Vets Beyond Borders

Annual Report 2021

www.vetsbeyondborders.org
Vets Beyond Borders is a registered not-for-profit organisation. It was founded in 2003 by vets committed to improving animal and public health in developing communities and fostering the spirit of volunteering amongst their profession.
OUR VISION

Enabled and empowered communities around the globe that can deliver world-class One Health initiatives, to create a world of better health and welfare for animals and people.
The challenges of operating a not-for-profit organisation in the current climate continue. As we face ongoing pandemic restrictions, Vets Beyond Borders needs to focus on its strengths; training volunteers, building local and international networks, and raising the profile of the organisation through multiple means.

The bushfires of 2019/2020 mobilised our AVERT program into a most effective arm of the organisation. The experiences learnt during that period highlighted the need for more targeted training of volunteers in wildlife triage and care. Partnerships with animal rescue organisations, zoos, the RSPCA, and State Governments are being built in order to prepare for future disasters. Specifically, the Taronga training modules for veterinarians and nurses are proving most popular throughout the country. It is envisaged that VBB will seek continued funding assistance for suitable candidates from our volunteer base.

Our international relations are building despite the restrictions on travel and deploying volunteers. A World Rabies Day 2-part video in September, 2020 brought together speakers from the World Health Organisation (WHO), World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE), Global Alliance for Rabies Control (GARC), Australian and Indian Governments, and many others. Achieving measurable outcomes in rabies control and prevention are our common aims.

Finally, without our wonderful volunteers and most able administrative team, Dr Sally Colgan (CEO) and Robert Leach (Programs and Administration Manager), VBB could not achieve our vision. On behalf of the VBB Board I would also like to recognise the work of our previous Chair, Dr Ian Douglas and Treasurer, Dr David Gray for their long and dedicated service. Both will be sorely missed as they retire from their posts at the end of the 2021 calendar year. Many thanks to you both.
Exponential growth and continued field work despite global travel restrictions

**70%**
Volunteering opportunities with VetMatch-International

**107%**
Non-emergency volunteers deployed

Non-emergency volunteer deployments (cumulative)
Vets Beyond Borders experienced strong growth in 2020-2021, despite international and interstate border closures and lockdowns. This is testament to the empathy and passion for animal welfare of veterinarians and veterinary nurses in the global VBB community.

Each new member and volunteer who joins our ranks enables us to continue to assist our partners to help animals in need. We are the leading provider of veterinary volunteers in Australia and are proud to be a Community Partner of the Australian Veterinary Association.

VBB receives no government funding and relies solely on donations to allow the organisation to carry out its work. FY2020/21 was a time of uncertainty and relative difficulty for all Australian charities.

We thank all supporters, donors and partners who provide financial support.

As we began to emerge from the gloomy shadows of the Black Summer bushfires, it became increasingly apparent that our profession needed to be better equipped to help Australia’s unique wildlife during disasters.

With the support of World Animal Protection, PetSure, VetPartners, Royal Canin, PetBarn Foundation and Greencross, we joined with the Taronga Conservation Society Australia to train our first cohort of veterinarians and nurses in advanced wildlife care and treatment. This initiative was so successful and well-received by our volunteers that a precedent was set and we have committed to continuing to provide this training in 2022 and beyond. During the FY21 year we worked tirelessly with key stakeholders and government departments to ensure we are fully prepared when disaster next strikes.

Our emergency veterinary response program AVERT has grown 10-fold since early 2020 and currently stands at over 2200 professionals, representing a nationwide database with nurses and veterinarians from all veterinary disciplines ready to assist animals in times of crisis.

Amidst a COVID-induced time warp, in which great uncertainty around Australia’s participation in the outside world impacted our planning and strategy, we found ourselves with a unique opportunity to explore avenues to maximise our impact at home. Whilst our
eyes and ears were always on ourighbours and international partners, being ready to assist once again as soon as conditions permitted, we focused our attention on the home front.

As COVID-19 continued to raise barriers to overseas deployments VetMatch Australia launched in late-2020, going from strength to strength. Our Australian partners in this initiative include the Animal Welfare League (AWL), the RSPCA, large wildlife hospitals and independent veterinary groups across the country. Our volunteers assist in all types of veterinary activities, from desexing clinics to “healthy pet days” and they can be found in mobile semi-trailer based clinics, pop-up clinics, shelters and hospitals in cities and rural communities nationwide.

We also delivered educational webinars and live panel sessions with experts from around the world to inform and educate our volunteers and partners on a range of relevant subjects.

The work of VBB would not be possible without our amazing volunteers who donate so much time and expertise to assist animals in need. Volunteering is also good for an individual’s mental health and wellbeing - it is definitely a win-win experience.

We could not continue our work without the generous support of our valued donors and sponsors. The funds we receive allow us to continue our efforts to improve animal welfare and to promote veterinary volunteering, assisting our partner organisations at home and around the world to continue their work, with the ultimate aim of creating “a world of better health for animals and people”.

A special thanks to our incredibly hardworking management team whose dedication has allowed us to deliver and grow. Thanks also to the VBB Board for all the volunteer hours and the expertise they bring to the organisation. We have a big and bright future thanks to the support of our volunteers, donors, supporters, sponsors, management and directors, who truly believe in our vision.
Although VBB’s programs were majorly impacted by travel restrictions in the 12 months to June 2021, the time was wisely used to increase our activities within Australia and our online support for our Partner and Affiliated animal welfare organisations (POs and AOs).

We have now partnered with several Australian organisations actively involved in the provision of care to Australian wildlife, enabling us to deploy veterinary personnel to assist them in their work following natural disaster. In addition, to ensure that volunteers are equipped with the necessary skills, we have been able to provide training in wildlife care to members registered with our Australian Veterinary Emergency Response Team (AVERT).

As we were able to deploy very few volunteers to overseas projects during this period, the decision was made to create an online resource, including forums and library, to allow VBB to provide support to veterinary staff working with POs and AOs around the world and also to enable discussions amongst the broader VBB community.

We look forward to full resumption of our overseas activities in the coming year.

- Dr Ian Douglas, Chair, Programs Committee

VetMatch-Australia

FY21 saw VBB grasp an opportunity to redefine its perception of ‘borders’. Animal welfare issues are not exclusive to developing regions, and VBB turned its attention inward to the socioeconomic, cultural, and geographic barriers to quality animal welfare within our own backyard in Australia. In late-2020, VetMatch-Australia was launched, replicating the VetMatch model with local animal welfare organisations such as the Animal Welfare League and RSPCA.

In just a few months, VBB had established partnerships across New South Wales, Queensland, and Western Australia and deployed 28 volunteers who provided free (or subsidised) veterinary services.
to the pets of vulnerable community members, including desexings, vaccinations, and microchipping.

VBB Director Dr David Gray attended one of the RSPCA NSW Healthy Pet Days in Waterloo to lend his expertise and assistance to the other 3 VBB veterinarian and 3 VBB vet nurse volunteers deployed to the event. The day was highly successful, attracting 200 social housing residents with their 181 companion animals offered free veterinary services. Following the event, Dr Gray stated: "The day was rewarding with strong support from both VBB and the organisers for the day clinic; a very positive experience for volunteers".

VBB received frequent positive feedback from volunteers deployed to VetMatch-AU programs: "Everything went smoothly and just inspired me to want to do more! Can’t recommend VBB enough and can’t wait to do my next stint with them!" - Dr Emma Johnson, VBB volunteer veterinarian.

These new local partnerships secured under VetMatch-AU were also extended to emergency deployment of volunteers. VBB AVERT was called to standby to assist partners in the February bushfire crisis in Western Australia and the March flooding crisis in New South Wales.

Following the previous year’s devastating bushfire crisis, VBB aimed to strengthen AVERT’s capabilities for wildlife emergencies, and through a collaboration with Taronga Conservation Society Australia, 24 veterinary professionals graduated from the ‘Veterinary Professional Training in Wildlife Treatment and Care’ training. VBB would like to thank VetPartners, The PetBarn Foundation, Royal Canin, PetSure and World Animal Protection Australia for their contributions to this.

VBB member Natalie Sale put her wildlife training into practice during the March flooding crisis: "Our surrounding suburbs have recently been affected by severe flooding. The information that I’ve learnt in this
In New South Wales, VBB joined two working groups established by NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service, and continues to contribute to their wildlife emergency response plans being developed.

**VetMatch-International**

COVID-19 global travel restrictions greatly impacted VBB’s deployment opportunities. With a brief lull in COVID-19 cases toward the end of the 2020 calendar year, travel had begun to open across the European continent and VBB harnessed the opportunity to deploy a small team to the Sardinia program for a shortened sterilisation campaign.

In Victoria, VBB collaborated with Zoos Victoria for their pilot undertaking of a wildlife emergency response training. VBB vet nurse Marcie Connor joined the pilot cohort and is on standby for future response efforts led by the state government officials.

Despite the inability to deploy volunteers internationally, FY21 saw VBB growing its network of registered Partner Organisations, expanding its volunteering opportunities in preparation for a global return to ‘normality’. Partners were engaged frequently for updates during the pandemic, and occasionally spotlighted on VBB’s social media pages.
VBB approved the registration of 8 Affiliate Organisations, acknowledging their efforts to improve animal welfare in their regions and with intentions to offer virtual expertise to their veterinary staff through the impending library and forums.

With the generosity of the Animal Welfare League NSW, VBB arranged 2 shipments of veterinary supplies to be donated to new partner Te Are Manu in the Cook Islands. A feat that was well-received and highlighted in the local Cook Islands newspaper.

Behind the scenes, VBB Administrative team sought to draw on the ongoing interest of student members and established a National Student Group; bringing together like-minded students from all veterinary universities across Australia. VBB appointed an executive Committee of the Group, comprising of student representatives from each university. The Committee has met bi-monthly to discuss avenues of raising awareness of VBB amongst the student networks. VBB would like to extend our thanks to Joanna Nelson, DVM student from the University of Adelaide for her contributions to the Group as its inaugural President.

Additionally, after much anticipation, the VBB website was reconstructed. The launch included a bespoke user-friendly membership and donations portal thanks to the efforts of Sean Freitas - 'Mr Digital’. The portal features additional capacity for AVERT, VetMatch, and the exclusive library and forums.
Financial Year 2020/21 has been challenging for the world and for VBB. Operating norms have been out the window in one of the most unpredictable periods in our short history, necessitating adaptation within the organisation and our operational models.

In such circumstances fund raising has been difficult but, in my opinion our administrative staff have done a tremendous job in adjusting the focus of our organisation from a focus on international VetMatch programs to expansion of our activity in VetMatch Australia.

The points to be noted from our audited Financial Reports include an operating deficit of $74,772 for the operating period, total revenue being $190,500 compared to some $492,963 for the previous year. FY 20 was an aberrant year because of the tremendous public response to the summer bush fires and donations have largely returned to what we have experienced in a “normal year”.

Expenditure in FY21 ($265,285) is significantly less than that in FY20 ($302,578). Financial Assets as at the end of FY21 were $537,293 compared to $427,614 in FY20, the difference being funds held for specific programs, unexpended grants totalling $179,064, principally Foundation Brigitte Bardot funds for the SARAH program and a contribution from WIRES towards the training of VBB members in partnership with Taronga Zoo. We were in receipt of some $37,400 in Government Covid support payments in FY21.

Though the year was challenging the organisation remains in a sound financial position.

Our thanks go to Fondation Brigitte Bardot for their ongoing support of our VetMatch partners in India, to the Australian Veterinary Association, Taronga Zoo, WIRES, Vet Partners, PetSure, the Huddleston and Baker Foundations, Provet, Todd Triggers and our many regular donors who have supported our cause.

Our administration team Sally and Robert have done an outstanding job in keeping us relevant to ever changing circumstances and promoting VBB to the wider community. Thanks also to Cally and Abby from YBM for their work in managing our accounts and providing advice on Government support available in these challenging times.

My term as Treasurer has come to an end after some 6 years in the position as my time on the Board will end as of this AGM; it is with some sadness that my term on the Board has come to an end. I wish the organisation every success into the future.
The global pandemic saw the world occupying the online realm more than ever. VBB continued to remain relevant on social media and in the international animal welfare space. Our socials (Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn) have continued its steady growth in audience.


VBB also engaged Australian veterinary students to participate in a ‘logo designing competition’ for World Rabies Day, and vastly increased social media posting frequency during September, utilising the GARC World Rabies Day social media toolkit.
As a community partner of the Australian Veterinary Association (AVA), VBB presented at the AVA’s Student Conference, highlighting programs available to veterinary students and the benefits of volunteering in the profession. VBB was exhibited at the AVA’s virtual VetFest2020 Conference, and Robert Leach presented his talk ‘Redefining Borders’ as an entrant to the conference’s VetED talks – Robert was awarded First Place.

VBB was also invited to present a webinar event to the Federation of Indian Animal Protection Organisations, with Dr Ian Douglas, Dr Helen Byrnes, and Dr Thinlay Bhutia each contributing presentations.

With several press releases distributed and an ongoing presence on social media, VBB was featured in online and print publications. Some notable highlights were VBB’s full-length feature in The Veterinarian, a VetMatch-Australia update in the Australian Dog Lover magazine, and features in the local newspapers of Tamworth and the Cook Islands.
Chair: Dr Robert Johnson
Dr Robert Johnson (BVSc MANZCVS CertZooMed BA Grad Dip Asian Studies) graduated from the University of Sydney in 1977. He currently works in zoo, wildlife, and livestock welfare practice.

Robert is a member of the Australian College of Veterinary Scientists (Feline Medicine) and holds a Certificate in Zoological Medicine from the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons. In May 2015 he was elected President of the Australian Veterinary Association and formally recognised as a Fellow of the AVA in 2020. Robert has extensive clinical experience in zoo animal medicine and has presented and written widely on reptile, zoo and wildlife medicine.

In his spare time Robert draws cartoons and tries to learn stuff.

Deputy Chair: Dr Hugh Millar
Dr Hugh Millar (BVSc MANZCVS PSM) is a highly regarded veterinarian and biosecurity professional, who has worked extensively over 35 years in biosecurity management and disease control.

Dr Millar was Victorian Chief Veterinary Officer for 11 years, and for 5 years was the Executive Director for Biosecurity Victoria, responsible for policies and programs for plant and animal biosecurity, animal welfare, invasive plants and pest animal management, domestic animal regulation and control of use of agricultural and veterinary chemicals. He is a member, by examination, of the Australian College of Veterinary Scientists, Epidemiology Chapter, and was awarded a Public Service Medal in 2011 in his role as Chief Veterinary Officer for Victoria.

Dr Millar has extensive professional networks within government and with industries at the national and state levels. Dr Millar has had extensive experience in the area of One Health, forging links over his career with his counterparts in public health and infectious disease management. He is a strategic thinker, not afraid to ‘think outside the square’.

Dr Millar is currently working as a biosecurity and disease management consultant to government and industry.

Treasurer: Dr David Gray
After graduation from Sydney University in 1969, David embarked on a career in mixed rural practice, initially on the Central Coast of NSW but for most of his career on the South Coast of NSW.

Always looking for a challenge, he completed an MBA through University of New England in 1996, participating in a People to People study tour of endangered species in China in 1993 and led an AVA team to assist in the Foot & Mouth disease outbreak in UK in 2001.

Now retired, VBB has become a particular interest for him and he has volunteered in the ABC-AR programs in Gangtok, Sikkim (2010, 2012, 2013 & 2019); Bylakuppe, Karnataka (2012); Vanuatu (2014); Koh Phangan, Thailand (2015) and Ladakh (2016, 2017, 2018 & 2019). He also participated in the 2012 VetTrain programs in Gangtok and in 2013 in Jaipur. David has served on the Board of VBB since July 2012 and has held the position of Hon Treasurer since October 2014.
Incoming treasurer: Dr John Allen
Dr John Allen is the most recent addition to the VBB Board, bringing with him a wealth of experience in epidemiology and international animal health programs.

After leading DFAT and ACIAR animal and zoonotic disease research and control projects in Indonesia, John vastly expanded his assignments to areas such as Lao, Thailand, Vietnam, Bhutan, Mongolia, and Yemen to name a few.

Following completion of an MBA, John sought a change of career and followed an interest in licensing and commercialisation of research outcomes. Since 2009, John has been the Program Leader for CSIRO’s Australian Centre for Disease Preparedness through their International Engagement Program.

John also has made a significant contribution to the ethical conduct of research involving animals and has chaired and held membership on animal ethics committees in Australia and has facilitated the establishment of ethics committees in developing countries.

Dr Ian Douglas
VBB has been an important part of Ian’s veterinary life since 2005, when he was elected its inaugural president and commenced work, together with Sikkimese veterinarian, Dr Thinlay Bhutia, to establish the now highly regarded SARAH Program, India’s first state-wide ABC/AR project.

Ian has devised and delivered several surgical training courses in the Asia-Pacific region, is the author of widely referenced publications on clinical aspects of ABC/AR programmes and has been a regular guest speaker at animal welfare meetings.

He is a strong proponent of the “One Health” philosophy, promoting the collaboration of veterinarians, doctors and other health professionals in efforts to combat disease. Ian operates a veterinary neurological and neurosurgical referral practice in Adelaide, South Australia.

Dr Helen Byrnes
Apart from her role on the board of VBB, Helen is the current VBB Program Co-ordinator for the Sikkim Anti-Rabies and Animal Health (SARAH) Program. In this capacity, she works closely with the local co-ordinator Dr Thinlay Bhutia in the management of the program.

Helen joined VBB in 2006 when she volunteered in the SARAH Program. She subsequently volunteered on VBB’s Ladakh and Bylakuppe projects before taking on her current roles. Helen graduated with first class honours in veterinary science from University of Queensland in 1988 and subsequently completed a Bachelor of Medical Studies and Graduate Certificate in Trade Mark Law and Practice. Helen is a member of the Australian College of Veterinary Scientists by examination in pharmacology. She also has private veterinary practices in Brisbane, Australia.

Jane Sharwood
As the Special Advisor, City of Melbourne, Jane works closely with a wide range of stakeholders to drive economic development and position Melbourne as a world-class city in local, national and international markets.

By building strong and ongoing partnerships with key city stakeholders, domestically and internationally, during the past 22 years, Jane has positioned Melbourne as a city that collaborates with its long-standing international city partnership. Jane also worked for the Victorian Government, councils in remote New South Wales and regional Victoria, in community development and recreation services and for over 30 years, enjoyed supporting her family mixed farming enterprise.

Jane was appointed in 2007, as the lay member of Museum Victoria’s animal ethics committee. Jane holds a Bachelor of Arts (Australian National University), Graduate Diploma in Recreation Planning (University of Canberra), a Certificate in Wool Classing and is a member of the Australia Institute of Company Directors.
Nina Dejmanee

Nina is a strategic advisor to organisations across the private, public and for-purpose sectors with a specific focus on organisational capability, culture and design. She joined the Board of Vets Beyond Borders in 2019. Nina currently runs her own independent management consulting practice.

She has previously held consulting roles at Ernst and Young and Bendelta and worked in people strategy and analytics at Macquarie Bank. She holds a degree in psychology (M. Org Psych; B. Psych (hons)) and is a member of the Australian Institute of Company Directors.

Nina has a strong personal interest in animal welfare, animal cognition and behaviour, and the mutually beneficial relationship between animals and humans, an interest strengthened through her previous volunteer work with Delta Therapy Dogs Australia. A passionate animal advocate, Nina shares her home with three indomitable rescue pets.
A world of better health for animals & people