

Media release

Celebrating 100 years of vets in NSW

This year vets across NSW celebrate 100 years of their profession in the state – that’s 100 years of registered vets caring for precious pets, priceless wildlife, valuable livestock of every shape and size, and every other kind of animal in NSW.

In 1880 there were fewer than 50 overseas qualified vets in all of Australia, and NSW had no registration system for vets. Registration created the modern veterinary profession as it ensured that only vets who are suitably qualified are able to call themselves vets and work as vets in NSW.

Since the *Veterinary Surgeons Act 1923* came into effect in 1924, more than 13,000 vets have been registered in NSW, initially by the Veterinary Surgeons Board and more recently the Veterinary Practitioners Board. Today more than 4,500 vets are in practice in the state.

Paul Canfield, chair of the Centenary Committee for the Veterinary Practitioners Board of NSW, says it’s an awe-inspiring legacy that vets have built over the past 100 years.

“At the start of the 20th Century, vets mainly had expertise with horses, cattle and sheep. but fast-forward to today and we see a profession caring for all animals. The growth in pet practice has been amazing, as has the increasing dedication to native wildlife and zoo animals,” Paul says.

“But vets have not forgotten their traditional roles of protecting animals from the devastating effects of introduced diseases such as foot and mouth disease and rabies. Today, vets work to safeguard NSW from diseases that could ravage animals and sometimes spread to people,” Paul says.

“Our profession continues to grow in terms of skills and understanding the needs of society and the environment. That makes us more proactive to the many challenges facing animals. Sure, we are proud of what we have achieved, such as eradicating tuberculosis, brucellosis and pleuropneumonia in cattle. But we can’t rest on our laurels. We have to remain vigilant, especially in the areas of animal welfare, public health and biosecurity. We also need to ensure that vets have access to the latest developments in animal diagnosis and treatment so that we can better serve animals and their carers,” Paul says.

To celebrate the centenary year, Her Excellency, the Honourable Margaret Beazley, Governor of NSW and Mr Dennis Wilson held a reception at Government House in NSW on February 26th, attended by veterinarians from around NSW and dignitaries. At the event, the President of the Board, Dr Steven Ferguson, announced the establishment of the inaugural Centenary Awards.

“The Centenary Awards will celebrate and recognise those members of the profession who have gone above and beyond what is asked of them. Those that were inspirational pathfinders or just plain hard workers will be acknowledged. The Centenary Committee is excited and privileged to be reviewing and acknowledging this legacy and will be announcing our deserving recipients later this year,” Paul says.

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For media enquiries, please contact:

Alexandra Williams
alexandra@hc.net.au
0402 088 558

ABN 93 831 750 859

Veterinary Practitioners Board
Suite 7.09, 247 Coward St
Mascot NSW 2020

Telephone: (02) 8338 1177
Email: admin@vpb.nsw.gov.au
Website: www.vpb.nsw.gov.au