

## Report on Activities of the Board 2018

With the term of this Board ending 30 June 2018, I have been reflecting on our achievements over the last 3 years and the overarching importance of regulation. Whilst we often don't think about regulation we must follow various pieces of legislation as part of our day-to-day life as veterinarians in practice, industry, or government. The standards that regulation mandates are pivotal in that day-to-day life.

So, it is with considerable appreciation to my fellow Board members and the Board's administrative office and employees that I contemplate this last term of the Board.

There has been continual improvement of processes and protocols over that period so that all our interactions are more consistent and efficient whilst serving the purpose of the legislation. This improvement has been particularly important with respect to our complaint investigations with the number of new complaints against veterinarians increasing from 44 in 2016 to 57 in 2018. The number of new complaints has increased by just over 3% annually over the last 5 years and by just under 8% annually over the last 10 years.

The Board has faced a number of issues created by external forces during the last 3 years including the regulation of members of the profession by racing authorities and stressors created by stray animal management and social media. When dealing with these and other issues the role of the Board includes enforcing the provisions of the Act and Regulation, providing advice to consumers of veterinary services, providing advice to the Minister, liaising with professional bodies such as the AVA, and co-operating with regulators in other jurisdictions.

The Australasian Veterinary Boards Council (AVBC) facilitates this co-operation among regulators of the profession in Australia and New Zealand and our Board continues to make a leading contribution. The AVBC is an incorporated association whose members are the state and territory veterinary registration boards of Australia and the Veterinary Council of New Zealand together with the Australian Veterinary Association (AVA) and the New Zealand Veterinary Association (NZVA).

The strength of the AVBC is that it provides a body with the critical mass and resources to carry out these activities which would be very difficult and much more expensive if each individual veterinary board had to perform them in isolation. An important consequence of the validity and robustness of AVBC's assessment processes is the international reputation it has achieved as an assurer of the quality of veterinary professional standards. Whilst many veterinarians might not think about or fully understand the role of the AVBC during everyday veterinary life, like its constituent Boards, it is foundational to the high esteem in which our profession is held.

Many will be aware of that the AVBC has had to deal with some internal division and differing expectations from different jurisdictions across Australia over the last year, and I am proud of the leadership role our Board has played in attempting to resolve these issues and strengthen the AVBC.

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 continue to 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 auditing system



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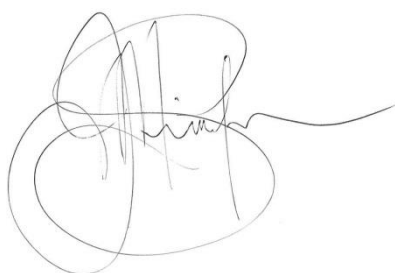
3. **Communication** with the profession is critical to the success of the Board's regulatory function, and the Board employs Boardtalk in June and December, Board Updates in March and September, and the News section on the Board's website to disseminate critical information to NSW veterinarians
4. The **complaint investigation** process and reports are continuously being reviewed and revised, and guided by our legislation, they fulfil the Board's role in regulating the profession, maintaining standards of animal welfare, and protecting the public.
5. The Board's **database and IT platform** is being refined to again improve communication with the profession and assist with the development of improved auditing and reporting functions.

Mental health continues to be an area of particular focus for both the profession and the Board. While there are examples of veterinarians not coping at all, there are many more who are affected by the stresses of modern veterinary practice. Both in the traditional media and social media it is becoming increasingly apparent that veterinarians are sometimes struggling to cope.

The Board continues to provide support to veterinarians with health concerns through its Health Program for Veterinarians 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 at any time.

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 is in a strong financial position. While the work of the Board may incur significant legal costs these have not been an overwhelming impost on the budget in recent years. 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.

Finally I would like to convey my deep thanks to the outgoing Board members and all the Board staff for their dedication and hard work over the last three years. It has been such a privilege to work with these amazing people.



Dr J Mark Simpson N5433  
**President**