



Report on Activities of the Board 2017

The term of the current Board began 1 July 2015 and will end 30 June 2018 and it is my belief that the balance of experience and new members has matured into a very effective team.

Whilst there will be some changes in the administrative team at the Board's office in the new financial year, planning for these changes will ensure the process of refining the policies and procedures that facilitate the Board's work will not be impeded. The period of relative stability has also allowed the administrative office to work to streamline, formalise, and document many of the Board's protocols, as well as refine the Board's website and on-line communications.

The Board maintains and continues to develop a number of programs to improve regulation of the veterinary profession in NSW:

1. The **hospital inspection program** continues to provide the best mechanism for maintaining appropriate standards in the state's licensed veterinary hospitals and the Hospital Inspector Glenn Lynch also inspects veterinarians working from unlicensed premises and mobile facilities to ensure their compliance with the legislation
2. Veterinarians in NSW lead the country in the formal acceptance and use of **continuing education** to maintain the standards of practice, and the level of compliance with CPD as part of our professional responsibilities is proven by our annual audit
3. **Communication** with the profession is critical to the success of the Board's regulatory function, and the Board employs Boardtalk, the Registrar's "Update" email, and the News section on the Board's website to disseminate critical information to NSW veterinarians
4. The complaint investigation process and complaint investigation reports are continuously being reviewed and revised, within the limits of the legislation, to ensure fulfilment of the Board's role in regulating the profession and protecting the public.

Mental health continues to be an area of particular focus for both the profession and the Board. Research continues to highlight a higher rate of suicide in the veterinary profession than in the general population and other professions. Both in the traditional media and social media it is becoming increasingly apparent that veterinarians are sometimes struggling to cope.

The Board adopted the framework of the Doctors' Health Program developed by the Medical Council of NSW in 2010 and has been refining the implementation of a Health Program for Veterinarians. The Health Program is designed to assist veterinarians with physical and mental conditions which may detrimentally affect their ability to practice. The goal of this program is to support veterinarians to safely continue to contribute to the profession where possible. The Board continues to provide support to veterinarians with health concerns through this program and its contribution to the Doctors' Health Advisory Service (DHAS). Veterinarians, veterinary students and their families are able to call the DHAS service helpline (02) 9437 6552 anytime.

It is foundational to the Board's mission that it remains in a solid financial position and I am very pleased to report that the Board has almost completely rebuilt its financial reserves to the real value of levels held prior to some significant cases prosecuted in 2010. While the work of the Board involves regulation and legislation, and therefore by definition the cost of lawyers, these have not been an overwhelming impost on the budget of the Board in recent years.



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There is, however, the need to be prepared for cases which may involve an increased spend on legal fees for the Board. The Board operates its budget on the principle of achieving a small profit each year to allow continued investment in Board activities and maintenance of the real value of its financial reserves for such cases.

The Board continues to make a leading contribution to the Australasian Veterinary Boards Council (AVBC). The AVBC accredits Australian veterinary schools, and provides recommendations for the accreditation of specialists. It thereby plays a fundamental role in maintaining standards of veterinary science across Australia. The AVBC also provides a forum in which movement toward smoother and more consistent administration of veterinary regulation between different jurisdictions across Australia and New Zealand can develop.

Finally, I would once again like to sincerely thank all the Board members and Board staff for their considerable contributions and good judgement, which are really the driving forces that ensure the effective delivery of the Board's regulatory functions.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J Mark Simpson', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Dr J Mark Simpson N5433
President