

# Vets for Climate Action



**ANNUAL REPORT 2023**



# 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.

In the spirit of reconciliation, Vets for Climate Action recognises the generosity of the Uluru Statement from the Heart and its invitation from First Nations People to all Australians to walk together to build a better future.

Photo by Dr Jeannet Kessels, Larapinta Track

# 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.



The Swift Parrot (*Lathamus discolor*) is threatened by logging in its habitat in Tasmania



The Broad-tooth rat (Mastacomys fuscus) was added to the Govt's threatened species list due to the threat of bushfires in its habitat

## THEORY OF CHANGE

At the centre of Science, Policy and Politics, VfCA inspire, educate, mobilise, collaborate with, and act as 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.

**Advocate** - Being trusted climate advocates 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.



# TO OUR PARTNERS AND SUPPORTERS

Vets for Climate Action has come so far from a simple Facebook post in August 2019.

We now represent over 2000 veterinarians, vet nurses and other animal care professionals. We have developed the first of its kind Climate Care Program to reduce the profession's carbon footprint, attended and spoken at industry events, written submissions and met with our elected representatives and advocated for policy change. We have over 60 active volunteers, a team of three, and thirty-three former Chief Veterinary Officers and Senior Government Veterinarians work alongside us.

It is only with the support of our wonderful partners and generous donors that we are able to continue to expand our reach to even more veterinary professionals on the front line to create change, and amplify our impact for the animals we love and care for, and to ensure a healthy future for generations to come.

And so we send a special thank you to Advance Queensland's Ignite Ideas Fund, The Robert Hicks Foundation as managed by Equity Trustees, Environmental Leadership Australia, Ben and Femke, John Sevier and Rebecca Gorman, and Sarah Brenan, among other individuals who shall remain unnamed but whose generosity is very much appreciated.

## VETERINARY SUPPORTERS



## PARTNERS



# TO OUR VOLUNTEERS

Our volunteers work across communications, media, fundraising, events and seminars, Volunteers staff our Board and advisory committees.

We know how hard vets and vet nurses work, often with limited resources and fewer staff than needed, as well balancing the demands of life! Much of what we've achieved this year is thanks to our volunteers who gift their time and energy regardless of these constraints. A special thank you to all of you.

We would also like to acknowledge the dedicated team of volunteers who worked over many hours to create and bring the Climate Care Program to life and enable it to launch earlier this year: Dr Jeremy Watson, Dr Mariane Morin, Jane Bindloss, Terry George, Dr Annaliese Johnson, and Dr Mila Kasby, just to name a few.

On behalf of the animals we all love and care for: Thank you.



# MESSAGE FROM OUR CHAIR

## Dr Jeannet Kessels

2023 was the hottest year on our planet in 125 000 years. Melting sea ice meant over 9000 Emperor penguin chicks, with their down feathering, perished in the Antarctic summer; another catastrophic impact on our precious animals.

Humanity has seven years to shape its response to the climate crisis, thus determining the future of all generations to come.

This will require effective action connecting the zones of science, politics and community life, a matrix through which Vets for Climate Action can provide strong leadership. I invite you to support VfCA in this journey, however you can.

The Board thanks Tara O'Connell for her enormous contribution to the development and consolidation of VfCA's strategy. Her expertise, commitment, focus and sheer hard work also enabled the success of VfCA's first major government grant, which is pivotal to our future success. Thank you Tara.

The Board welcomes Steff Goldring as our CEO after acting in the role for the last 5 months. Steff worked as VfCA's COO before this, and with me personally in the 12 months prior. As a wise, stable and experienced manager with a relentlessly positive drive, she engenders deep trust. Steff is a powerful advocate for a better world, where humanity can flourish and our animals are safe.

I congratulate the mighty Climate Care team: faithful volunteers who over three years have created the



innovative and world-leading Climate Care Program. CCP gathers the big picture 'Why' into a tangible 'How' for veterinary business.

This extraordinarily practical, on-point program educates our profession, harnessing the energy of in-clinic 'Climate Champions' to educate while driving practical change across energy, recycling, chemical use, procurement and more.

We are planning a formal launch of the Climate Care Program at my veterinary hospital in Springfield (Queensland) in March 2024 and you are all invited to celebrate this achievement!

Frontiers in Veterinary Science published a world-first Pathway to Net Zero for Vet Practice, by VfCA volunteers Watson, Klupiec, Bindloss and Morin. I have this printed in my folio to share wherever I can. Please do the same. Once again, thank you!

Our advocacy is growing, with Steff and our communications team producing numerous detailed submissions to federal and state government, also to be found on our website. A particular thanks to Janet Berry for her tireless writing efforts.



# MESSAGE FROM OUR CHAIR

cont'd

I had the privilege of staying on Janet's regenerative cattle property in Tasmania, an inspiring model for carbon sequestration alongside efficient beef production.

In August vets joined with doctors in Parliament House, Canberra, meeting with numerous MPs to highlight our deep concern about pending fracking in the Beetaloo Basin and associated Middle Arm Precinct development. If successful, these projects will substantially increase Australia's emissions through export at a time when, globally, renewables are the essential way forward. VfCA welcomes the Senate enquiry in response to our joint advocacy.

With sadness we farewelled key founding volunteer Dr Mike Nunn this year. Mike's scientific rigour, enthusiasm and drive for change were an inspiration to me, and I was privileged to speak with him soon after his major surgery. Even then Mike's passion was not dimmed. Vale Mike. We offer our condolences to his family.

This year has been one of consolidation for VfCA. We have experienced some growing pains, so have been driving improved structures, implemented to accommodate our vision and to ensure the safety of our organisation, in particular our volunteers and staff, who give so much.

We thank retiring board directors Angela Frimberger and Nick Williamson, and advisor Kelly Douglas, for their contribution to the board. As our founding Deputy Chair, the Board especially thanks Angela for her loyalty and continuing determination for VfCA's success.

Angela will continue to volunteer with VfCA - speaking with media and engaging with universities and internationally to drive collaboration on climate action across the veterinary sector.

Financially, VfCA has focussed on the completion of the Climate Care Program, a necessary but expensive exercise. CCP can now be developed as a social enterprise, achieving our purpose whilst strengthening our financial position. Your financial support remains pivotal to VfCA's viability, success and the future expansion of our work.

This year the Board and I have had the privilege of countless conversations, and numerous major presentations, most recently to 75 attendees at the Chief Vet Officers forum. I also presented to the Commonwealth Vet Association, with flow-on to become apparent over 2024.

While we apply razor focus to the work at hand, our spirits require us, again and again, to embrace the exquisite, the beautiful, the funny, generous, kind and connected; for us to find that place where we can experience sheer joy. We need these tools to carry us forward throughout our work. 'The times are urgent, let's slow down'. Akomolafe.

I thank you for your contributions to VfCA, and I encourage you to be creative in your ongoing support as we traverse these times, powerfully, together.

With kindest regards  
Jeannet

In 2019, floods in FNO killed over 600,000 cattle. Survivors died of cold exposure in the summer month of February.



# MESSAGE FROM OUR CEO

**Steff Goldring**

I acknowledge and thank our staff, Clare and Elise. We are a small team, driven by our love of animals, to make a real difference on the issue that has the biggest impact on their health and welfare: climate change. Both have been an incredible support to me, the Board, our Climate Champions and volunteers - going above and beyond to ensure VfCA's success. I add to this my thanks to our former team members Liz, Katie, Mel, Jesse and CEO Tara for their hard work setting VfCA up for success. A big thank you must also go to Jeremy Watson for his time, generosity, expertise and passionate support for our Climate Care Program.

And last but by no means least, thank you to Jeannet and the Board for their trust in me to lead Vets for Climate Action in the year ahead and for all their support over the course of the past year.

I'm delighted to share with you what we have achieved this year: a year that held some challenges and importantly, success with the launch of our Climate Care Program and pilot of the Rural & Regional Program - all of which you can read about in this Annual Report.

We have exciting plans for the year ahead. I invite you to support us in 2024.



As vets, vet nurses, vet technicians, receptionists, and animal carers you are on the front line of climate change. I know you are seeing the impacts of extreme weather events on our much-loved animals first hand - bushfire, floods, drought, extreme heat. I know you will continue to care for our animals over the hot and dry summer and the threats this brings. This is why I am so very proud to be the CEO of Vets for Climate Action and leading the amazing team of staff and volunteers.

I would like to send my thanks to our volunteers for their work over the year that has allowed VfCA's impact to grow. Thank you for answering my calls for assistance, for fronting the media, writing to our MPs, sharing your professional expertise, and lending your voice so we can be a voice for all animals. I feel privileged to represent and to be working with such generous, empathetic and caring people - genuine leaders in the profession and the Australian community. You make my job easier.

The Flying Fox or Friut Bat (Pteropus) is an endangered species. More than 23,000 were killed in far north Qld when temperatures were over 42°C.



# PROGRAM SPOTLIGHT



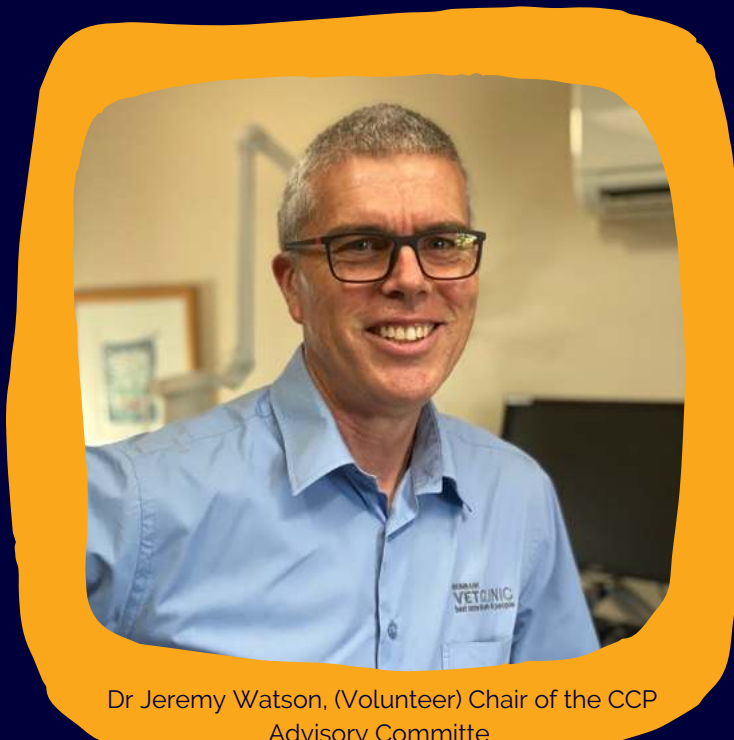
## Climate Care Program

After years of development and a successful pilot program last year, in March we launched the Climate Care Program: Australia's first carbon emission reduction program for the animal health sector to achieve Federal and State regulatory targets.

The Climate Care Program is an interactive digital toolkit designed to halve greenhouse gas emissions in vet hospitals, zoos and rescue facilities and work towards zero. Created by vets and vet nurses for veterinary teams, the Climate Care Program is realistic and workable in a busy veterinary practice.

This online Program comprises an introductory module and 6 self paced sequential content based modules, each addressing a different sustainability topic. It is a recognised professional development course with the relevant materials to make a credentialed course eligible for CPD.

We now have 40 veterinary practices subscribed to the Climate Care Program and we were thrilled to receive a grant through the Ignite Ideas Fund from Advance Queensland recognising the importance of the Program and to enable us to commercialise the CCP further.



Dr Jeremy Watson, (Volunteer) Chair of the CCP Advisory Committee

-  **Reduce your environmental impact**
-  **Motivate and educate your team**
-  **Help protect animal habitats**
-  **Reduce costs and add value**
-  **Attract and retain dedicated staff**
-  **Increase client loyalty**
-  **Networking opportunities**



# PROGRAM SPOTLIGHT



Climate Care Program

## CLIMATE CARE PROGRAM CONT'D

"Being part of this program has actually helped us to hire staff. That along with the benefits of water saving has been amazing!"

KELLY, PRACTICE MANAGER

"It's good to have a comprehensive plan for reducing our impact. It can save money, it can help staff morale and... it may make a difference for clients."

CATHERINE, VETERINARIAN

"(It's) a really good program. It's interactive, simplified and makes it really easy for busy working people. I am currently doing my diploma in vet nursing and it makes my environmentally sustainable workplace policies unit infinitely easier!" Gina, Vet Nurse Manager

GINA, VET NURSE MANAGER

We would also like to acknowledge and thank that dedicated team of volunteers who worked over many hours to create and bring the Program to life.

Following the launch, in July the Climate Care Program Advisory Committee was formed from a broad cross section of the veterinary profession to provide valuable feedback into content enhancement, marketing and business development for the CCP.

A special thanks to volunteer committee members Jo Sussex, Inkarrri Trumball-Ward, Louisa Farthing, Zali Brookes, Annaliese Johnson and Terry George for their time and commitment.

The CCP aligns with the key strategic objectives of Vets for Climate Action by:

- Reducing emissions of the veterinary sector
- Inspiring two thirds of the Australian population through their animal ownership that climate action is absolutely their business.
- Collaborating with all industry stakeholders and with the wider animal owning community is the key to successful climate action.

The CCP is an ambitious, practical approach to dealing with climate change and is gaining worldwide attention. We value the ongoing support from all VfCA members and in time you can be proud that your efforts established the veterinary profession as leaders in dealing with climate change, enhancing the current public perception that veterinary teams are committed to the long term health of all animals.



# PROGRAM SPOTLIGHT

## RURAL AND REGIONAL ENGAGEMENT PROGRAM

People in rural and regional communities are some of the hardest hit by the damaging effects of climate change. Recent years have seen bushfires and floods have devastating impacts on communities across Australia, with lives, properties, livelihoods and of course animals all at risk. Despite this, their voices have been underrepresented in the climate movement.

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. The Rural and Regional Program seeks to build this capacity by engaging with the veterinary and broader animal care community in rural and regional areas, increasing awareness of the impact of climate change on wildlife, domestic pets and livestock (and associated economies) and encouraging climate action.

2023 has built on the planning work undertaken last year, and seen significant progress. Dr. Elise Anderson joined the VfCA team part time in April as Regional Lead for the Rural and Regional Program. Elise has spent much of her life living and working in regional Australia, and has been involved in the planning and development stages of the program as a volunteer over the last 2 years.

With the development of the full Program Strategy Plan, the Rural and Regional Program launched its pilot program in April 2023. This is currently underway in the federal electorate of Nicholls, which encompasses a large area of north central and north east Victoria.



Dr Elise Anderson, Rural & Regional Program Lead

An important part of the pilot has been building connections with the veterinary community by visiting local vet clinics, learning about their experiences with and thoughts on climate change, and raising awareness of VfCA's work. Elise has also attended a number of events including Seymour Alternative Farming Expo, a climate leadership and jobs summit in Shepparton co-hosted by Environmental Leadership Australia (ELA) and federal Nationals MP for Nicholls Sam Birrell, and the inaugural careers event for veterinary students at Charles Sturt University.

2024 looks set to be another exciting year for the Rural and Regional Program, with planning underway for a week-long, intensive version set to take place in the electorate of Page in northern NSW in the first half of the year. We are also seeking funding for the development of an online Climate Change Advocacy and Leadership Module to complement the Climate Care Program, and ensure access to training and skills is available to members of the veterinary community in regional areas across Australia.

We continue to collaborate with aligned organisations, working side by side with groups such as ELA, Farmers for Climate Action and Canter for Climate to identify opportunities to work towards our shared goals.

# PROGRAM SPOTLIGHT

## COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Earlier this year, Clare Werbeloff was appointed as Programs Lead to provide support to our volunteers, and manage the Climate Care Program. She has been thrilled by the support offered by our passionate and driven volunteers who give their time, knowledge and expertise to bring about positive change.

Our volunteers have helped in so many different ways to achieve the goals of VfCA this year. Volunteers have staffed our stands at events such as the AVA Conference in Adelaide, Science Week in Queensland, The Vet Expo in Melbourne and market days in Sydney. Attendance at these events means we are able to grow industry awareness of the important work that VfCA is doing, as well as promote our first of its kind Climate Care Program to those inside and outside the veterinary profession.

Volunteers have also provided support for our monthly Masterclasses, which have been a great success. With volunteers providing everything from tech support to presenting, each month we welcome up to 50 attendees online, from various professions creating an open space for engaging and educational conversations. We have offered a variety of topics including the Carbon cost of Veterinary Anaesthesia, How our changing Climate is impacting animals and their carers and Horses and Heat. And, we already have an exciting Masterclasses Program lined up for next year.



Clare Werbeloff, Programs Lead

With thanks to our active Communications team, VfCA has written powerful submissions to state and federal government, which have garnered mention on the floor of NSW Parliament and centred the animals at the heart of the climate change conversation. We have also sent letters to newly elected MPs, state and Federal MPs Ministers and, with representatives from our board, we were also pleased to be joined by volunteers at the Health Day of Action in Canberra speaking to MPs and Senators at Parliament House.

Our volunteers have also spoken to media and written articles sharing their expertise and amplified the voice of animals.

Our volunteers are the lifeblood of our organisation and we are thankful to all those who give their time, knowledge and expertise to bring about positive change. We are excited to see what they can achieve in 2024!

# IMPACT AT A GLANCE

**5**

New climate change fact sheets

**9**

Masterclasses to our community

**10**

Submissions written to Federal and State inquiries

**12**

Veterinary and animal care events attended in 2023

Declining sea ice caused the loss of all emperor penguin chicks from 4 out of 5 colonies in Antarctica 2022



# 40 Climate Care Program Practices

100+ Hits in the Media



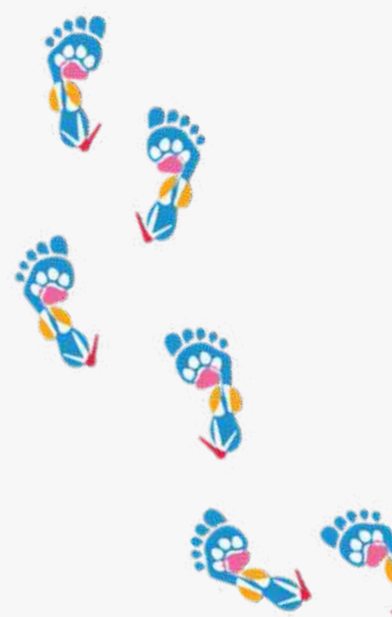
Social media has grown to over 3400 followers



The Green Sea Turtle (*Chelonia mydas*) is at risk from climate change as warming sands cause a higher than usual ratios of female hatchlings

# FINANCIAL SUMMARY

Total Income and Expenditure for the year ended 30 June 2023.



## INCOME

Donations	\$201,375
Grants	\$107,205
CCP Subscriptions	\$21,618
CCP Sponsorship	\$20,000
Other Income	\$890
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>\$351,088</b>

## EXPENSES

Operating Expenses	\$126,190
Marketing & Events	\$17,071
Wages and Salaries	\$363,013
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$506,274</b>



# WHAT'S NEXT

We will continue our important work in the new year. We will continue to **educate** the veterinary profession and Australian community about the impact of climate change on the animals we love and care for. We will continue to **collaborate** with the veterinary profession, animal care community and like-minded, values-aligned organisations because we cannot drive change on our own. We will continue to **advocate** on behalf of the animals to drive policy change.

We will continue to lead the veterinary profession to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions through our Climate Care Program. We aim to have 350 Vet Clinics involved by the end of 2025, including in New Zealand. We will update the existing Modules to ensure they are current, and enhance the user experience. We will integrate a carbon calculator to help clinics measure their reductions. We will also develop the yearly value propositions to ensure practices can continue their net zero journey through to 2050 and beyond!

We will continue to host online events and Masterclasses; attend and speak at industry events, secure media coverage and share educational resources. We also will engage with industry suppliers to reach net zero targets by 2035.

We will host a week-long, intensive Rural & Regional event in northern NSW in the first half of the year to engage with our Rural & Regional veterinary colleagues. We will develop an online Climate Change Advocacy and Leadership Module to complement the Climate Care Program to ensure access to training and skills for members of the veterinary community in regional areas across Australia.

We will focus on four areas for government action:

1. 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.
2. End destruction of native vegetation, including old growth forests and increase plantings of native vegetation and timber.

3. Strengthen environmental and wildlife protections afforded by the EPBC Act 1999, including incorporating a climate trigger.
4. 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.

We invite you to join us in 2024!



Thought to be extinct, the Victorian Grassland Earless Dragon (*Tympanocryptis pinguicolla*) is still critically endangered but with the right action, it will survive

# PLAY A KEY ROLE IN OUR SUCCESS



## DONATE

Vets for Climate Action is a DGR-registered charity. This means every donation over \$2 is tax deductible.

Donations enable us to continue our vital work, attend events, employ experienced staff and maintain our programs .

We are also an Environmental Partner with 1% for the Planet.

## PARTNER WITH US

Be part of our vision (it's big!) and put your product, service or innovation in front of Australia's veterinary and animal care industry.

Business supporters can help us tackle the biggest health and welfare threat to the animals we love and care for: climate change.

## VOLUNTEER

Our wonderful volunteers are responsible for our success.

Volunteering for VfCA gives you the chance to take meaningful climate action and learn new skills at the same time.

Volunteering can take many forms, and there are so many opportunities to put your skills and passions to use with us.

Volunteering can look like facilitating seminars, running social media campaigns, writing media stories, educating clinics, talking to veterinary professionals at conferences, and so much more



# BOARD OF DIRECTORS



**Chair**  
Dr Jeannet Kessels



**Director**  
Dr Helen Scott-Orr  
AM PSM



**Director**  
Professor Mark  
Howden  
Nobel Laureate



**Director**  
Dr Jonathan  
Happold



**Indigenous Advisor**  
Ben Tyler



**Patron**  
Nobel Laureate  
Professor Peter  
Doherty, AC FRS FMedSci

# STAFF



**CEO**  
**Company Secretary**  
Stefany Goldring



**Programs Lead & Community Engagement**  
Clare Werbeloff



**Rural & Regional Lead**  
Dr Elise Anderson



**Chair, Climate Care Program Advisory Committee (Volunteer)**  
Dr Jeremy Watson



**Dr Mike Nunn**  
Founding Member & Volunteer

# WITH THANKS TO...



**Former Deputy Chair**  
Dr Angela  
Frimberger



**Former Treasurer**  
Nick Williamson



**Former Legal Advisor**  
Kelly Douglas

**Vets for Climate Action mobilises the  
veterinary profession and  
broader animal care community  
to tackle the climate crisis  
within and beyond our sector.**



**[www.vfca.org.au](http://www.vfca.org.au)**



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