



Wildlife Disease Association Australasia

C/O

Department of Biological Sciences

University of Tasmania

Private Bag 55, Hobart, Tasmania 7001

Australia

www.wildlifedisease.org

August 5, 2021

Dear Council of the Wildlife Disease Association,

The geographic section Wildlife Disease Association Australasia has contributed to the mission of the Wildlife Disease Association and all funds spent were in pursuit of this mission.

In the past year the section has welcomed a new Chair-Elect (Laura Grogan) to become Chair in late 2021, Treasurer (Orr Cohen), Executive Member (Brett Gartrell) and New Zealand Member at Large (David Hayman). We have also welcomed new representatives for Queensland (Alison Peel), New South Wales (Aditi Sriram), South Australia (Taylor Hawkins) and New Zealand (Chris Neibuhr). At the parent body level, Andrew Peters has been successfully nominated to become the WDA President and Jasmin Hufschmid elected to the WDA Council.

The values of our section were established by our founding members and the ongoing contribution of members over the past 47 years. We recognised the risk of cultural drift as these members retire from active participation in the section and formed an ongoing *WDA Australasia History Subcommittee* at our 2017 AGM. The objectives of this subcommittee are *to record the section's history, preserving and improving access to WDA-A memorabilia (including photographs) and overseeing the production of material celebrating WDAA's history and communicating our organisational culture to future members*. The subcommittee was provided with a budget and is undertaking the ongoing process of capturing, preserving and sharing our organisational culture.

The section continues to be an advocate for wildlife health in Australasia, most notably in Australia, through high-level involvement with *Wildlife Health Australia*, participation in biannual Australian Government *Environmental Biosecurity Roundtables*, participation in the development of a *National Biosecurity Statement*, and participation in the wildlife diseases working group (by invitation) on an Australian *National Priority Exotic Environmental Pests and Diseases List*. The section has contributed to *National Guidelines for Veterinary Triage of Wildlife Affected by Bushfires* and *Wildlife in Care Workshop*, following the 2020 Australian bushfire emergency. The section has also interacted closely with Australia's first Chief *Environmental Biosecurity Officer* and Australia's *Chief Veterinary Officer*. Our advocacy activities have helped to mature an understanding of advocacy for our section and grow relationships at high levels of federal government. An important development has been the involvement of WDAA members in an initiative to form an Australian Wildlife Health Institute dedicated to solving priority wildlife health issues. While this initiative is still in the formative stages, WDA Australasia has had an active role in shaping the direction.

WDA Australasia has focused on supporting students through improved organisation, funding and functioning of the Australasian Student Chapter and the result of this has been the reinvigoration and expansion of the WDA Australasian Student Chapter to over 330 student chapter members (many of whom are also WDA members) from all the vet schools and many other faculties across the region. Thanks to generous donations from members, including notably the Schultz Foundation and the annual conference auction, this chapter is funded and can support activities that make a real difference to student development and engagement in wildlife health.



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The student chapter has made several initiatives, and also helped identify potential barriers to student chapter members to become WDA members. Among their initiatives, they have established a mentorship program, pairing academics and professionals with student chapter members for general mentoring support. They have also established an occasional 'Q and A with an Expert' online webinar. WDA Australasia is extremely proud and supportive of the student chapter.

Like most scientific societies around the world, our annual conference in 2020 had to be cancelled and instead WDA Australasia participated in the WDA/EWDA virtual conference. We had two speakers represent the Australasian section: Kate McInnes (NZ Department of Conservation) who presented on a mortality event of yellow-eyed penguins; and Hume Field (EcoHealth Alliance) who presented on the re-emergence of SARS.

WDA Australasia seeks to recognise the excellence of our members. At the AGM Dr Leanne Wicker was awarded the Barry L. Munday Recognition award, which recognises the *significant contributions to wildlife health made by a member of the Australasian Section in the past five years*. Dr Janeen Samuel was awarded the Dave Spratt award, which is to *honour a long-standing WDA Australasia member who has made an outstanding contribution to our Section*. An additional ad-hoc award of the Barry L. Munday Recognition award was given to Dr Joanna Griffith in November 2020. In addition, WDA Australasia was able to award four Research Awards in 2020, which all went to students: Brett Gardner, Fiona Knox, Thais Sasso Lopez, and Berta Blanch. WDA Australasia sincerely congratulates all of these award recipients.

WDA Australasia recognises the generous donations from the WDA to Australia's 2020 bushfire emergency. Through the generosity of WDA members greater than \$9,000 was donated to WDA Australasia. These funds have been used to support WDA Australasia members to create predator proof shelters for small mammals recovering from the fires, and to monitor the success of rehabilitated wildlife that are released.

WDA Australasia is grateful for your support and I would like to reiterate our commitment to a strong international Wildlife Disease Association with purpose and vision.

Yours sincerely,

Scott Carver

Chair, Wildlife Disease Association Australasia

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