

Annual Report

2022 - 2023



Acknowledgements

Wildlife Health Australia acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of Country throughout Australia. We respectfully acknowledge Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' continuing connection to land, sea, wildlife and community. We pay our respects to them and their cultures, and to their Elders past and present.

Join Us

Wildlife Health Australia (WHA) aims to link, inform and support people and organisations who work with or have an interest in wildlife health across Australia and the Indo-Pacific through technical advice, facilitation, communications and professional support. By becoming a member and joining our community, you join a network of stakeholder with an interest in wildlife health.

Follow the link to subscribe: www.wildlifehealthaustralia.com.au

WHA would like to thank its members, supporters and employees for their dedication and commitment to the ongoing development of Australia's wildlife health system.



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Our Purpose

Wildlife Health Australia (WHA) is the independent coordinating body for wildlife health in Australia. It provides leadership through strong partnerships for national action on wildlife health to protect and enhance the natural environment, biodiversity, economy and animal and human health.

WHA's activities include managing the national wildlife disease surveillance program, facilitating investigations into disease incidents and emerging wildlife health issues, and providing input into national and regional strategies for wildlife health and exotic disease emergency preparedness.

WHA coordinates a diverse range of stakeholders to deliver wildlife health surveillance, through partnerships with over 45 government and non-government agencies including environment, health and biosecurity agencies, zoo-based hospitals, sentinel veterinary and university clinics and pathology departments.

The health of Australia's wildlife, animals in agriculture and human population are all inextricably linked. Many diseases that can affect humans and livestock often emerge in wildlife, and they are increasing. Effective surveillance of wildlife health is therefore vital to human health, agriculture, the environment and biodiversity in Australia.

Wildlife can also act as indicators of environmental health where other factors are at play, such as toxins or chemical contamination. In monitoring wildlife health, WHA also indirectly monitors the health of ecosystems, domestic animals, people and communities.

The presence or absence of disease in animals can also impact Australia's trade-status with overseas partners. To avoid potentially devastating trade shocks, we need to understand the potential for disease transmission across species and how to prevent exposure of domestic animals to the risks.

We also need proven, ongoing, streamlined processes for surveillance and emergency preparedness in wildlife. This makes it vital to align incentives to connect wildlife surveillance and research with decision-making and action nationally.

The challenges of sustaining healthy wildlife in Australia will become greater with changing land use, climate change and as societal practices bring wildlife, livestock and people into closer contact. Now, more than ever, there is the need for coordinated national action on wildlife health.

Healthy wildlife, healthy Australia

Our mission

Lead national action
on wildlife health
to protect and
enhance the
natural
environment,
biodiversity,
economy and
animal and human
health through
strong
partnerships.



Chair Introduction

I was pleased to be appointed Chair of Wildlife Health Australia in January 2023, and immediately realised what an amazing organisation we have. The interactions between members, governments and the wonderful and talented staff are what makes WHA so special – indeed, unique.

Working alongside the Board members and staff, I look forward to continuing to realise WHA's strategic objectives in leading national action on wildlife health, promoting biodiversity conservation, supporting the economy, and promoting animal and human health. The rapid development of One Health has had special significance for us, as we do what it suggests should be done – bridge health of wildlife, livestock, pets, people – and ultimately planet.

With the CEO and COO being fully involved with aspects of the World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH), it was not surprising, but still pleasing that in June 2023, WHA achieved official designation from the World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH) as a Collaborating Centre for Wildlife Health Risk Management in the Indo-Pacific.

This new international collaborating centre will ensure wildlife health is integrated into One Health decision-making across the Indo-Pacific region to benefit public health, biosecurity, animal health, food security and biodiversity in its many forms.

COVID-19 has taught us that by identifying and managing risks to wildlife health, and working collaboratively across disciplines and neighbouring countries, we can improve Australia's prevention and mitigation capabilities for current and emerging animal diseases, especially those with pandemic potential.

I'd like to thank Rupert and the team for embracing a period of change, rapid growth, and increasing regional and international presence, whilst sustaining the vitally important national networks, collaborations, and information-sharing that underpins the strength and value of our organisation.

Finally, I would also like to recognise the significant contribution of all our members in driving our vision forward, and thank all Australian governments who provide the core funding support that will help us realise an exciting new vision for wildlife health in Australia.



The Board



Peter Bridgewater	Chairperson
Cameron Bell	Funding Member, Agriculture Victoria
Andrew Pearce	Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry Representative
Sharon Kolek	Funding Member, Office of the Chief Veterinary Officer
Nicola Craddock	Zoo and Aquarium Association Representative
Leanne Wicker	Wildlife Disease Association Australasia Representative
Rodney Vile	Invited Member
Michelle Campbell-Ward	Individual Member
Julien Grosmaire	Australian Veterinary Conservation Biologists Representative

Not pictured:

James Newman	Invited Member
Sarah Britton	Animal Health Representative - NSW Chief Veterinary Officer Resigned 20th April 2023

CEO Introduction

The 2022-2023 year has been an exciting one characterised by growth, change and innovation.

We pride ourselves on our governance and in 2023 we welcomed a new, and our first, independent chair, Professor Peter Bridgewater. Peter brings an impressive body of experience to the role including appointments as Chief Executive of the Australian Nature Conservation Agency, Director of the National Parks and Wildlife Service, Secretary for UNESCO's Man and the Biosphere Programme and Chief Scientist for the UK's Nature Conservation Council. Already Peter's impact is being felt as a strategic thinker and leader with a deep understanding of global conservation initiatives and the need for a more wholistic, One Health-type approach, both now and into the future. A visionary leader.

We were also enhanced as an organisation through the addition of new Board members and retention of experienced and ably qualified members. Thank you Cameron Bell, Sarah Britton, Andrew Pearce, Leanne Wicker, Nicola Craddock, Julien Grosmaire, Michelle Campbell-Ward, Rodney Vile, James Newman and Sharon Kolek for your commitment and wise council.

Operationally, our focus was progression of WildPLAN, our strategic vision for wildlife health in Australia. We began our journey in building two way trusted partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people through formation of a committee to progress our first-ever Reconciliation Action Plan (page 17). This is an important area for us and the country. We need to reach out and to listen.

In the Environment area we assisted in development of Australia's first national disease risk assessment – the Koala Disease Risk Analysis (page 38). This is a significant contribution. The protocols and approaches developed can be used as a model of best practise to support the response to management of health and disease issues in any wildlife species. Development of the DRA was a national effort, with many of our members central to the process: well done to everyone involved.

WILDDeST (page 13) was launched and is a world first. The tool will help Australian governments navigate the challenges of wildlife incident response in what is an increasingly complex world. As well as our usual role in provision of support for biosecurity agencies as part of emergency preparedness and responses, our thoughts this year also increasingly turned to the natural hazards, including bushfires, and trying to better understanding our role. WildPLAN provides priorities and this will, increasingly, become an area of focus for us and the country in future years.

Well done, Tiggy (Tiggy Grillo, our National Coordinator), who was recognised with an AM in the King's Birthday Honours List for 'significant service to conservation through education, research and leadership roles', and, finally, thank you to the entire WHA team for your committed and character-filled approach to making this year a success. All this happens because of you.





*“The 2022 - 2023 year has been
characterised by growth, change
and innovation.”*

Rupert Woods,
CEO

Strategic Areas of Focus 2021 - 2025



A robust, coordinated wildlife health surveillance system that drives improvements to Australia's biodiversity, trade, human health, animal health and wildlife health.

Surveillance

Objectives and Deliverables

A robust, coordinated wildlife health surveillance system that drives improvements to Australia's biodiversity, trade, human health, animal health and wildlife health. This is achieved through:

1. An expanded national wildlife health coordination system for wildlife disease surveillance and reporting.
2. Rapid, effective and efficient capture, management and sharing of wildlife health information, integrated with relevant data sources.

An expanded national information system for wildlife health, with an increased focus on: Wildlife health and disease issues impacting upon human health.

1. Information on antimicrobial resistance in Australian native wildlife.
2. Disease impact on conservation, biodiversity and ecosystems for wildlife.
3. Use of wildlife as bio-sentinels for environmental pollutants, pesticides and heavy metals.
4. Wildlife as indicators of ecosystems health.

Progress

The foundation of Australia's wildlife health surveillance system is supported by core funding. Opportunities for future expansion will be possible through the WHA 'One Health' program.

The sentinel surveillance program has continued to expand over the last few years as new opportunities for sentinel clinic participants are identified. These clinics help to fill identified gaps (geographic or species) in the surveillance network. WHA now has 45 surveillance partners across our programs. Information collected from the surveillance programs is analysed and reported on a regular basis e.g. wildlife health reports in Animal Health Surveillance Quarterly and quarterly Wildlife Health and Intelligence Reports to Animal Health Committee (AHC), along with more specific reports such as Australian Bat Lyssavirus (ABLV) Bat Stats.

Input into national surveillance activities this year included contribution to the National Animal Health Surveillance Plan for Japanese encephalitis, during the Australian outbreak response (see Emergencies page 13).

Objectives and Deliverables

Wildlife health management is integrated within national One Health and conservation strategies, including planning, governance and multi-sectoral information sharing.

Expert advice on the impact on Australian wildlife health of climate change, habitat loss and other significant environmental threats.

A national picture of Australia's wildlife health through linking and harmonising health information systems.

Expert wildlife health guidance is integrated within threatened species planning and recovery.

Coordinated national response to priority wildlife health issues, including iconic species such as koalas, orange-bellied parrots, and frogs.

Progress

Wildlife health management and guidance is integrated within threatened species planning and recovery. This year WHA contributed to the review of the Australian Government chytrid Threat Abatement Plan (TAP), made an additional submission to the inquiry into Australia's Faunal Extinction Crisis, and a key highlight was the completion of the updated version of the **National Koala Disease Risk Analysis** (KDRA). In addition, as part of the consultation process for the proposed Australian Centre for Disease Control (CDC), WHA continues to highlight that the health of humans, domestic and wild animals, plants and ecosystems are closely linked and interdependent. Therefore, WHA recommends One Health principles be the cornerstone of CDC design and governance, whereby human health is safeguarded by also understanding, promoting, protecting and monitoring environmental and animal health. WHA also presented at the IUCN Environmental Law Colloquium and National Koala Conference.



WHA is an active trusted and key advisor about wildlife in Australia's emergency system.

Objectives and Deliverables

Agreed national standards for triage, care and rehabilitation of wildlife affected by emergency events.

Communicated protocols and guidance on best-practice in wildlife welfare during emergencies.

A national wildlife bushfires and emergency preparedness focus group to improve communication, coordination and progression of issues of mutual concern between government and non-government stakeholders.

Veterinarians, first responders and wildlife carers can effectively contribute to all-hazard emergencies affecting wildlife.

Progress

Through the WHA 'One Health' program, a Program Manager has been engaged to progress elements of the strategic vision. The 'One Health Investigation Fund' (OHIF) is administered by the Program Manager and bolsters support for multi-sector collaborative field, laboratory, and epidemiological investigations into selected wildlife disease events and issues in Australia. Projects supported through the OHIF this year include the development of a tool for evaluating the role of climate change in wildlife infectious disease epidemiology, and investigation of genetic causes for flying fox cleft palate syndrome.

Scientific and technical advice to support national emergency animal disease responses are also supported through core funding and bolstered by the 'One Health' program. This year, this included input to support decision-making during the response to the Japanese Encephalitis outbreak in Australia. In terms of Emergency Animal Disease (EAD) preparedness, WHA continues to provide technical advice regarding how the ongoing outbreak of High Pathogenicity Avian Influenza (HPAI) overseas could impact Australia, developed an **information sheet** on Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD) in relation to Australian native species, feral and zoo animals, and participated in the working group for the update of the AUSVETPLAN Wild Animal Response Strategy.

Other highlights for this year include the rollout of the **WILDDeST** decision support tool to facilitate decision-making by government agencies investigating or managing wildlife health incidents.

Coordination and Collaboration

WHA leads, coordinates and collaboratively partners to deliver a nationally integrated wildlife health system of Australia.

Objectives and Deliverables

WHA is the World Animal Health Organisation (WOAH) international collaborating centre on wildlife health and biodiversity for Australia and the region.

An International Collaborating Centre on the Health of Antarctic Wildlife that incorporates the Australian Antarctic Territory (AAT) into Australia's national wildlife health system.

Progress

Through the 'One Health' program, WHA has now been endorsed as a **WOAH Collaborating Centre** in the area of Wildlife Disease Risk Management, specialising in drivers of emerging risk for Australia and the Indo-Pacific region, led by the Program Manager for International One Health, a senior project officer and project officer.

A WOAH Regional Wildlife Health Network was established, and Australia (via WHA) provides the secretariat for this new group. Australia continues to chair the WOAH Pacific Wildlife Health Network, supported by the multi-country secretariat which includes New Zealand and Fiji. More information about this network and others in the Asia-Pacific region can be found [here](#).

A national strategic research agenda that creates positive outcomes for wildlife health in Australia.

Objectives and Deliverables

A prioritised national wildlife health research strategy, built collaboratively with all stakeholders.

Collaborative, interdisciplinary wildlife health research that uses multiple data sources.

Shared research findings that maximise positive outcomes and iteratively inform the national strategic research agenda.

Progress

WHA continues to foster and maintain current interdisciplinary research-based networks and partnerships in support of core WHA areas of focus, including the national surveillance system, and wildlife health policy advice, through the Universities Focus Group and university surveillance partners.

This year WHA contributed to national research groups to ensure inclusion of wildlife health considerations and related research, including via participation in National Environment and Community Biosecurity Research, Development and Extension Strategy (NECBRDES) cross-sector working group and Australian Wildlife Health Initiative. The Australian Wildlife Health Initiative presented the 10-year National Plan for Wildlife Health research, development and extension (RD&E) to stakeholders this year (see more [here](#)).

Funding is being sought for additional staff to support this strategic vision objective. An important part of the new role will be to secure funding to progress the strategic deliverables.

Capacity Building

Increased capacity of Australia to protect and promote wildlife health.

Objectives and Deliverables

A rapid response network in all states and territories to:

- investigate wildlife disease events
- provide expert cross-disciplinary guidance on best practice responses.

Improved skills for wildlife carers through training programs and evidence-based standards for wildlife rehabilitation.

Enhanced technical advice on wildlife health to the nation, through the employment of wildlife epidemiologists, ecologists and public health experts.

Wildlife carer groups are brought into the national wildlife health system.

Progress

Through the WHA 'One Health' program, a Program Manager for Capacity Building has been engaged to progress elements of the strategic vision.

This year, activities have focused on engagement with feral animal disease experts and feral animal managers to explore and identify how best to support Australia's freedom from disease claims and early warning and management of potential risks posed by feral animal populations.

Engagement activities this year focused on gaining a deeper understanding and connectivity with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders in relation to wildlife health.

Additional engagement activities aimed to broaden WHA's stakeholder network in the environment and human health sectors.

Two way trusted partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, organisations and peoples.

**Aboriginal
and Torres
Strait Islander
Partnerships**

Objectives and Deliverables

Mutually beneficial relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations that have close ties to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

Enhanced wildlife health surveillance and support for ecosystem health, through collaborative work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations.

Increased awareness across the WHA membership base of wildlife issues that are of concern for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander project officers employed to assist WHA build trusted partnerships.

Progress

Under the One Health Program, a Program Manager has been appointed to lead the engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander partnerships. Focusing on our future, one of our most important goals is to create and sustain two-way trusted partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, organisations and peoples through our developing Reconciliation Action Plan, listening to their insights and advice. This year, a Reconciliation Action Plan Committee was formed and a Draft WHA Reflect Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) was developed.





Awareness

Increased awareness of wildlife health, One Health and ecosystem health.

Objectives and Deliverables	Progress
<p>Impactful, compelling messages and data that demonstrate how wildlife health is crucial to human and ecosystem health.</p> <p>A national plan for Australian wildlife health and wellbeing, updated every two years, with national, state and territory recommendations.</p>	<p>WHA has successfully increased its presence on social media in 2022 and 2023, through the creation of profiles on Twitter, LinkedIn and Instagram.</p> <p>To 1 July 2023, WHA had 631 Twitter followers, 2,771 LinkedIn followers, and 897 Instagram followers.</p> <p>WHA also attended and presented at a number of webinars, workshops, training sessions and conferences this year to engage with key stakeholders and raise awareness of wildlife health.</p> <p>WHA will be streamlining public-facing reporting, and an Annual Operating Plan has now been incorporated into the annual planning documentation. The WHA Annual Operating Plan for 2023-2024 can be found on the WHA website.</p>



Programs and Projects



Administration of Australia's general wildlife health surveillance system

WHA, working with Australian governments, administers Australia's general wildlife health surveillance system, and collects and disseminates information on wildlife disease events from across Australia.

The system relies on the detection, submission, investigation and reporting of sick and dead free-living (both native and feral species) and captive wildlife. Through WHA's focus groups and programs and projects, wildlife health information is collected into a national database, the electronic Wildlife Health Information System (eWHIS) (see page 21 for more information). Information is submitted by WHA surveillance partners, including state and territory WHA Coordinators and WHA Environment Representatives, veterinarians at zoo-based wildlife hospitals, sentinel veterinary clinics and universities, as well as wildlife rehabilitators, researchers, other wildlife health professionals and members of the public.

Key components of Australia's general wildlife health surveillance system include:

- ❑ WHA Coordinators and WHA Environment Representatives
- ❑ The Sentinel Wildlife Disease Surveillance Program
- ❑ A web-enabled national database of wildlife health information (eWHIS).

It is estimated that partners in Australia's general surveillance system see over **60,000** wildlife cases each year, from which **800 - 1,000** events covering over **200** species fit the criteria for capture and are included in eWHIS.



- Wildlife Health Surveillance and Intelligence Reports to Chief Veterinary Officers (CVOs) and Environment agencies are produced each quarter.
- A wildlife health report in each issue of Animal Health Surveillance Quarterly.
- Wildlife health surveillance summary contributed to Animal Health in Australia annually.
- *Ad hoc* support to government agencies and non-government organisations in response to over **80** wildlife disease events and issues.

WHA administers Australia's national database of wildlife health information (eWHIS), which provides a national repository of wildlife health events. Data are reported by a variety of sources, including government agencies, zoos based wildlife hospitals, sentinel veterinary clinics, universities, wildlife rehabilitators, and a range of other organisations and individuals via more than **45** surveillance partner agencies and organisations, and moderated by WHA staff. WHA maintains and regularly reviews data sharing and security procedures.

Surveillance information captured through Australia's general wildlife health surveillance system allows WHA to support Australia's Chief Veterinary Officer (CVO), Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF), Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (DCCEEW), Animal Health Committee (AHC), Animal Health Australia (AHA), and Australia's states and territories to better prepare for and protect Australia against the adverse effects of wildlife diseases.

WHA ensures that nationally collated wildlife health information is available to inform decision-making and policy development, for the management of emergency disease incidents, for international reporting, and to protect Australia's environment, biodiversity, animal and human health, trade and economy. Summary reports on a selection of wildlife disease and mortality events recorded in eWHIS are published quarterly through the National Animal Health Information Program (NAHIP) in each issue of Animal Health Surveillance Quarterly (AHSQ). WHA also provides information to help fulfil Australia's reporting requirements to WOA. H.

Requests for access to data in eWHIS may be submitted to WHA for specific projects e.g. for use in research projects, disease risk assessments or publications. Requests are managed according to the **WHA Data Management Policy**, and approval for use of the information is obtained from individual data submitters.

Over **870** wildlife disease events, that met agreed criteria for reporting, were captured in the national eWHIS database.

eWHIS data utilised, with appropriate permission and acknowledgement, in support of assessing the efficacy of the wild bird general surveillance program, as part of National Avian Influenza Wild Birds (NAIWB) special projects.

WHA Coordinators

The WHA Coordinator Group provides a framework to identify, coordinate, discuss and report wildlife disease information into eWHIS. Each of Australia's state and territory agricultural agencies have a WHA Coordinator, appointed by their respective state or territory CVOs or in the case of Australian Antarctic Territory, by the Director of the Australian Antarctic Division. The WHA Coordinators provide a primary point of contact for reporting wildlife disease events for each state or territory and also ensure that their CVOs are kept informed of any national wildlife health issues or developments. Wildlife disease events investigated through state and territory agricultural or environmental agencies are entered directly into eWHIS by the WHA Coordinators.

To further promote collaborative links in the investigation and management of wildlife health, representatives from each jurisdiction's environment agency, WHA Environment Representatives, are included as part of Australia's wildlife disease surveillance system. Each WHA Environment Representative works closely with their respective WHA Coordinator and ensures a second point of contact in the jurisdiction.

Alongside the WHA Coordinators, the Group includes representatives from DAFF, Department of Health and Aged Care (DoHAC), the Australian Registry of Wildlife Health, CSIRO Australian Centre for Disease Preparedness (ACDP), Northern Australian Quarantine Strategy (NAQS) and Animal Health Australia (AHA).

The national surveillance program is primarily funded through a cost-shared model with funding from DAFF and all Australian state and territory governments. In addition, the program is supported by an estimated additional \$5.6M per year in-kind from participating agencies and their laboratories.

Sentinel Wildlife Disease Surveillance Program

The Zoo Based Surveillance Program, the Sentinel Clinic Surveillance Program, and the University Based Surveillance Program, are now coordinated as a collective group by WHA. This surveillance program captures information on free-ranging and rehabilitation wildlife cases from around the country. Each participating organisation has one or more surveillance coordinators; a total of **123** coordinators have been trained by WHA to select and enter cases directly into eWHIS. In addition to data entry, surveillance coordinators are brought together via four program meetings annually. The program continues to capture useful data, while also facilitating communication between program participants and the WHA Coordinators.

The **Zoo Based Surveillance Program**, a collaboration between WHA and the Zoo and Aquarium Association (ZAA), was established in 2010 and includes **ten** zoo-based veterinary hospitals seeing free-ranging wildlife. Over **3,300** records from **250** different species have been entered by the zoos since the program began.

The **Sentinel Clinic Surveillance Program** commenced in 2014 and now includes **11** key wildlife veterinary clinics that have a high wildlife caseload or that expand the geographic and species coverage of the surveillance system.

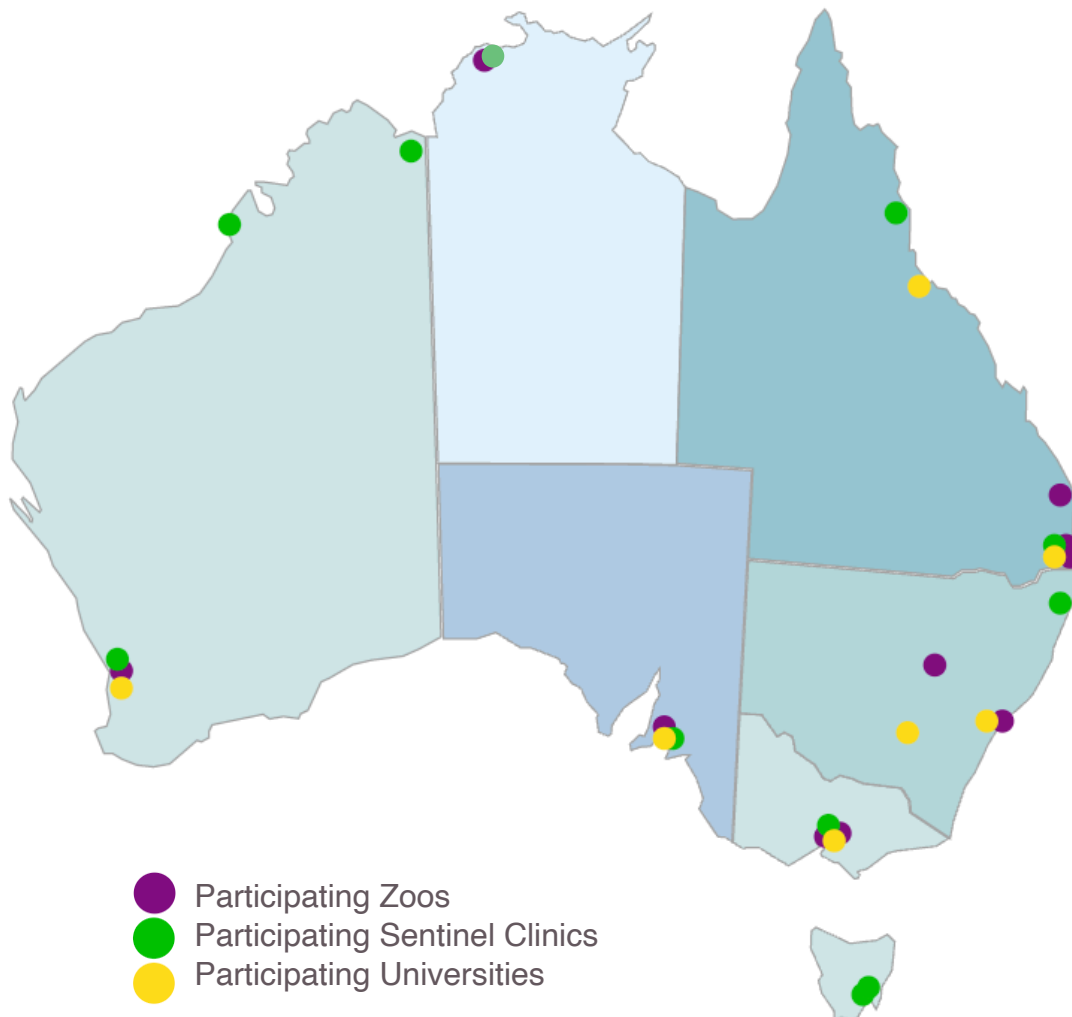
The university sector's involvement into WHA's wildlife health surveillance system further facilitates the direct linkage of recognised experts working within Australia's universities with the national framework and wildlife practitioners.



An article “**Partnerships for wildlife conservation**” promoting the important work carried out by the zoos involved in the program was published in collaboration with ZAA to mark World Wildlife Day on 3rd March 2023.

The information provided through this surveillance program is used to better understand disease threats to biodiversity, human health and livestock, and contributes to our national picture of wildlife health. This is an invaluable surveillance effort providing data that may not be otherwise available.

The Sentinel Wildlife Disease Program Network



Organisations in the Surveillance Program saw over **63,000** free-ranging wildlife cases and made over **350** new eWHIS entries this year. The program welcomed a new sentinel clinic in January 2023, The Ark Animal Hospital in Darwin, which expands our caseload in northern Australia.

The Sentinel Wildlife Disease Program			
Zoo Based Surveillance Program	Sentinel Clinic Surveillance Program	University Based Surveillance Program	
Ten participating zoos	11 key wildlife veterinary clinics	Three universities	Four universities
Seeing over 27,000 free-ranging wildlife cases every year	Seeing over 35,000 free-ranging wildlife cases every year	That joined the core surveillance program between 2016 and 2020	That contribute to regular meetings with WHA
Perth Zoo, WA	Adelaide Koala & Wildlife Centre	The University of Melbourne	James Cook University
Sea World, Qld	The Ark Animal Hospital, Darwin	The University of Queensland	The University of Adelaide
Taronga Zoo, NSW	Bonorong Wildlife Hospital, Hobart	Murdoch University	The University of Sydney
Taronga Western Plains Zoo, NSW	Boongarry Veterinary Services, Cairns		Charles Sturt University
Territory Wildlife Park, NT	Broome Veterinary Hospital		
Zoos SA, SA	Byron Bay Wildlife Hospital		
Australia Zoo Wildlife Hospital, Qld	Kimberley Vet Centre, Kununurra		
Currumbin Wildlife Sanctuary, Qld	Kingston Animal Hospital, Hobart		
Healesville Sanctuary, Vic	Lort Smith Animal Hospital, Melbourne		
Melbourne Zoo, Vic	RSPCA QLD Wildlife Hospital, Brisbane		
	WA Wildlife, Perth		

Universities Focus Group

Members of WHA who are affiliated with Australia's universities and research institutions make up a significant component of the WHA network. The Universities Focus Group was formed in 2008 to provide a forum to enhance the contributions that this sector makes to wildlife and biosecurity.

The group acts as a focus point to improve communication and coordination around Australian wildlife health, primarily in the areas of research, education, training, capacity-building and foresight. The group meets regularly to share information and discuss issues of mutual concern as "Hot Topics", which promotes discussion on emerging and challenging wildlife health issues.

WHA also continues activities in a number of other important areas of research and knowledge including scanning, analysis and collating and providing information and intelligence to stakeholders. In 2022-2023, WHA also provided representatives to the Australian Wildlife Health Institute Initiative Advisory Committee and Working Group to help bring a national perspective to discussions by these groups.

The Universities Focus Group discussed these topics this year: "Japanese encephalitis virus and wild birds and other Australian wildlife" and "the Australian Wildlife Health Institute Initiative".

Bat Health Focus Group

The Bat Health Focus Group uses a collaborative, One Health approach to consider bat health issues within the broader context of biosecurity, public health, domestic animal health, and environmental impacts in Australia.

Members are from a range of organisations including Australian and state and territory government departments of agriculture, public health and environment, ACDP, universities, the Australasian Bat Society and the Australian Speleological Federation. There is a broad range of expertise across the group including veterinarians, biologists, ecologists, virologists, epidemiologists and bat carers.

Working with the Bat Health Focus Group and WHA Coordinators, WHA maintains a national dataset of Australian bat lyssavirus (ABLV) testing. Summary reports of ABLV testing are provided in AHSQ and published every six months in a dedicated publication 'ABLV Bat Stats'. WHA produces a monthly 'Bat News' e-newsletter of media and publications relating to bat health, with the aim of raising awareness and to counter misinformation about diseases associated with bats.



The Bat Health Focus Group provides technical input to the development of national emergency plans and public health guidelines, and has produced **personal protective equipment (PPE) information for bat handlers**. Sub-groups are regularly formed for specific projects, for example to conduct a **disease risk assessment for SARS-CoV-2 transmission from humans to bats**, and currently for developing public messaging guidelines for government media agencies.

Expert advice and representation

WHA proactively supported and/or responded to **163** requests for information, including **two** queries relating to wildlife and Japanese Encephalitis, **nine** relating to Foot-and-Mouth disease, **80** relating to avian influenza (double the number of avian influenza queries in 2021-22), additional to information provided as part of ongoing wildlife disease investigations. WHA has also responded to and/or provided submissions to **74** state/territory, national and/or international queries, request for input, reviews and/or public consultations.

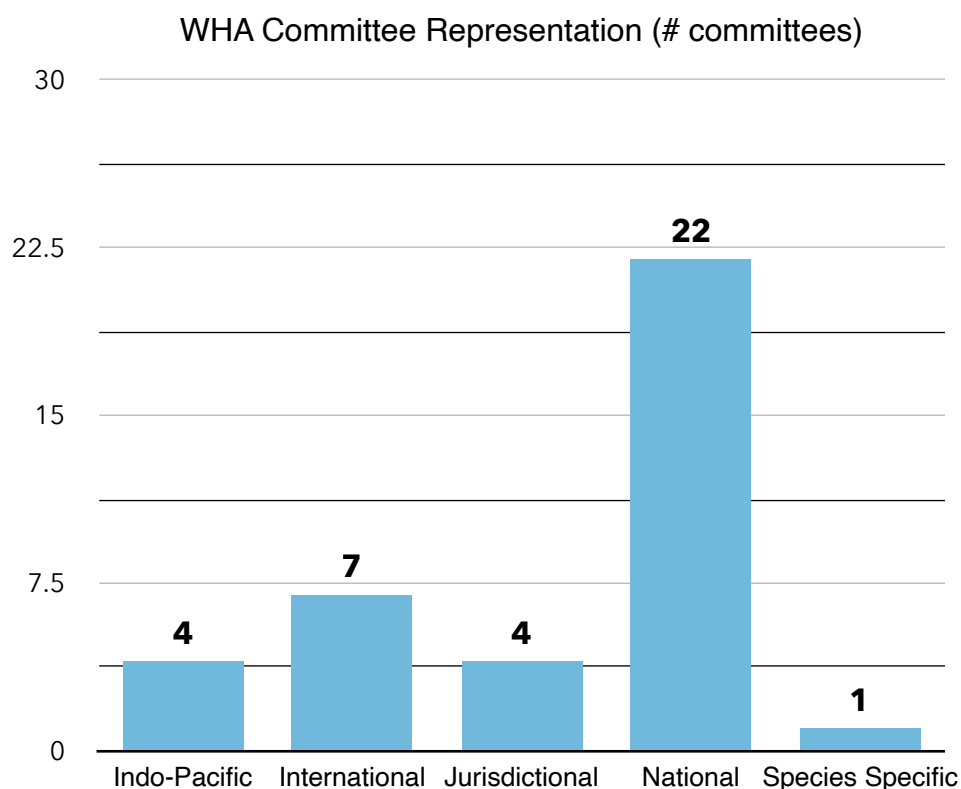
WHA has been an observer on the **Environment and Invasives Committee** (EIC) since 2018, which was established by the National Biosecurity Committee (NBC). A high priority is to assist the work of this committee by providing a national wildlife health perspective. This year, WHA attended one virtual meeting. The **meeting communiqués** can be found on the EIC website.

WHA also has observer status on a second NBC sectoral committee - **AHC**. The committee members include the CVOs of the Commonwealth, states and territories, along with representatives from ACDP and DAFF.

The main purpose of AHC is to deliver strategic policy, science-based technical and regulatory advice and national leadership on animal health and biosecurity matters to NBC. In doing so, AHC provides leadership in developing and implementing policy, programs, operational strategies and standards for government in the areas of animal health, domestic quarantine, animal welfare and veterinary public health.

Australia enjoys a high level of food safety and quality, and an enviable reputation amongst our agricultural trading partners for freedom from disease. Surveillance, monitoring and reporting systems focus on the fact that Australia can be called upon to substantiate our claims of freedom from major diseases, including foot-and-mouth disease and bovine spongiform encephalopathy. As part of such assurances, we must be able to demonstrate that an adequate level of service exists to detect, diagnose and control animal diseases. The inclusion of WHA as an observer on AHC assists members in the provision of information, depth of discussion and decision-making on issues relating to wildlife and where wildlife diseases may be involved with trade, market access and the environment.

As well as AHC and EIC, WHA also represented its members on a number of important national committees and/or by contributing to their outputs, including NAHIP and National Significant Disease Investigation (NSDI) Program. WHA also provided representation on the National Biosecurity Communication and Engagement Network (NBCEN) and Human Animal Spillover and Emerging Diseases Scanning (HASEDS) Group.



Support for Wildlife Disease Investigations

The NSDI Program is managed by AHA and subsidises veterinary practitioners who investigate and report on significant disease incidents in livestock and wildlife. WHA administers NSDI Program funds for wildlife and promotes the program to WHA's surveillance partners and other private veterinarians. For eligible events, funds are provided to the investigating veterinarian and to the laboratory for diagnostic testing. In addition, WHA supports investigations into current or ongoing wildlife disease events that might otherwise not proceed, utilising the WHA Wildlife Disease Investigation Fund.

In 2022-23, funding was provided for an investigation of skin disease in King skinks in WA and typing of Babesia organisms detected in Queensland koalas.

Wildlife disease investigations are often complex and logistically difficult. Funding made available through the NSDI Program and WHA Wildlife Disease Investigation Fund can support elements of field and diagnostic investigations to help achieve a diagnosis, and thereby allow an informed assessment of the risk of the wildlife health event to human health, livestock health and biodiversity.

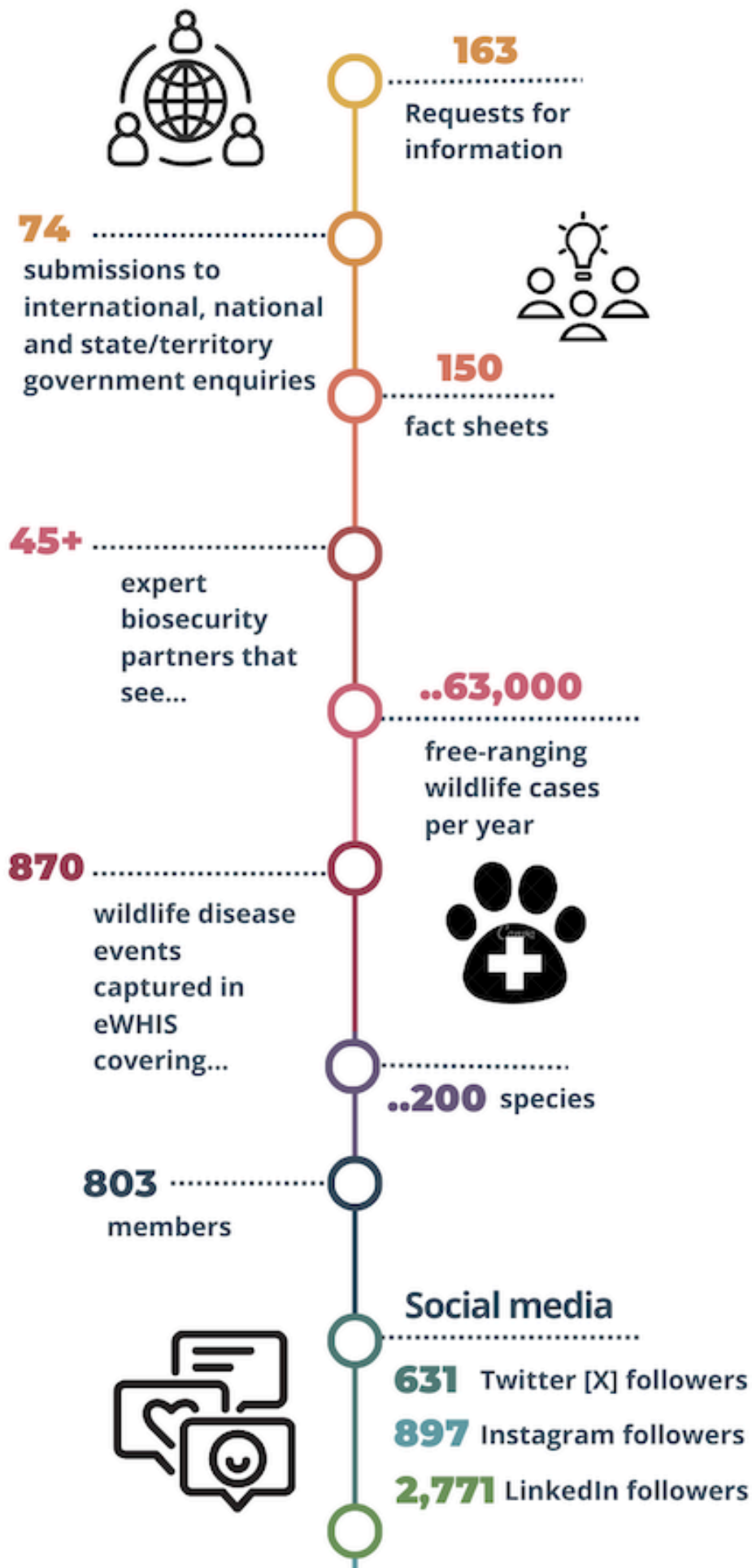
Fact Sheets

There are almost **150 WHA Fact Sheets** on the WHA Website, with **17** Fact Sheets updated in 2022-23 and **two** new Fact Sheets created ("Giardia in Australian wildlife" and "MPox").

To complement information contained in the Fact Sheets, the website contains technical documents and publications developed by the organisation on behalf and in collaboration with the wildlife community. The website also provides comprehensive information on current and past activities relevant to wildlife health for Australia and the region.



In the last five years, **82** fact sheets have been reviewed or created.

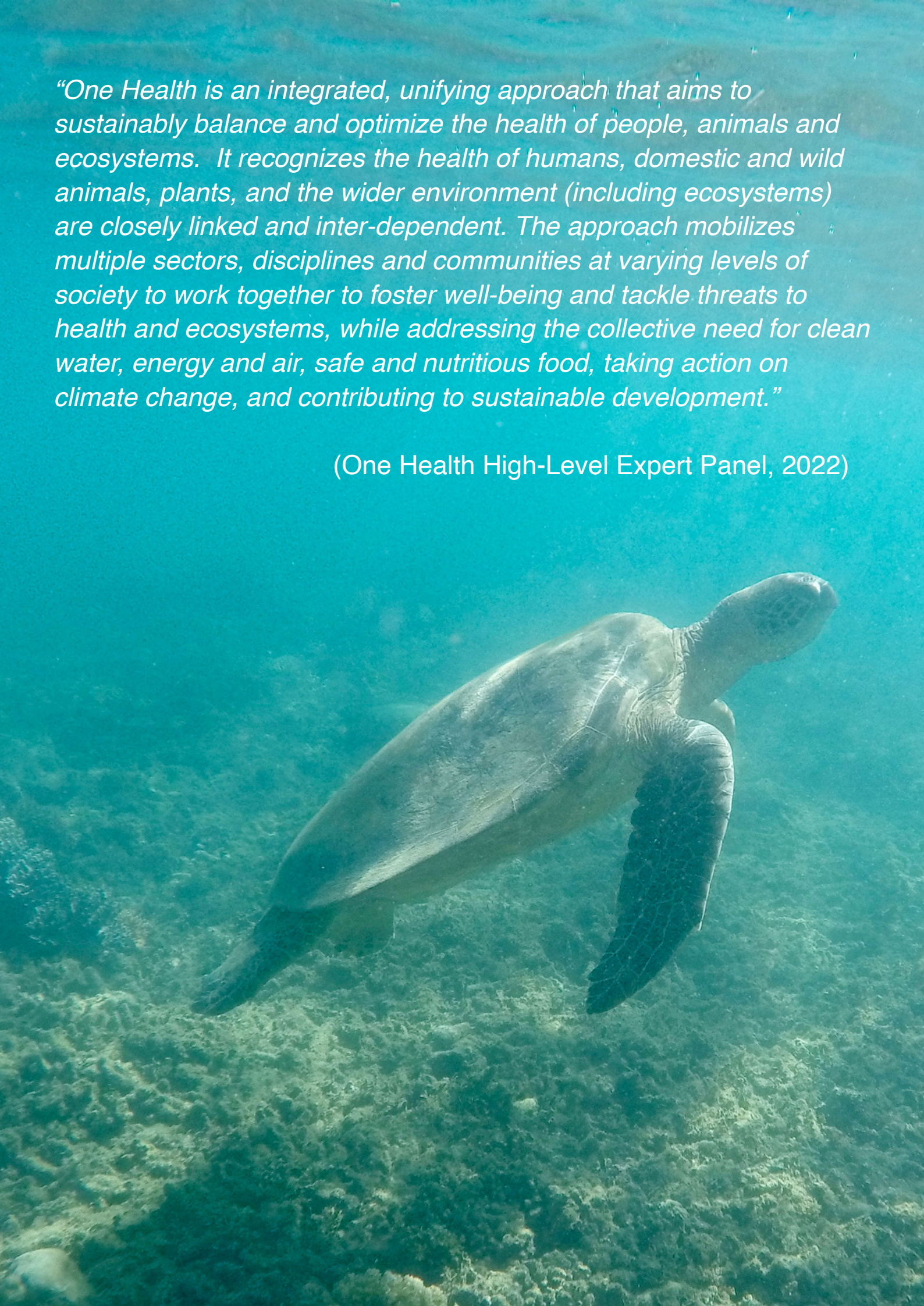


Separately Funded Programs and Projects



“One Health is an integrated, unifying approach that aims to sustainably balance and optimize the health of people, animals and ecosystems. It recognizes the health of humans, domestic and wild animals, plants, and the wider environment (including ecosystems) are closely linked and inter-dependent. The approach mobilizes multiple sectors, disciplines and communities at varying levels of society to work together to foster well-being and tackle threats to health and ecosystems, while addressing the collective need for clean water, energy and air, safe and nutritious food, taking action on climate change, and contributing to sustainable development.”

(One Health High-Level Expert Panel, 2022)



One Health Program

The 'One Health' Program (One Health Surveillance Initiative) is a relatively new initiative funded by the Commonwealth Government. It will position Australia at the forefront of the global transformational change agenda aimed at preventing future pandemic and other zoonotic disease risks emerging from the human animal-environmental interface, through the implementation of a true One Health approach.

Key elements include:

- ❑ Strengthening Australia's national wildlife health framework
- ❑ Establishment of a 'One Health Investigation Fund' to be administered by WHA, to bolster support for multi-sector collaborative field, laboratory, and epidemiological investigation into selected wildlife disease events
- ❑ Establishing WHA as an International Collaborating Centre on Wildlife Health to support WOA
- ❑ Further expansion and establishment of mutually beneficial partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and feral animal disease experts
- ❑ Supporting expert contribution into development and review of human health, conservation, and agricultural guidelines, standards and policies in Australia and overseas to ensure wildlife health and the drivers of disease emergence are considered.

Much of the work at WHA since the **announcement in January 2022** has included recruitment of new team members who bring a breadth and depth of wildlife health, public health, One Health knowledge and stakeholder engagement expertise to WHA.

- ❑ Simone Vitali has come on board as the Program Manager - Emergencies.
- ❑ Joanne Walker joined as the Program Manager - Capacity Building.
- ❑ International One Health Program and WOA Collaborating Centre has grown with the addition of Arlene Rutherford and Erin Davis.
- ❑ The Surveillance Program became a team of four with the addition of Shana Ahmed.
- ❑ Lauren Bassett came on board to support WHA fact sheet development as part of Emergencies Program.
- ❑ Joe Cashmore joined WHA and provides support across the business and operational teams.

A key activity that has progressed this year has been the endorsement of WHA as a **World Animal Health Organisation (WOAH) Collaborating Centre** in the area of Wildlife Disease Risk Management, specialising in drivers of emerging risk for Australia and the Indo-Pacific region, led by the Program Manager for International One Health, a senior project officer and project officer.

The Collaborating Centre will support WOA and its members by:

- ❑ enhancing and promoting the rapid sharing of wildlife health and biosecurity intelligence by building trusted networks
- ❑ supporting veterinary, wildlife, and public health authorities and related organisations to better protect and manage wildlife health
- ❑ strengthening multi-sectoral and interdisciplinary coordination and collaboration in capacity-building to improve wildlife health outcomes, including linking with other WOA collaborating centres focused on wildlife health data generation.

The Collaborating Centre will build on WHA's community-based approach to wildlife health in Australia, to support community-led, bespoke services to the Indo-Pacific region based on One Health principles and practice, i.e. an integrated, unifying approach that aims to sustainably balance and optimise the health of people, animals and ecosystems. An iterative approach will be used to create communities of practice led by a clear understanding of how different groups see the world around them and how they share knowledge. This understanding is especially needed where wildlife health knowledge capacity-building needs to consider the audiences' preferred means of communications.

This year, the WOA Collaborating Centre international activities included:

- ❑ Ran two IUCN SSC Conservation Planning Specialist Group (CPSG) / WHA **Wildlife Disease Risk Analysis (WDRA)** courses
- ❑ Contributed to Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) Field Training Program - Wildlife, Ecosystems, Biodiversity, and the Environment (FTP-WEBE) and WOA training workshops for WOA National Focal Point for Wildlife in the **Asia and the Pacific**, **Africa** and the Americas
- ❑ Supported establishment of the WOA Regional Wildlife Health Network, for which Australia provides the secretariat, and continued to chair (both via WHA) the WOA Pacific Wildlife Health Network, which is supported by the multi-country secretariat that includes New Zealand and Fiji. Find out more [here](#)
- ❑ Expanded the community of practice of wildlife health in Indonesia and Malaysia
- ❑ Undertook extensive stakeholder engagement in the Indo-Pacific as a focus to establish ongoing, sustainable south-east Asian engagement in wildlife health disease risk management and explore templates for further engagement in the Pacific in 2024.

Scientific and technical advice to support national emergency animal disease responses are also supported through core funding and bolstered by the 'One Health' program. This year, this included input to support decision-making during the response to the Japanese Encephalitis outbreak in Australia. In terms of EAD preparedness, WHA continues to provide technical advice regarding how the ongoing outbreak of HPAI overseas could impact Australia, developed an **information sheet** on FMD in relation to Australian native species, feral and zoo animals, and participated in the working group for the update of the AUSVETPLAN Wild Animal Response Strategy.

- WHA endorsement as a **WOA Collaborating Centre** in the area of Wildlife Disease Risk Management.
- Regional wildlife health network and communities of practice development and support in the Indo-Pacific, including linkage with WOA staff, WOA National Focal Points for Wildlife and numerous organisations in south-east Asia and the Pacific.
- Roll out of the **WILDDeST** decision support tool to facilitate decision-making by government agencies investigating or managing wildlife health incidents.

WOAH and other international activities

WHA supports Australia in its role as an international good citizen. The importance of healthy wildlife populations is recognised by WOA, the influential global intergovernmental organisation responsible for improving animal health worldwide. WOA recognises that the health of animals (including wild and domestic), humans and ecosystems is interdependent and the need to better integrate and strengthen the wildlife and environmental component of One Health globally. In 2020, a comprehensive **Wildlife Health Programme** was developed to better integrate wildlife Health into WOA's core activities and reinforce One Health strategies.

Australia's WOA Focal Point for Wildlife is Tiggy Grillo, WHA's National Coordinator, who provides support for Australia's WOA Delegate, the Australian government CVO, Mark Schipp. The Focal Point engages in regional and national wildlife health issues and provides advice on wildlife issues to state and Australian Government agricultural, human health and environmental agencies. Through the Focal Point, WHA also engages with members to ensure that Australia's scientific view and position relating to wildlife is considered when developing international policies and guidelines. WHA assists members by acting as the link between Australia and overseas wildlife health centres and focal points for wildlife within the region and internationally. Reports from Australia to WOA can be found on the **WAHIS interface**.

A small scientific advisory group, WOA's **Working Group on Wildlife** (WG) provides advice to WOA on health problems relating to wild animals, whether in the wild or in captivity. WHA's CEO, Rupert Woods, is a member of this group and assists in bringing an Australian perspective.

A priority this year has been support for WOA's **Wildlife Health Programme**, an activity seen as crucial to the global advancement of wildlife health management following identification of issues relating to the emergence of disease, in addition to the spread of a number of significant diseases such as high pathogenicity avian influenza.



Highlights:

- Contributed to support and development of the WOAHP Wildlife Health Programme.
- Contributed to a number of global guidelines and communiques, WOAHP advice on avian influenza and wildlife:
 - **Risk management for people working with wild birds**
 - WOAHP **Risk Guidance on Reducing Spillover of Monkeypox Virus from Humans to Wildlife, Pet Animals and Other Animals**
 - WOAHP / IUCN WHSG joint paper on rapid movement of wildlife diagnostic samples in relation to Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) (**CoP19 Doc. 9.1.1 #27**).

International collaborations are also maintained via regular communication with the Canadian Wildlife Health Cooperative and the United States Geological Survey National Wildlife Health Center, as well as via participation in an international working group on national wildlife health programs.

In 2020, the **Scientific Committee on Antarctic Research** (SCAR) for birds and marine mammals held a workshop on Polar Wildlife Health and subsequently established the SCAR Antarctic Wildlife Health Monitoring Working Group. The group has formed the following six sub-groups: Disease surveillance network, Unusual mortality plan, Web page, Sample collection protocols, sample collection database and Database of labs/Diagnostic facilities. WHA's CEO, is a member of this working group with a focus on input into the Disease Surveillance network and Unusual Mortality Plan sub-working groups.

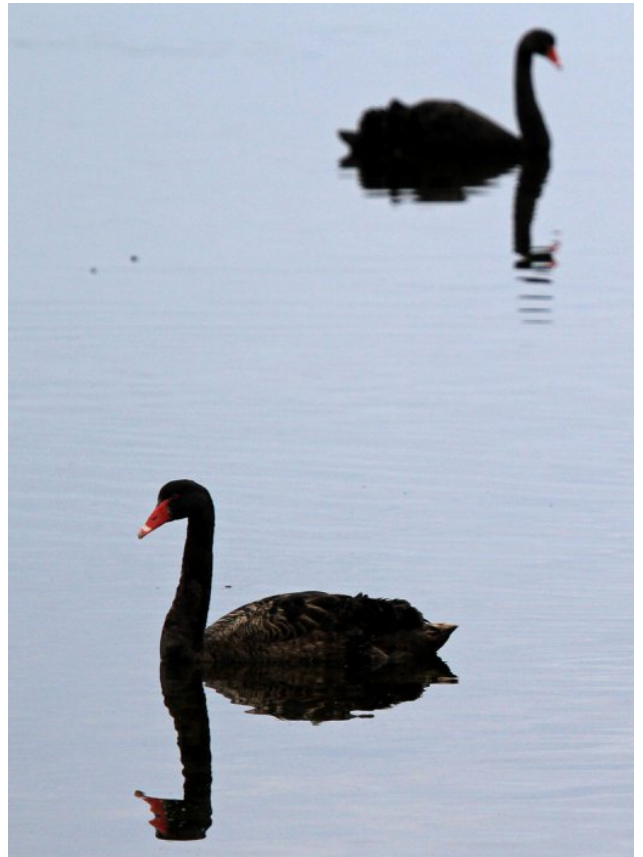
In addition to work through WHA's WOAHP Collaborating Centre, WHA's National Coordinator, is the co-chair of IUCN Species Survival Commission (IUCN SSC) **Wildlife Health Specialist Group**, alongside Billy Karesh.

The One Health Program will also enable WHA to contribute further to the development and implementation of international standards, guidelines and reporting development activities relating to wildlife health and One Health.

National Avian Influenza Wild Bird (NAIWB) Surveillance

In 2006, the NAIWB Steering Group was established to ensure national coordination and collaboration of wild bird avian influenza surveillance activities in Australia. WHA manages and coordinates surveillance program activities, provides support to the NAIWB Steering Group, coordinates the wild bird surveillance program and collates and reports surveillance data for avian influenza in wild birds in Australia. The Steering Group includes members from Australian national and jurisdictional government animal health and environment agencies, non-government organisations, laboratories, universities and the industry.

The NAIWB surveillance program is conducted Australia-wide, with funding provided by DAFF. Significant in-kind support is provided by the jurisdictional agencies, researchers and representative's institutions.



Australia's NAIWB Surveillance Program comprises two sampling components. The first is the risk-based targeted surveillance at key locations with known mixing of shorebirds and waterfowl, proximity to poultry and humans. Faecal environmental swabs and cloacal and/or oropharyngeal samples are collected and tested from apparently 'healthy' wild birds and hunter-shot wild birds of species with known reservoirs of avian influenza virus (AIV) (including waterfowl and shorebirds). Samples are collected through various state and territory government agency programs, research projects and NAQS. The second component - general surveillance - involves investigation of significant morbidity and mortality events in wild birds, including zoo bird populations. Reports and samples from sick and dead birds are received from members of the public, private practitioners, universities, zoo wildlife clinics and wildlife sanctuaries.

Data generated by the NAIWB program is used to monitor and understand distribution of AIV infection in wild birds. Subsequent sequence analysis of the AIVs detected in wild birds further contributes to the understanding of avian influenza virus evolution and dynamics in Australia, maintaining currency of diagnostic tests, and a virus sequence library allowing comparison of Australian and overseas strains.

In addition, wild bird AIV data generated through the NAIWB surveillance program is utilised in special projects, including epidemiological analysis and sequence data collected through the program. The **Wild Bird News** makes results of the program available for the general public.

The NAIWB Steering Group developed and published **information about high pathogenicity avian influenza** on the website, including a series of resources that include:

- **Advice for people who encounter sick or dead wild birds**
- **Advice for veterinarians and other animal health professionals**
- **Risk Management advice for bird banders, wildlife rangers and researchers**, and
- A WHA presentation at the 2022 Australasian Shorebird Conference on **Bird flu and the future risk to Australian wild birds** was also made publicly available.

WHA also coordinated a series of projects with additional funds provided by the Office of the Chief Veterinary Officer (OCVO) following NAIWB Steering Group recommendations of actions in light of the global HPAI events. These included:

- re-evaluate the incursion risk of HPAI to Australia via wild birds
- assess the efficacy of the wild bird general surveillance program
- assess Australia's capacity to respond rapidly should an incursion occur
- accelerate the avian influenza Nextstrain platform
- scope actions required to future proof the NAIWB surveillance database.

Support for Environmental Health and Biosecurity

- The National KDRA is the first nationwide disease risk analysis for Australian wildlife. It informs the actions of the National Koala Recovery Team with respect to koala health and welfare.
- Provision of technical information relating to wildlife and specific intoxicoses to the Australian Pesticide and Veterinary Medicine Authority (APVMA).
- Contributed to the review of the Australian Government chytrid Threat Abatement Plan (TAP).

Wildlife health is an important area for ecosystem health and environmental biosecurity. Diseases in wildlife can lead to species extinctions (e.g. the introduction of chytridiomycosis in frogs in Australia) or severely impact upon populations (e.g. Tasmanian devil facial tumour disease). The risks will become greater with changing land use, climate change, animal movements and as societal attitudes bring wildlife, livestock and people into closer contact. It is essential that Australia has the ability to effectively identify and manage these risks. Through the One Health Program and other funding streams, WHA continued to contribute expert advice into national, state and territory policies, guidelines and plans, coordinate biodiversity investigations that involve disease and raise awareness of diseases with potential biodiversity impacts.

Program Manager, Simone Vitali, and Senior Project Officer, Andrea Reiss, continued to lead the collaboration with the University of Sydney, Koala Health Hub and the IUCN to develop a national KDRA. This is the first disease risk analysis to examine disease risk for an Australian wildlife species at the national level. This nationwide approach was made possible through the support of the Australian Government and with the enthusiastic participation and engagement of over **40** stakeholders.

The KDRA **report** identifies the knowledge base, information gaps, risk assessments, critical control points, risk mitigation options and recommended risk mitigation actions for koala disease hazards. A series of implementation workshops, facilitated by WHA, in October and November 2022 prioritised the recommended actions in alignment with other national koala conservation initiatives. The KDRA is now being utilised at regional and national levels for koala management planning, including incorporation of its recommendations into the activities of the National Koala Recovery Team.

Since 2019, WHA has been a member of the national recovery team for the critically endangered southern bent-wing bat, providing input on disease-related issues such as white-nose syndrome, surveillance and biosecurity.

Support for Human Health

Most emerging diseases that affect people arise from wildlife. In 2022-2023, WHA provided support for human health activities around zoonoses and emerging infectious disease, antimicrobial resistance (AMR) in addition to:

- ☐ Support for the Bat Health Focus Group and NAIWB Surveillance Program
- ☐ Providing public information on significant zoonotic diseases that involve wildlife
- ☐ Providing *ad hoc* information DoHAC on wildlife disease events that may involve human health
- ☐ Providing *ad hoc* information to DAFF and other key stakeholders working on Australia's national approach to AMR
- ☐ Representation to the HASEDS Group, whose activities included a rapid risk analysis for highly pathogenic avian influenza.

From 2021, High Pathogenicity Avian Influenza (HPAI) H5N1 clade 2.3.4.4b has caused ongoing outbreaks of disease in wild birds throughout much of the North America, Europe, Asia and Africa. Mortalities have been observed in a wide range of species, seen as individual bird deaths and mass mortalities. While previous research has determined the risk of HPAI strains entering Australia via migratory birds to be low, the current global situation means an increased level of risk to Australia. WHA in collaboration with DAFF, DCCEEW and DoHAC and the NAIWB Steering Group continue work to support Australian preparedness activities in relation to HPAI to ensure surveillance and response activities relating to a potential HPAI outbreak are well informed.

The potential role of environmental contamination in the transfer of AMR between wildlife, domestic animals and humans has been documented, and highlights the need for further surveillance and research to determine the extent and significance of this process. Cases of multi-resistant bacterial infections and AMR in free-ranging wildlife in Australia are reported to WHA through the national wildlife disease surveillance program. As well as its many other activities, WHA also tracks research occurring on AMR and free-ranging wildlife and there is the opportunity to capture further surveillance data from these and other projects into eWHIS should funding be secured to do so. AMR is a significant challenge for Australia and the world. Greater investment and coordination in the environmental area is required before it can be considered that Australia has a true One Health approach to this issue.

In April 2020, WHA established a working group involving government and non-government members of the Bat Health Focus Group, state/territory WHA Coordinators, Environment Representatives, and other experts and stakeholders to consider the potential risk of transmission of SARS-CoV-2 from humans to bats. The working group developed biosecurity guidance for bat carers, researchers and others interacting with bats.

In addition, WHA provided input as part of consultation process for the proposed Australian Centre for Disease Control (CDC), highlighting that the health of humans, domestic and wild animals, plants and ecosystems are closely linked and interdependent. WHA recommends One Health principles be the cornerstone of CDC design and governance, whereby human health is safeguarded by also understanding, promoting, protecting and monitoring environmental and animal health.

There is now widespread international understanding of the importance of taking decisive action and altering global processes in wildlife trade to mitigate the risk of future zoonotic disease pandemics. At the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) nineteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties (**CITES COP19**) discussion on the role of CITES in reducing risk of future zoonotic disease emergence associated with international wildlife trade' was progressed (**CoP19 Doc. 23.1** and **CoP19 Doc. 23.2**). CITES subsequently issued a **Notification Parties** to report on any measures in place to prevent and mitigate the risk of pathogen spillover and transmission from wildlife trade. WHA is noted in Australia's submission to the CITES secretariat ([here](#) see page 8-14).

- Provided input into the Australian CDC highlighting the need for a One Health approach that is inclusive of wildlife.
- Support for HPAI preparedness.
- Support for agriculture, environment and human health government response agencies on matters relating to wildlife health and pathogens in wildlife.



Contribution to national policy development

On behalf of the Australian wildlife community, WHA contributes to relevant national and state and territory policy documents, committees and working groups including the Series of National Guidelines (SoNG), Australia's Veterinary Emergency Plan (AUSVETPLAN), AnimalPLAN, National Animal Health Surveillance Business Plan, and Threatened Species Recovery Plans. Notable contributions this year include participation in the working group for the AUSVETPLAN Wild Animal Response Strategy, Avian Influenza Disease strategy and a submission to consultations on the design of the Australian CDC. In 2022-23, WHA also made a number of submissions regarding native wildlife, feral animals and health and diseases, including submission on the Draft Feral Deer Action Plan 2022-2027 and an additional submission to the inquiry into Australia's Faunal Extinction Crisis. WHA submissions can be found on the [WHA website](#).

Remote and Rural Communities

WHA has an interest in animal health surveillance activities in remote and rural communities around Australia, in particular in health data collected from community dogs and associated animals in view of the potential risk of spread of rabies from Australia's near northern neighbour countries. WHA continues to engage with DAFF's [NAQS](#) program and [Animal Management in Rural and Remote Indigenous Communities \(AMRRIC\)](#) and will look for opportunities for further networking with other organisations and individuals that provide animal health services to Indigenous communities.

National Biosecurity Communication and Engagement Network

The NBCEN produces nationally consistent public information and education programs in response to pest and disease outbreaks (biosecurity incidents) that impact on Australia's agricultural industries. The network consists of communication managers from the Australian, state and territory agriculture and primary industries agencies, Plant Health Australia (PHA), AHA, ACDP, Australian Government DoHAC, Australian Local Government Association, Centre for Invasive Species Solutions, WHA and various industry peak bodies.

Biosecurity incidents can impact on many people including affected producers and growers, local communities, overseas trading partners, exporters, supply chain service providers, the general public and media. The NBCEN facilitates the rapid and consistent dissemination of information that affected people need to prevent and respond to a pest or disease outbreak.

The NBCEN also plays a pivotal role in pest and disease prevention and preparedness communication and stakeholder engagement activities. WHA provides information and advice regarding wildlife health stakeholders and issues, and during a response assists the NBCEN in ensure consistency and alignment of messaging.



Funding Members and Subscriptions

WHA is funded under a shared subscription model with contributions from the Commonwealth and state and territories, and has been agreed through the NBC. These subscription contributions fund the foundation of WHA's core funding.

Partner Agencies

WHA works with a broad group of partner agencies, including individual and associate members, wildlife networks, peak bodies, academia, zoos and carers. All of these partners bring a very broad range of expertise and insights to inform the national outlook on Australia's unique wildlife. This ranges from policy perspectives to clinical innovations, disease discoveries and investigative breakthroughs.

WHA's greatest strength is its ability to engage a large and varied group of stakeholders, many of whom may have valuable information, expertise and experience with wildlife health issues, and can participate in discussions on these issues through WHA.

Corporate Governance



Financial Overview

WHA is registered as an Incorporated Association under the Associations Incorporated Act 2009 in NSW. In NSW, incorporated associations are categorised as either Tier 1 or 2. Tier 1 associations are defined as having greater than \$250,000 in income per annum or \$500,000 in assets. WHA is a Tier 1 association and requires independent audit and reporting of its financial affairs each year. Members are informed of the financial situation of WHA by presentation of audited financial reports each year at the Annual General Meeting (AGM). Audited financial reports are publicly available through the Australian Charities and Not-for-profit Commission.

Subscription Funding

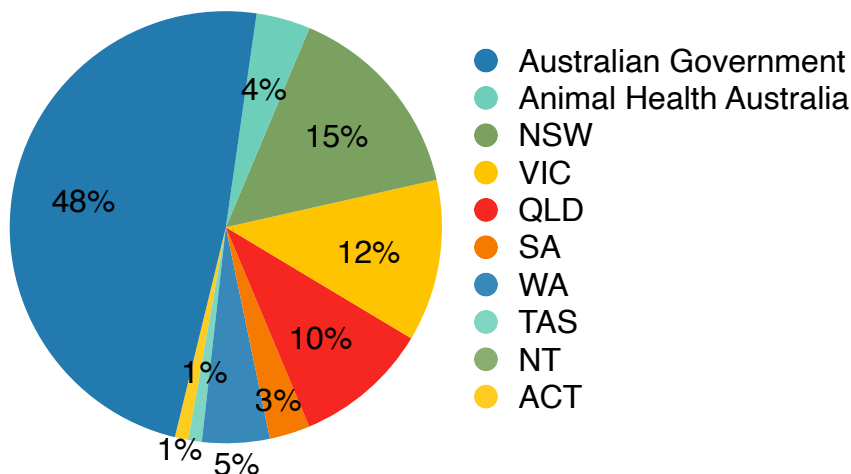
A shared subscription model agreed through the NBC provides the core funding for WHA. In 2022, an increase was agreed to, representing a total percentage increase in contribution to WHA core funding of approximately 13.4% by each contributing jurisdiction.

Staff funded through Core Funding: 5.6 FTE

Core Income and Expenditure

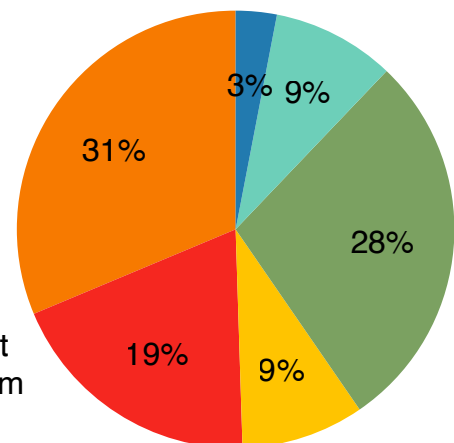
2022-2023 Core Income and Expenditure		
Income	Project Revenue	\$1,182,540
	Other Income	\$8,891
	Interest	\$19,714
	Total Income	\$1,211,145
Expenditure	Project Expenses	\$552,197
	Staff and Administration	\$309,404
	Depreciation Expense	\$4,766
	Promotion & Development	\$5,696
	Rental Expenses	\$23,621
	Other Expenses	\$294,785
	Total Expenses	\$1,190,469

Income for core funding 2022-23

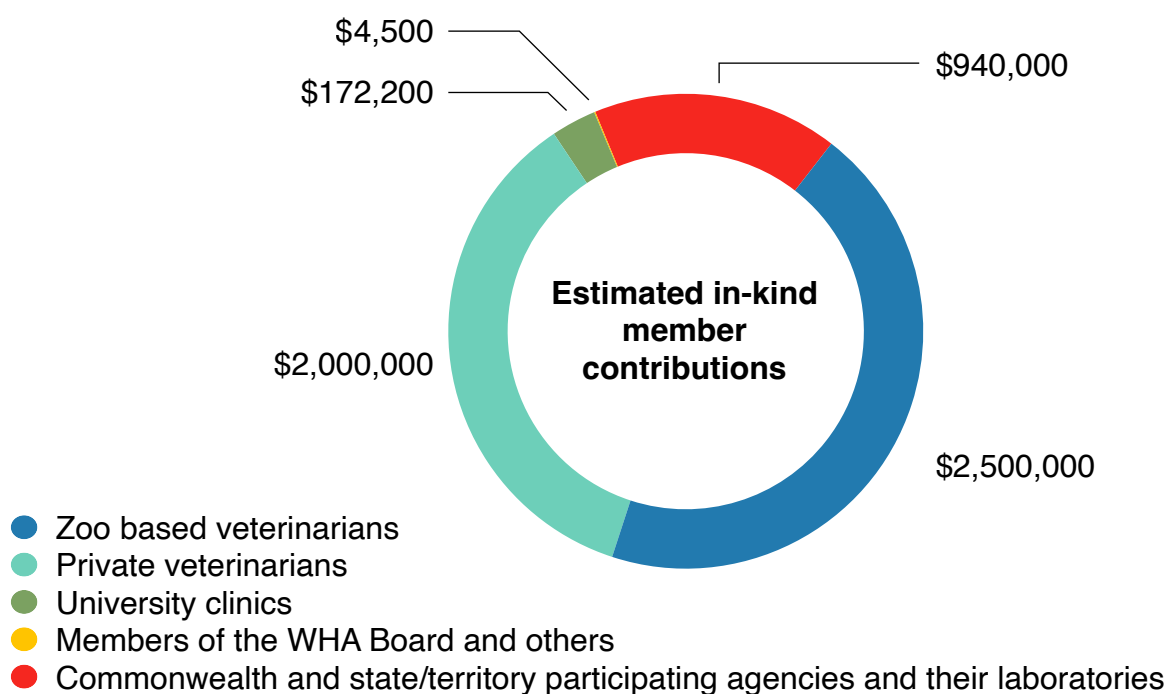


- Fact Sheets & Resources
- Bat Health Focus Group
- WHA Coordinator Group
- Communications
- Surveillance Framework Support
- Sentinel Wildlife Disease Program

Core Project Expenditure 2022-23



Though total income for the financial year was \$1,211,145, it is important to note that individual and organisational WHA members and over 120 service partners contributed approximately \$5.6M to achieving the objects of the organisation as in-kind contributions.



One Health Surveillance Program

The Commonwealth Government has committed \$8.4 million over four years to bolster and build on the existing surveillance activities and extensive networks in order to strengthen our ability to prevent, detect and respond to emerging diseases, including those with pandemic potential. The initiative will allow expansion on core activities into a collaborating centre in wildlife health risk management for the Indo-Pacific region. This will allow WHA to enable a One Health systems approach to create effective and feasible environmental management options, by linking wildlife health to climate change and biodiversity rejuvenation in its capacity development program.

2022-2023 One Health Surveillance Program	
Staff funded through One Health in 2022-2023: 11.4 FTE	
Opening Balance	\$2,095,031
Add: funds received	\$2,021,472
Less: funds disbursed/allocated	(\$346,313)
Less: FTE wages expenditure	(\$1,038,955)
Closing Balance	\$2,731,235

Emerging Roles and Developments

The Australian Government-sponsored One Health program builds upon WHA's existing range of core functionalities with the aim to protect native wildlife and ecosystems, prevent future pandemics and monitor for the emergence of disease in wildlife.

WHA's immediate future includes driving forward projects relating to One Health and broadening stakeholders to include all feral animal experts, and expanding its operations into the Indo-Pacific region.

More about the year ahead can be found in WHA's [Annual Operating Plan](#) for 2023-2024.

Governance and Legal

WHA is a 'for purpose' (not-for-profit), incorporated association registered under the Associations Incorporation Act (2009) in NSW. WHA is a registered charity, registered under the Australian Charities and Not-for-profit Commission.

The organisation prides itself on good governance and is administered under best practise organisational governance principles with an elected **board** that oversees activities on behalf of the nation. As a next step in its development for the nation, in 2023, WHA will look to transition to a 'public company limited by guarantee' with a skills-based board.

Donations, Bequests & Corporate Partners

By making a tax-deductible donation to the WHA Public Fund, you will be supporting an organisation that is working to protect our amazing wildlife for future generations. Donations can be made here: www.wildlifehealthaustralia.com.au/Donations.aspx

If you would like to discuss leaving a gift for WHA in your will, please contact Rupert Woods, CEO, on 0438 755 078, or rwoods@wildlifehealthaustralia.com.au.

WHA is a sponsorship-friendly organisation looking for partners. Please contact Rupert Woods, CEO, at rwoods@wildlifehealthaustralia.com.au if you are interested.

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Acronyms and Initialisms

ABLV	Australian Bat Lyssavirus
ACDP	Australian Centre for Disease Preparedness (CSIRO)
AHA	Animal Health Australia
AHC	Animal Health Committee
AHSQ	Animal Health Surveillance Quarterly
AIVs	Avian Influenza Virus
AMR	Antimicrobial Resistance
AMRRIC	Animal Management in Rural & Remote Indigenous Communities
AUSVETPLAN	Australian Veterinary Emergency Plan
CDC	Centre for Disease Control
CVO	Chief Veterinary Officer
DAFF	Australian Commonwealth Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry
DCCEEW	Australian Commonwealth Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water
DoHAC	Australian Commonwealth Department of Health and Aged Care
EAD	Emergency Animal Disease
EIC	Environment and Invasives Committee
eWHIS	electronic Wildlife Health Information System
FMD	Foot and Mouth Disease
HASEDS	Human Animal Spillover & Emerging Diseases Scanning
HPAI	High Pathogenicity Avian Influenza
IUCN	International Union for the Conservation of Nature
KDRA	Koala Disease Risk Analysis
NAHIP	National Animal Health Information Program
NAIWB	National Avian Influenza in Wild Birds
NAQS	Northern Australian Quarantine Strategy
NBC	National Biosecurity Committee
NBCEN	National Biosecurity Communications and Engagement Network
NSDI	National Significant Disease Investigation
OCVO	Office of the Chief Veterinary Officer
PHA	Plant Health Australia
RAP	Reconciliation Action Plan
SoNG	Series of National Guidelines
TAP	Threat Abatement Plan
WGW	WOAH Working Group on Wildlife
WHA	Wildlife Health Australia
WILDDeST	Australian Wildlife Health Incident Decision Support Tool
WOAH	World Organisation for Animal Health
ZAA	Zoo and Aquarium Association