

PRESIDENT'S REPORT ON ACTIVITIES 2023

Over the past twelve months the Board and office have continued working diligently, collaboratively, and productively as a regulator to not only meet our legislative requirements but also to engage with the veterinary profession and consumers as we continue to refine our processes, procedures, and interactions.

The Board has implemented its Strategic Plan 2026 with the purpose to optimise animal welfare across NSW through the regulation of a sustainable and trusted veterinary profession. This document guides the Board and office in working towards meeting this purpose.

The four goals of the strategic plan are:

- **People and Culture** - a high performing Board and office team that works efficiently and sustainably in an inclusive, engaging, and collaborative culture that accommodates robust and respectful discussions.
- **Operations** - delivering our core functions of registration, licencing and complaints management effectively and efficiently whilst managing risks and being alert to threats and opportunities and focusing on reducing our environmental footprint.
- **Financial** - effective budgeting and maintaining sufficient cash reserves to defend the reputation of the profession and respond to any significant contingencies.
- **Leadership** - developing an effective and progressive complaints management process that is sustainable, fair, and transparent. Developing relationships with the veterinary profession, NSW Government and other relevant stakeholders that are deep, broad, and valuable and communication and awareness-building activities which showcase the Board and its work to the veterinarians and public of New South Wales.

The Board is truly blessed to have a registrar of the caliber of Dr John Baguley to support us and manage the small, highly skilled, dedicated, and compassionate team in the Board office to achieve our objectives.

The Board is acutely aware of the sustainability and workforce shortage issues facing the veterinary profession and actively engaged with the Veterinary Workforce Shortage in New South Wales parliamentary inquiry announced 9 June 2023. Our submission was evidence-based and focused on the need to review our primary legislation to ensure it is fit for purpose, to allow a more modern approach to management of complaints and health concerns, after-hours requirements, and paraprofessionals.

We acknowledged the Board has a role in collecting data not just about the number of registered veterinarians (which continue to increase) but more importantly the number of hours worked, as well as the need to reduce the financial and emotional burden that the profession bears in the care of stray companion animals and injured wildlife.

Dr Mark Simpson, in his capacity as immediate past chair continues to represent the Board at AVBC. AVBC provides a pathway for all the state boards to work cooperatively together sharing knowledge skills and resources working through common issues like complaints management, registration of paraprofessionals and veterinarian health and wellbeing. The AVBC also oversees assessment of specialist qualifications and the Australasian Veterinary Examination.

The Board values and continues to develop relationships with NSW Health, NSW Department of Primary Industries, animal sporting organisations, the Australian Veterinary Association, and all our stakeholders.

BoardTalk remains our primary communication tool and remains full of useful information.

Our complaints process, under current legislation, remains focused on the individual though it is clear from investigations in recent years that many consumer concerns could be better classified as systems or practice problems.

The focus of our hospital inspection program continues to shift to a supportive role and the Board will engage a second hospital inspector in the new financial year with a plan to ensure premises are visited once every three years. Our objective is to support practices to have appropriate policies and procedures in place to minimize complaints but more importantly enhance the animal health and welfare outcomes and improve consumer confidence and satisfaction.

The successful implementation of the Board's finance strategy has enabled us to ensure sufficient funds are available to defend the reputation of the profession. We have invested in a PhD scholarship to provide the profession, the public and the Board with a greater understanding of the epidemiology of complaints and we are completing a substantial upgrade to our database and website that will streamline the registration and licensing processes, enhance the user experience, and facilitate the collection of data which will be used to guide the Board and profession into the future.

The financial results for 2022-23 reveal that the Board retains a solid financial position which allows it to invest as required to meet its legislated function. The guidance of the finance subcommittee is very much appreciated.

The Board remains a highly engaged, high performing and compassionate team and I thank them for their dedication, commitment, and hard work. I highly value their friendship and passion for animal welfare, protection of the public, and regulation of the veterinary profession.

As a Board we are extremely fortunate to have a highly skilled and dedicated team in the office and out on the road to implement our strategy.



Dr Steven Ferguson NSW V6464
President