokerinos was driven by one ambition during his life in Australia – to provide his children with an honest work.

The late Emmanuel, James, Leo and Archie graduated in medicine, while the only girl, Adriana, became a teacher.

After graduating from the University of Sydney, in 1951, Archie Kalokerinos was appointed resident medical officer at Lismore Base Hospital, where the surrounding area was ‘full’ of Greeks – mostly Kytherians.

‘I was about to enter into a medical nightmare of almost destructive proportions that almost overcame me’.

On the edge of the town there was an Aboriginal ‘reserve’ – with a number of Aboriginal infants.

Dr Kalokerinos became very concerned about the high mortality rate of Aboriginal children.

Many suffered from a series of apparently ‘minor’ infections and then they would die suddenly in various mysterious ways.

Autopsies failed to explain why and Dr Kalokerinos sought advice from specialists, a professor of paediatrics, and state and federal departments of health.

Dr Kalokerinos went on to treat many of these children for the symptoms of scurvy and discovered that their health improved – in many cases they were saved by death from intravenous injections of large doses of Vitamin C.

Dr Kalokerinos recorded his findings in a book, Every Second Grave, which referred to the high mortality rate in Aboriginal children.

Returning to Australia, he agreed to work for a few weeks in the isolated town of Collarenebri – 500 miles north west of Sydney.

“It was meant to give me time to sort myself out – it did more than that – it laid the foundation for everything that mattered,” he wrote in his Kythera-Family.net memoirs.

“I soon discovered that I was at home in Collarenebri in every way – instead of returning to Sydney I became established as the local doctor but it was not all to be a ‘party’.

“I was about to enter into a medical nightmare of almost destructive proportions that almost overcame me.”

The service of thanksgiving took place at St Michael’s Anglican Church, Vancouve on Wednesday, March 7.

The late Dr Archie Kalokerinos is survived by his wife Catherine and his children Ann, Helen and Peter and a grandson Oscar.

Bendemeer and Nundle sign on for Landcare

The communities of Bendemeer and Nundle have formed Landcare groups to build on work they have done in partnership with Namoi CMA.

Felicity Baker, Regional Landcare Facilitator with Namoi CMA congratulated the Bendemeer and Nundle communities for their initiatives and said, “planing workshops were held with both communities and they decided that forming Landcare groups would help them put their plans into action.”

“These partnerships are good examples of what Namoi CMA tries to achieve with local groups.

“Namoi CMA can provide some resources and expertise and the community provides the enthusiasm and ideas for projects.”

“Namoi CMA’s role is to strengthen and support the capacity of local groups to tackle natural resource projects,” Felicity said.

The Bendemeer group will join forces with Southern New England Landcare and the Nundle group will work with the Tamworth Regional Landcare Association (formerly TMLA).”

Both groups will work on improving the condition of the rivers and managing woody weeds on the riverbanks in their towns.

Namoi CMA is also working with McBurness Crossing Landcare Group to run three workshops titled Building Resilience in the Face of Change.

Felicity said that Landcare groups play an important role in managing the natural resources of the Namoi Catchment.

“We will continue to work with and support individual Landcare groups as well as their umbrella bodies such as Southern New England Landcare and Tamworth Regional Landcare Association,” Felicity said.

To find out how Namoi CMA can help your group to improve the natural resources of the Namoi catchment please call Felicity Baker on (02) 6742 9214 or email her at felicity.baker@cmaj.nsw.gov.au.

Dr Archie Kalokerinos, the son of hardworking Greek immigrants, who made a difference to the lives of Aboriginal children and their families.