

**PRESIDENT'S REPORT ON ACTIVITIES  
2021**

It is my great honour to present a report as the Board's president. The Governor recently appointed a new board for a three-year term. At the Board's first meeting on 17 August 2021, I was appointed president.

Firstly, I would like to sincerely acknowledge the significant contributions of Dr Kylie Parry, Dr Jane Lord, Dr Mark Simpson, and Mrs Wendy Cochrane who did not seek reappointment after years of dedicated service to the Board.

I would especially like to thank Dr Mark Simpson for his insightful mentoring and outstanding leadership as the Board's president for the past 6 years. Mark has also led AVBC through a very difficult time with distinction. Mark, you have left the Board in a much better and stronger place and have set the foundations for continued improvement. I am truly humbled by the opportunity to lead the Board as a general practitioner veterinarian in the tradition of those before me.

The past year has been very challenging for the profession and the Board due to the lingering consequences of COVID-19. The Board has been able to keep its office open with most staff working remotely. All staff continue to ensure the effective and efficient performance of Board functions. Most Board meetings have been held virtually and we are looking forward to returning to the office when safe to do so.

Significant investments are being made to upgrade the Board's database and to improve the Board's website with our aim to streamline the process of licencing and registration applications and renewals. This will also allow us to collect better data on workforce participation.

The Board welcomes Mr John Rota as our new Hospital Inspector. He will make his rounds of all licenced premises over the next few years. The Board's hospital inspection program is aimed at ensuring all premises meet minimum requirements. We encourage all superintendents to perform as self-assessment regularly.

The past year has been especially difficult for veterinarians working under extra stress ensuring they are operating in a COVID safe way. Carpark and remote consulting and new policies and procedures have complicated practice. This has been exacerbated by staff shortages that are presenting a real challenge. The Board has seen an increase in complaints that have some association with these changes as well as a continuing upward increase in complaints in general.

The Board is acutely aware of the stressors veterinarians are currently working under and the stress associated with having a complaint made against them. The Board's website provides a valuable explanation of the complaints processes the Board is legislatively required to follow as well as statistics on outcomes of complaints and links to support services. The Board has invested in extra staff resources and training to enable complaints to be processed as quickly as possible. The Board's Deputy Registrar and Complaints Officer, Mary Lydamore has completed qualifications as a counsellor and is available to provide support to veterinarians and the public through the complaints process.

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.

The Board remains in a strong financial position due to the good management and planning of the previous Board. The Board was able to again produce a surplus last year. Legal fees remain the biggest variable and unknown expense in the Board's budget. The Board last increased fees in 2018 and a small increase in fees this year is recommended.

Finally, I would like to thank all the Board members and staff for their dedication and hard work in a challenging year. I look forward to working with the new Board and to ensuring we continue to meet the Board's regulatory functions effectively and efficiently in a considered and compassionate way.

Steve Ferguson



Dr Steven Ferguson NSW V6464  
**President**