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# AUSTRALIAN VETERINARY JOURNAL

**STRONG LEADERSHIP  
KEY TO WORKING THROUGH  
THE PANDEMIC**

**SNAKE VENOM AND  
CORAL PREDATORS**

**WORKER WELLBEING  
AND COVID-19**

**BRACHYCEPHALIC AIRWAY  
COMPLICATIONS**

**IMPROVING OVSYNCH**

**ANIMAL WELFARE  
IMPACTS OF  
AIR TRANSPORT**



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# Inspiring the veterinary profession for climate action

The group Veterinarians for Climate Action (VfCA) formed in late 2019 to inspire the veterinary profession to advocate for and achieve climate action – both within the veterinary industry and in the wider community.

Veterinarian, Nobel Laureate and climate advocate, Professor Peter Doherty has recently come on board as the group's patron. VfCA has also had the opportunity to meet with Dr Mark Schipp, Australia's Chief Veterinary Officer and Dr Sam Hamilton, Director of Epidemiology and One Health.

Queensland veterinarian Dr Jeannet Kessels who owns two veterinary hospitals on Brisbane's southern outskirts, is the Founder and Chair of VfCA. Dr Kessels has been thrilled by the support shown to the group so far. "A recent BBVet Australia survey in January 2020, revealed that

over 80% of veterinarians think global warming is real, and believe there will be harmful impacts from climate change. So, in setting up VfCA, it has quickly become evident that there is a large group of vets who are deeply concerned about this cause and want the profession to do more. Vets are scientists but we also have that warmth - we are great communicators and can explain complex problems simply", said Dr Kessels.

Dr Kessels explains that the group has been founded on the belief that veterinarians, vet nurses and those associated with the veterinary profession are deeply embedded within their local communities and are regarded by the general population as being knowledgeable, empathetic and trustworthy. Building on this trusted advisor status, veterinary professionals

have a unique and powerful opportunity to change Australia's attitude to climate change and help enact policy change in this area.

"VfCA is a voice for all animals; we want to be putting the guard rails at the top of the cliff not being the ambulance at the bottom. We've just lost a billion wildlife in the bushfires, an absolutely devastating occurrence exacerbated by climate change. Will there be another billion lost next year? A half million livestock were lost in 2019 through flood and cold exposure, in our tropical north. Are we going to accept all this as the new norm?"

"Climate change is going to affect all livestock, wildlife and our domestic animals through changes in disease patterns, already being seen, increased temperatures affecting welfare and survival, and extreme weather events

**Climate change is going to affect all livestock, wildlife and our domestic animals**



including drought and floods. In recognising a climate emergency for animals through VfCA, veterinarians can positively advocate for change on behalf of all animals”, said Dr Kessels.

VfCA are also establishing a twelve-month Climate Smart sustainability program for

veterinary practices. The group is also looking at environmental practices such as reducing use of plastics, incorporating the use of solar and newer concepts such of electric vehicles.

“Now is the time to focus on the climate emergency, the next decade is crucial in

terms of progressing climate action. If we don’t universally mobilise to make substantial changes to our behaviour now, the changes to our planet are completely irreversible”, said Dr Kessels.

**For further information on VfCA, visit [vfca.org.au](http://vfca.org.au).**

**Dr Phil Tucak**