

Vets for Climate Action



ANNUAL REPORT 2022



ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

Vets for Climate Action acknowledges our First Nations Peoples, the traditional custodians who have cared for the country upon which we work and meet; its land, oceans and rivers, its trees and wildlife, for over 60 000 years. We pay our respects to their Elders past and present. We acknowledge that this land was never ceded.

TO OUR SUPPORTERS

We would like to thank our many supporters who have joined us in our journey to take climate action over the past 12 months.

To our volunteers - we could not achieve such great impact without you! Volunteers work across communications, fundraising, events (speaking roles and attending stands), seminars, social media, administration and research. We have a dedicated team of volunteers working on our Climate Care Program, and 33 former Chief Veterinary Officers are our voice to government and science advisors.

Support also comes via donors, without whom we simply would not have had paid staff this year.

Environmental Leadership Australia offers significant support through financial services, funding, mentoring team members, media and social media support, political advice, design services and coordinating the larger constituency group of which VfCA is a member.

Thank you to every person who provided this support to our wonderful organisation throughout the year. We appreciate you!



MESSAGE FROM OUR CHAIR

Dr Jeannet Kessels

It has been my privilege to continue to lead Vets for Climate Action through 2022 as our organisation reaches maturity. It is remarkable what a band of committed volunteers and staff can achieve in a year!

While the new federal government declares a welcome focus on climate change and sustainability, the needs of our animals have never been greater.

Globally, the five hottest years ever measured have occurred since 2017, causing terrestrial and underwater heat waves. Together with serious flooding, exacerbated by climate change, our animals, both wild and domestic, are under increasing threat. Australia's \$73 billion livestock industries are deeply vulnerable; this year saw disease incursion to South Australia of the vector-borne Japanese Encephalitis, previously only seen in the Torres Strait. Potential spread of pathogens such as Lumpy Skin Disease is of substantial risk to our biosecurity.

Through these changing times our veterinary and animal care community is taking the opportunity to powerfully lead with our wonderful VfCA Board (page 19). Read VfCA's powerful new 3 year Strategic Plan [here](#).

We welcomed our experienced and deeply committed new CEO Tara O'Connell, and farewelled with thanks our hard working outgoing CEO Alix Foster Vander Elst. VfCA continues to work with 33 former Chief Veterinary Officers, led by Dr Ron Glanville. The generous support and assistance of VfCA members, donors and volunteers



throughout 2022 has been deeply appreciated. In the last quarter alone, membership has grown 30% to over 2000.

VfCA set out to change the culture and mindset of our profession, and this year we have enjoyed a strong presence at AVA, VNCA, Science Week, Vet Expo, Greencross Conference events and have been highlighted in numerous industry publications. Over 870 VfCA posters were hung in veterinary practices across Australia, and with many media releases, op eds and a growing social media presence.

Burning of coal, petrol and gas is causing climate change and it's time for all of us to embrace the shift to renewables with vigour. VfCA's Climate Care Program, now with 3 staff, is promoting practical veterinary sustainability. Piloted across 21 practices, with almost 400 more on the waiting list, the Climate Care team is preparing for an official launch in early 2023. Across my own hospitals I see our VfCA Climate Care Champions working hard to bring about changes that I have, until now, found

Message from our Chair (continued)

difficult to implement as an individual business owner. VfCA's MOU with the AVA has been renewed, with another in progress with NZVA. We have been approached by dentists, physiotherapists and horse owners who wish to emulate our work. Corporate engagement is growing, with multiple opportunities to speak, including at the Provet National Conference.

VfCA has written to every Member of our Federal Parliament to advise them of our work, with several meetings resulting. The former Chief Veterinary Officers group writes regularly on matters of importance and together our role as trusted advisors is set to grow.

We're delighted that our application for Deductible Gift Recipient status has recently been approved, so all donations over \$2 to VfCA are now Tax Deductible!

Climate change is increasingly a veterinary problem. It is hurting the animals we love and need. But with this forward momentum, imagine what we might achieve over the next ten years, when every year matters, every fraction of a degree matters, and every decision matters.

I wish to deeply thank every supporter and volunteer who has given time, energy, and financial support towards our powerful vision.

'Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has.'

For the animals we love and need.





MESSAGE FROM OUR CEO

Tara O'Connell

The veterinary industry has continued to be on the frontline of climate change this year, with veterinary professionals and animal carers experiencing the impacts of floods, fire, drought, heat stress, the changing nature of diseases such as Japanese Encephalitis, and other impacts on our wildlife, livestock and domestic animals created by the changing climate. So it's with great pride that our team of staff and volunteers have supported the industry to make such progress in their climate leadership because together we are a voice for all animals.

VfCA continues to grow our reach and impact in education, collaboration and advocacy. Veterinary professionals are trusted advisors within their local communities, to governments and to those who are committed to the health of animals.

They are scientists who communicate complex matters in a simple way and can speak to the Australian community about the need for emissions reductions and strong climate policy to protect Australia's animals from the impacts of climate change.

I would also like to pay tribute to our staff and volunteers who continue to inspire action across this ever-changing landscape through their love of animals, and genuine desire to make a difference. And I would like to thank the outgoing CEO, Alix Foster Vander Elst, who worked tirelessly to bring many projects to life – many of which you will read about in this Annual Report.

Finally I would like to thank our Board for their support and leadership. I feel truly blessed to be surrounded by such a talented and inspiring group of passionate and committed individuals.

We have exciting plans for the year ahead, including some innovative new ways to measure our impact and communicate on behalf of the animals who don't have a voice. I invite you to join us on that journey.

ABOUT US

At Vets for Climate Action, we represent concerned veterinarians, veterinary nurses, practices and industry partners across Australia who want climate action. We hold a unique place in the heart of communities. Veterinary professionals are highly trusted professionals spanning multiple fields, with expertise in livestock, wildlife and pet health and welfare, epidemiology, public health and the environment. We can comfortably talk to millions of Australians about the health of animals, the importance of stable environments and the urgent need for climate action.

VISION

Our vision is of a world where animals and people thrive in a healthy climate.

PURPOSE

To lead those who love, care for and work with animals to act urgently on climate change.

VALUES

- We care deeply about animals, humanity and the environment. Consistent with the One Health paradigm, we recognise the three are inextricably linked.
- We value the commitment of our people and honour the trust our communities have in the veterinary profession.
- Our actions and policies are based on the available research and scientific evidence.
- We are proudly non-partisan. We support climate-positive policies and call out climate-damaging policies, regardless of the party or politician they are associated with.
- We are driven to achieve our strategic goals and increase our impact.





THEORY OF CHANGE

At the centre of Science, Policy and Politics, VfCA inspire, educate, mobilise, collaborate with, and act as a trusted advisor for the veterinary profession and animal care community to take climate action.

As such, we grow, diversify, and strengthen the climate movement and embolden politicians to take urgent positive action to mitigate and adapt to climate change.

OUR NICHE & POWER

It's well understood that information from a trusted advisor is more likely to be well received than via other mediums. Veterinarians, vet nurses and those associated with our profession are well placed to be trusted advisors.

We are deeply embedded and highly regarded as empathetic and knowledgeable within our local communities; rural, regional and urban. As scientists who communicate complex matters in a simple way, we can open up opportunities for action in businesses, on farms and in government.

We are committed to care for country, our economy and we reach a wide and diverse population of Australians through the shared commitment to, and love of, our animals.

STRATEGIC PILLARS

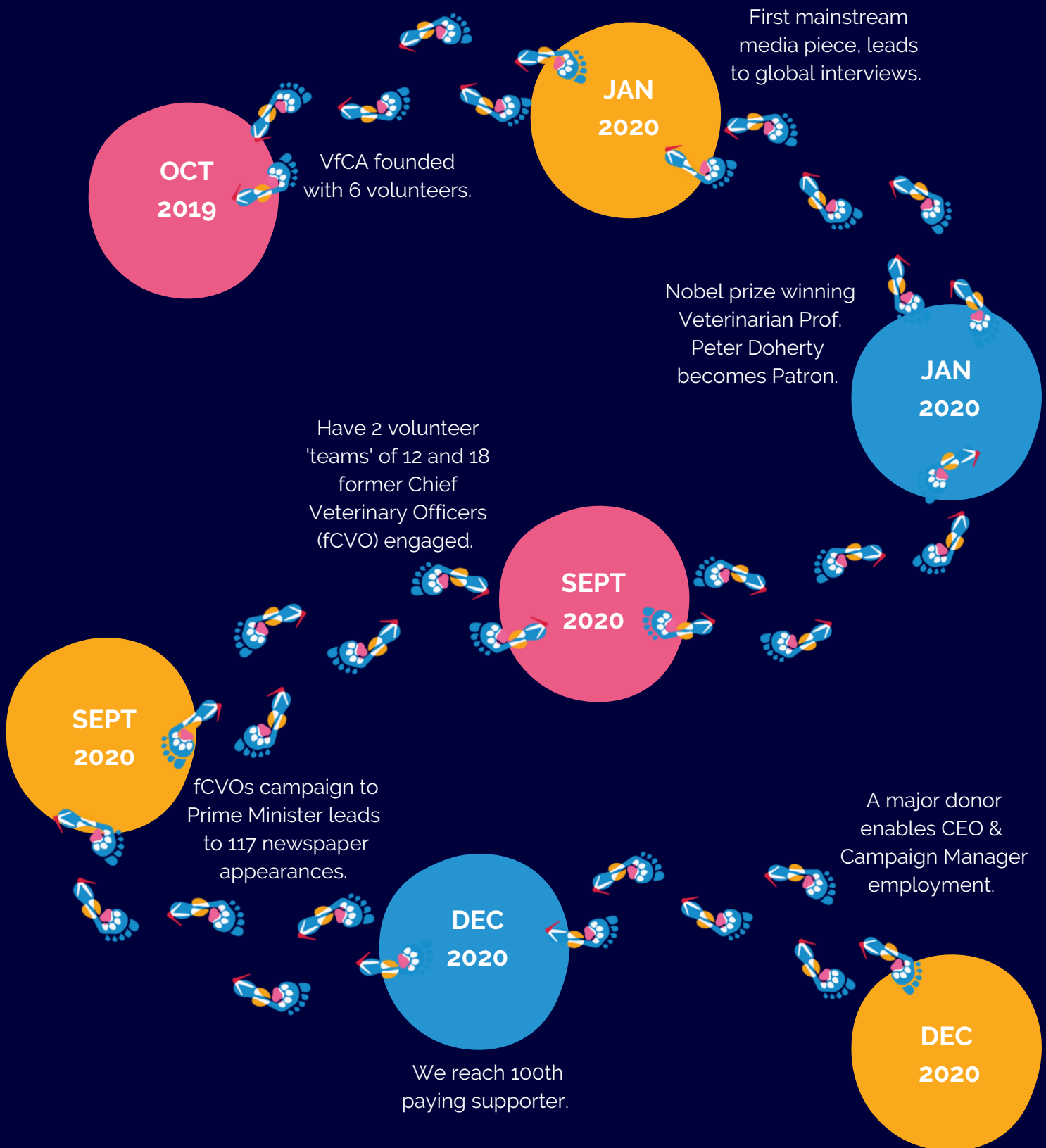
Educate - We will develop, distribute and/or sell high quality learning experiences for the veterinary profession & broader animal care community, in a way that is strongly aligned to our values & brand proposition.

Collaborate - Partnerships are fundamental to our success. We partner with like-minded, values-aligned organisations to achieve our purpose.

Trusted Advisor - Being a trusted advisor within the veterinary profession, to the broader community and to Government is key to the potential power of VfCA. We respect and steward this role.

Governance - We will achieve financial, social & ecological sustainability through ethical practice & meeting legal requirements.

OUR JOURNEY



**DEC
2020**

Major donor funding for development of a Climate Care education Program (CCP).

2021

VfCA collaborates with Zoos & Aquarium Aust, RSPCA, WIRES & Animals Aust. in Bushfire Vigil for animals.

**2021-
2022**

Attended every major veterinary conference.
Seminar series delivered to Industry.

**2021-
2022**

1100 members, 60 volunteers, 33 fCVOs & CCP Pilot launched.

2022

Deductible Gift Recipient status approved.

2022

Significant media exposure. Staff of 5. Constant stream of speaking engagements.

2022

Annual Report

Vets for Climate Action

PROGRAM SPOTLIGHT

RURAL AND REGIONAL ENGAGEMENT PROGRAM

This year VfCA launched the planning phase of the Rural and Regional Engagement Program. This program aims to engage with the veterinary and broader animal care community in rural and regional areas, to increase awareness of the impact of climate change on wildlife, domestic pets and livestock (and associated economies) and to encourage climate action. People in rural and regional communities are some of the hardest hit by the damaging effects of climate change, but also stand to benefit greatly from the opportunities that will present themselves as we address the climate emergency. As a profession that holds a trusted place in the community, as experienced science communicators and as established advocates for animal and human welfare, vets are uniquely positioned to provide leadership on climate change in rural areas.

This initial phase of the Rural and Regional Engagement Program has involved some of our wonderful staff, volunteers and partner organisations working to develop a project management plan and a supporter journey. These foundations will ensure VfCA has all the necessary information and resources to implement the program effectively. Our supporter journey is focused on participant support and encouragement from their first interactions with VfCA through to becoming local champions for climate action.

Another aspect of the planning phase has involved meetings between VfCA and other climate organisations, such as Farmers for Climate Action (FCA), to facilitate collaboration across the climate



movement. For example, discussions with FCA included how members of our organisations could work together when approaching local media outlets and local MPs to maximise impacts in rural and regional communities. We have also had discussions with Environmental Leadership Australia and the Climate Media Centre about future training opportunities for program participants. These opportunities look to include topics such as how to have climate conversations and basic media training. By providing this training, we hope that participants will feel empowered to take more climate action in their local communities.

Rural and regional areas have been largely underrepresented in the climate movement, and we believe it is high time for the movement to be inclusive of these communities. We are thrilled to be planning the launch of this program in 2023, and we are excited to be able to work with the rural veterinary industry to bring about strong action on climate change!

We wish to thank the Program donor for their generous support!

PROGRAM SPOTLIGHT

CLIMATE CARE PROGRAM

We know that everyone in veterinary practice cares deeply about animals, and the environment that their patients live in, and yet we also know it can be very challenging to live and work more sustainably - especially in a busy vet practice.

The Climate Care Program (CCP) is designed to make this easier by offering a modular, self-paced and industry-specific guide to better managing things like water, waste, energy, procurement and chemical usage. Step-by-step, the CCP supports users through behavioural changes that not only reduce a practice's environmental impact, but also help to lower costs, increase value, educate and motivate team members, and attract and retain aligned employees (and clients)!

Dr Jeremy Watson (pictured here with our CEO) has successfully trialled the CCP in his own Vet clinic, with landfill reduction, water savings, and improved energy efficiency. He runs Australia's first carbon neutral vet practice and feeds his valuable insights back into the Program itself.

The CCP has been, and continues to be, co-designed with professionals from the veterinary and animal care industry, as well as veterinary suppliers, climate scientists, water and energy industry specialists, skilled educators, and end-users - making it a uniquely informed and targeted offering.

Since May 2022, 21 Veterinary Hospitals have been participating in a CCP Pilot and providing VfCA with vital qualitative and quantitative feedback to help challenge assumptions, empower an iterative design methodology, and test and measure the success of the program's format, content, and impacts (environmental, social, and financial).



This will continue throughout the life of the CCP as measurement frameworks are built into the design.

The core outcomes expected from the CCP are:

- Increased awareness and understanding of the impact of climate change on animal wellbeing.
- Increased energy efficiency in and across participating practices.
- Increased uptake of renewable energy within and across participating practices.
- Increased water efficiency in and across participating practices.
- Reduction of waste sent to landfill.
- Increased recycling initiatives.
- Increased ethical procurement activities.
- Increased inventory management to reduce waste.
- Overall reduction of carbon emissions.
- Increased engagement with clients on the impact of climate change on animals.
- Improved mental health of veterinarians and vet nurses as a result of taking climate action.

As the reality of climate change further fuels a wide range of legislative and cultural developments, VfCA's Climate Care Program offers the veterinary industry a supportive and ongoing pathway to a net zero future.

We would like to thank our Program donor for making this innovative and important program a reality!

IMPACT AT A GLANCE

Membership grown **30%**
in last quarter to over **2000**

870 VfCA posters hung in Vet practices
around Australia



Piloted our Climate Care Program
with 21 practices with nearly **400**
more on the waiting list

60 ^{active} **Volunteers**

Letters written to
every

Senator and every
Member
of our Federal
Parliament



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

This year has been an amazing year for community engagement and our volunteers at VfCA! Our terrific volunteers are what keep VfCA running and we are always astounded by what they are able to accomplish. This year, our new Community Engagement Manager, Dr Jesse Fox, was appointed to provide support to our volunteers. As part of this support, we were able to run a survey and a meeting of many of our current and past volunteers to find out how we could make their experience the best possible.

Some of the points brought up during this process included increased opportunities for online training which led to events such as our recent media training provided by the Climate Media Centre. This process also led to team leaders being appointed to provide greater structure and support for volunteer teams. One of the biggest things to come out of the volunteer survey was the design of a clearer and simpler induction process for new volunteers.

Around 20 new volunteers have joined VfCA this year, bringing our total number of active volunteers to over 60! The top recommendation from this survey was to increase in-person events and connect volunteers who are located nearby, and this is a goal that we hope to achieve in 2023.



Our volunteers have helped in so many different ways to achieve the goals of VfCA this year. Our volunteers helped to run 2 new seminars: one about soil carbon and one about sustainability in the beef industry. Our Communications team has been working hard all year to produce a variety of submissions to Government, media, and industry. This has included writing letters to all newly elected MPs, producing numerous media articles, and writing submissions to the NSW EPA on their Climate Change Policy and Action Plan.

The brand new Fundraising team has been hard at work organising our Mega Christmas Giveaway! Other activities that our volunteers have been involved in include presenting and assisting at numerous conferences such as the AVA annual conference and Vet Expo; designing, creating and evaluating the Climate Care program; and delivering presentations on the importance of climate change at multiple veterinary universities.

Our volunteers are the lifeblood of our organisation and we are thankful to the passionate and driven people who give their time, knowledge and expertise to bring about positive change. We are excited to see what they can achieve in 2023!



FINANCIAL SUMMARY

Total Income and Expenditure for
the year ended 30-June- 2022.



INCOME

Donations	\$107,190
Grants	\$193,000
Interest Income	\$44
Total Income	\$300,234

EXPENSES

Admin Expenses	\$32,176
Marketing	\$7,104
Wages and Salaries	\$264,844
Total Expenses	\$297,020

WHAT'S NEXT

Over the coming year we will continue to expand both our Climate Care Program and our Rural and Regional Engagement Programs. We will educate and empower Vet Clinics to understand and take action to reduce carbon emissions with the aim of 350 Vet Clinics being involved by the end of 2025. We also will help them apply pressure to industry suppliers to reach net zero targets by 2035.

We will revitalise our membership program; host online events; attend and speak at industry events, secure media coverage and curate an online Knowledge Centre.

We will continue to foster our strong connections with the animal communities and animal care organisations, as well as our values-aligned partnerships.

We will work with key partners in our education system to have Climate Change included as part of tertiary training. With our Rural & Regional Program, we will continue to provide resources for influencing policy change. We will focus on four areas of government action:

- Prioritise an effective national climate action plan, with stronger net-zero emissions targets via deep cuts in greenhouse gas emissions and a rapid transition to renewable energy by 2030.
- End destruction of native vegetation, including old growth forests and increase plantings of native vegetation and timber.
- Strengthen environmental and wildlife protections afforded by the EPBC Act 1999, including incorporating a climate trigger.
- Position Australia as an agricultural leader in the world, with a commitment to carbon neutrality by 2030 and development of a National Ruminant Emissions Reduction Program.

By June 2024 our Rural & Regional program will run in 5 key electorates resulting in 50 more



veterinary professionals* joining the campaign, 40 more letters being sent to MPs, 4 meetings with MPs, 10 clinics displaying posters, 4 media stories, and 2 storytelling videos produced.

While climate change continues to pose a significant threat to animal health, welfare, production and biodiversity, the good news is we **can** halt catastrophic climate change and we look forward to 2023, and the years ahead, working towards this common goal.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS



Dr Jeannet
Kessels (Chair)



Dr Angela
Frimberger
(Deputy Chair)



Dr Helen Scott-Orr,
AM PSM



Nobel Laureate
Professor Mark
Howden



Nick Williamson
(Treasurer)



Dr Jonathan
Happold



Indigenous Advisor
Ben Tyler



Legal Advisor
Kelly Douglas



Patron
Nobel Laureate
Professor Peter
Doherty, AC FRS FMedSci

STAFF



CEO
Tara O'Connell



Team Assistant
Jethro Hardinge



**Community
Engagement**
Jesse Fox



CCP Manager
Sarah Woollorton



CCP Project Coord.
Katie Sheehan



CCP Product Dev.
Liz Malcolm

Vets for Climate Action



A Voice for all Animals