



Veterinary Board of Tasmania

Annual Report

2019-20



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The Hon Guy Barnett, MP
Minister for Primary Industries and Water
Parliament House
Hobart TAS 7000

Dear Minister,

I am pleased to submit the 2019-20 Annual Report of the Veterinary Board of Tasmania, in accordance with section 6 of the *Veterinary Surgeons Act 1987*.

This document reports on the responsibilities undertaken by the Veterinary Board.

In submitting this report, I would like to express appreciation for the support and input the Board receives from the veterinary profession, DPIPWE, the offices of the Chief Veterinary Office, Chief Pharmacist, the Australasian Veterinary Surgeons Board Council and other stakeholders.

I would also like to acknowledge the excellent work of the Registrar and all members of the Board, in what has been a particularly challenging year as the profession and community have worked through complexities relating to COVID-19.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Dr Tering Davies', is written over a light blue grid background.

Dr Tering Davies
Chairperson

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Introduction

The *Veterinary Surgeons Act 1987* provides primarily for the registration of veterinary surgeons and the regulation of the practice of veterinary surgery in Tasmania.

Primary functions of the Board are to:

- maintain and review standards for registration of veterinary surgeons, veterinary specialists, and veterinary service entities;
- ensure that registered veterinary surgeons and registered veterinary specialists provide veterinary services in a competent manner;
- declare veterinary service standards;
- approve qualifications for persons seeking to become registered or arrange for the examination of persons seeking to become registered;
- arrange, where it thinks necessary, for the inspection of veterinary establishments; and
- hear and determine any inquiry under Part VI (Disciplinary Proceedings) of the Act.

The Veterinary Board of Tasmania consists of five members appointed by the Minister for Primary Industries and Water, and is therefore a State Authority under the *Audit Act 2008*. They are:

- three registered veterinary surgeons who have their primary place of business in Tasmania;
- a registered veterinary surgeon employed in the Department of Primary Industries, Parks, Water and Environment (DPIPWE) and nominated by the Secretary; and
- a consumer of veterinary services.

The Board

Board members are appointed by the Minister for a three year term. The current Board were appointed in July 2019. The members are:

Dr Tering Davies (Chair)	Practitioner member
Dr Jennifer Griffith (Deputy Chair)	Practitioner member
Dr Vibeke Russell	Practitioner member
Dr Mary Lou Conway	Nominee of the Secretary, DPIPWE
Dr Megan Alessandrini	Consumer of veterinary services

The Board is categorised as a non-commercial F2 Regulatory Board under the Tasmanian Government Board Fee Policy and Board members receive sitting fees consistent with this policy. The Board appointed a new Registrar, Amelia Jones, in August 2019. Amelia has over twenty years' experience in senior governance, regulatory and public policy roles within the State Government.

Meetings

During the year the Board met on the following occasions:

Meeting	Date	Location	Attendance
127	12 August 2019	New Town	5
128	18 November 2019	New Town	4
129	16 January 2020	New Town	5
130	27 February 2020	Launceston	5
131	1 April 2020	Online	5
132	23 June 2020	Online	4

The members perform duties out of session as required to progress matters before by the Board.

Registrations

To practice veterinary surgery or provide a veterinary service in Tasmania on an ongoing basis, a person must be registered as a veterinary surgeon with the Veterinary Board of Tasmania. Under National Recognition of Veterinary Registration a veterinarian registered in another state or territory may provide veterinary services on a short term or locum basis in Tasmania.

Registration may be renewed for each financial year. During the year, 38 new registrations were approved by the Board. As at 30 June 2020 there were 322 registered veterinary surgeons on the Veterinary Register of Tasmania.

New registrations and total registered by financial year

	2014-15	2015-16	2016-2017	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20
New Registrations	29	26	32	32	25	38
Registered at 30 June	267	265	284	301	304	322

Cancellations of registrations are made under the following circumstances:

- where the Board becomes aware that the registrant has died; or
- at the request of the registrant due to retirement from practice, departure from the state, or another reason for non-practice in this state; or
- by the Board due to non-payment of the annual registration renewal fee following service of the renewal advice notice.

A number of indicated they would not be renewing for 2020-21 or cancelled their registration during the year. The reasons for non-renewal are primarily relocation interstate or overseas for work.

National Recognition of Veterinary Registration

NRVR has been enacted in Queensland, New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia, Australian Capital Territory and Tasmania. This means that a Tasmanian vet may undertake locum work or short term work in those states without being required to hold registration there. NRVR has yet to be enacted in Western Australia and the Northern Territory.

Under NRVR, Tasmania recognises all other states and territories' full or general registration, so interstate registered vets may undertake locum or short term work in Tasmania without being registered in Tasmania. If an interstate registered vet moves to Tasmania, while they may work initially here under NRVR, they need to be registered in Tasmania within a reasonable time.

Recognised qualifications

The Act provides that a person is qualified to be registered as a veterinary surgeon if the person has attained a qualification approved by the Board, and is a fit and proper person to practice as a veterinary surgeon in Tasmania.

The Board has approved the qualifications recognised by the Australasian Veterinary Boards Council as providing a holder with eligibility to apply for registration as a veterinary surgeon in Australia and New Zealand without further examination.

Overseas trained veterinarians who have been awarded the Australasian Veterinary Examination Certificate or the New Zealand National Veterinary Examination Certificate are also recognized. The AVE is administered by the AVBC. Upon successful completion of the AVE a candidate is issued with a certificate as proof that they have satisfied the examination requirements.

Specialist Registration

The Board has the power to register veterinary specialists in an approved specialty. No new applications were considered by the Board in 2019-20. One veterinary specialist in Cattle Management and Diseases continued his registration in Tasmania. A number of interstate registered veterinary specialists provide visiting specialist services in Tasmania under National Recognition of Veterinary Registration.

Australasian Veterinary Boards Council Inc.

The AVBC is a legal entity that has authority to speak and act on behalf of member veterinary registering authorities in Australia and New Zealand. The AVBC is financed by a levy on participating jurisdictions, based on the number of veterinary surgeons holding primary registration in that jurisdiction.

Although it has no legislative power to impose any decisions made at meetings on any participating Boards, it has a valuable advisory function and makes recommendations to the Boards in the areas of:

- the accreditation of veterinary schools and courses leading to a degree in veterinary science or medicine;
- assessment of suitability for practice in Australia and New Zealand of persons with foreign qualifications, including the running of the AVE;
- uniform criteria for recognition of qualifications for registration;
- provision of advice on matters concerning the occupational regulation of veterinarians, including general and specialist registration; and
- encouraging harmonisation of the standards, regulations and quality assurance of veterinary services provided to the community in all jurisdictions.

AVBC members have discussions bimonthly, primarily by teleconference, with a face to face meeting for the AVBC AGM. The Board's AVBC delegate in 2019-20 was Dr Mary Lou Conway. The annual face to face meetings were held via an online platform in May 2020, due to COVID-19.

Exemption from Registration

Section 11 of the Act makes it an offence for a person to engage in the practice of veterinary surgery or render a veterinary service unless that person is a registered veterinary surgeon.

There are some exceptions to the offence provision, including veterinary students acting under the direct supervision of a registered veterinary surgeon and any other 'prescribed case'. The penalty for breach of section 11 is a fine not exceeding 50 penalty units.

Section 13 exemption

Section 13 provides that an individual may apply to the Board for exemption from the operation of section 11 in relation to a specific veterinary service.

As at 30 June 2020, there are two exemptions in place:

1. an exemption under s13 has been granted annually since 1994 to an artificial breeding operator to enable him to perform laparoscopic artificial insemination of sheep; and
2. an exemption under s13 has been granted annually since 2017 to a number of DPIPWWE employees in the Natural and Cultural Heritage Division for the purposes of providing certain services to wildlife.

Regulation 5(2) exemption

Regulation 5 prescribes two categories of persons who are exempted from the provision of s11.

- National Veterinary Exam candidates: reg. 5(2)
An overseas trained vet studying for the final clinical Australasian Veterinary Exam is allowed to practice veterinary surgery without being registered, provided he or she is working under

the direct supervision of a registered veterinary surgeon. The person must seek approval from the Board prior to commencing work.

No applications were received under regulation 5(2) during the year.

- Research and teaching: reg. 5(4)

Students and scientists at a licensed research institution (for example, the University of Tasmania), may provide a veterinary service for the purposes of teaching or research, if the work is part of a research project approved by an Animal Ethics Committee.

The researchers must -

- be assessed as competent by a registered veterinary surgeon in a particular technique required for a research project and be acting within the authority of that veterinary surgeon; or
- be supervised by and providing the veterinary service in the presence of a registered veterinary surgeon.

In either situation, the veterinary surgeon must be nominated by the licensed institution.

Veterinary Practice Inspections

Board inspectors are appointed under section 10 of the Act. The inspectors carry out practice inspections on a five yearly cycle or as required. For example, additional inspections are carried out for new practices, if practices have had major renovations or if practices have changed ownership. Inspectors may also assist in the investigation of a complaint.

During the year ten inspections were carried out across the State. At its meeting in April 2020, the Board determined to suspend inspections as a result of COVID-19 restrictions in place at that time.

Number of practice inspections by region

Region	Inspections
South	5
North/North East	4
North West	1

The inspectors assess the practices against the Standards and in particular look at:

- the physical premises, including vehicles if a mobile practice;
- consultation, treatment and separate surgery rooms;
- the equipment including sterilisers, imaging and anaesthesia machines;
- the pharmacy including the recording and storage of drugs; and
- record keeping and continuing education.

The inspectors also have an educative role and actively provide feedback to practices as to improvements and best practice. The Board considers the inspection reports and makes recommendations for follow up as necessary.

In addition to routine practice inspections, two possible breaches of Section 11 of the Act (Practice by unregistered persons) were investigated by inspectors in 2019-20. One of these matters was resolved with a commitment to the Board from the individual to cease provision of veterinary services. The other matter is ongoing.

Complaints

A function of the Board is to hear and determine any inquiry under Part VI of the Act (Disciplinary Proceedings). A complaint may be made to the Board by any person against a registered veterinary surgeon or a person who was previously registered as a veterinary surgeon. The Board does not deal with complaints relating to veterinary fees or compensation.

One complaint was carried over from the previous year and six complaints were received from members of the public during the year. Complaints related mainly to small animal practice and to failure to comply with Veterinary Service Standards. Of these complaints, five matters were finalised and two have been carried over to 2020-21.

Summary of complaint outcomes

Complaint Outcome	2018-19	2019-20
Withdrawn: Dismissed	1	0
After investigation: Dismissed	4	3
S48 Informal proceedings: No adverse finding, dismissed	0	1
S48 Informal proceedings: Adverse finding against vet: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> caution issued; recommendations as to: record keeping; compliance with Standards; and undertakings as to CPD . 	3	0
S44 Inquiry: Finding of misconduct in a professional sense: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> caution issued and conditions on registration, including CPD. 	2	1
Carried over to 2020-21	1	2
TOTAL	11	7

Veterinary Service Standards

Section 5B of the Act provides that the Board may declare veterinary service standards (VSS), which may specify the standards of service to be provided, and the rules of conduct to be observed by a veterinary surgeon in carrying on the practice of veterinary science.

VSS are enforceable and contravention of a VSS may be the basis of a finding that a veterinary surgeon is guilty of misconduct in a professional respect.

There are currently four enforceable Veterinary Service Standards:

- Supply and Use of Drugs in Veterinary Practice;
- Standard of Professional Conduct;
- Standards of Veterinary Premises; and
- Record Keeping by Veterinary Surgeons.

The following guidelines support the implementation of the Standards:

- Veterinary Surgeons' rights, duties and responsibilities under the Poisons Act & Regulations;
- Guidelines - Standard of Professional Conduct Information and Examples; and
- Code of Practice for the Supply and Use of Veterinary Products issued by DPIPW.

Review of Veterinary Service Standards

At its meeting in February 2020 the Board approved a project plan to undertake a review of the Veterinary Services Standards, commencing in 2020-21. The objectives of the review are to:

1. ensure that the Standards reflect contemporary expectations of both veterinary service users, the veterinary profession and the community;
2. identify any new and emerging issues that should be addressed in the VSS;
3. align Tasmanian standards with other States and Territories (where appropriate);
4. improve the structure of the Standards so that they are accessible, practical, relevant and easy to understand (while fulfilling legislative requirements); and
5. identify potential amendments to the list of prescribed services in the Veterinary Surgeons Regulations 2012, for recommendation to the Minister.

Demographics of the Profession

As part of the registration renewal process, registered vets are requested to provide information on their practice for the preceding year. In 2019-20, around half (51.8 per cent) of respondents indicated that they work on a full time basis, which represents a decrease from 56.1 per cent in the preceding

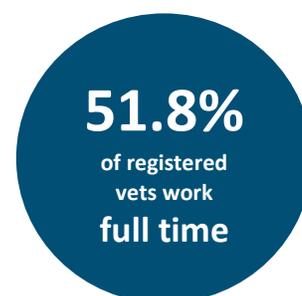
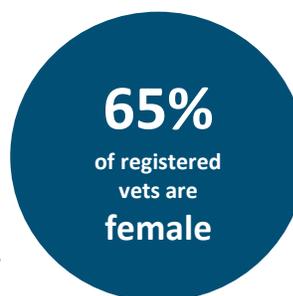
year. Similar to previous years, 80 per cent of respondents work in private practice, with majority of practices small animal (53.2 per cent) or mixed practice (25.7 per cent).

Demographics of the Profession

Year	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Work Status						
Full time	57.1	52.2	52.4	54	56.1	51.8
Part time	34.2	37.4	41.3	39.5	37	42.5
Retired	8.7	10.4	6.3	6.5	6.9	6.3
Location						
Tasmania	95.7	97	92	89.6	92.6	89.6
Tasmania & Interstate/overseas	3.7	1.8	7.5	9.5	6.1	6.3
Interstate/Overseas	0.6	1.2	0.5	0.9	1.3	4.1
Type of Employment						
Private Practice	86.1	83.4	81.7	83.8	81.8	80
University	0.6	1.2	2.2	1	1.8	0.5
Government Service	9.1	9.9	11.1	7.1	8.2	7.4
Industry	0.6	1.2	1.1	1.5	2.3	3.7
Other	3.6	4.3	3.9	6.6	5.9	8.8
Type of Practice/Work (Major Activity)						
Large Animal	4.5	2.4	5.5	2.4	3.1	1.8
Small Animal	48.3	50.9	53.2	49	47.1	53.2
Mixed Practice	28.4	27.9	24.4	27.6	27.1	25.7
Equine	4.5	3	3.3	4.9	3.6	3.1
Aquaculture	1.1	1.8	1.6	2.9	2.7	1.4
Regulatory/Advisory	6.3	6.7	5	4.9	4.4	3.6
Consultancy	0.6	1.2	1.6	1.9	2.7	1.4
Research/Laboratory	1.1	1.2	1.6	1	2.7	2.3
Industry	0	0	0	1	0.4	0.5
Avian/Poultry	0	0	0	0	0	0
Other/Specialist	0.6	0	0.5	0	0	0
Non-Veterinary	1.7	1.2	0	1	1.3	2.7
Wildlife	2.8	3	3.3	1.9	3.1	3.6
Teaching	0	0.6	0	1.5	1.8	0.9

The 2020 data relates to the 2019-20 year and represents the percentage of survey respondents.

In 2019-20 additional data relating to age and gender was included in the survey. Of respondents, 65.3 per cent identify as female and 34.2 per cent male. A small number did not answer.



With respect to age range, over half of registered veterinary surgeons are between 30 and 49 years of age.

Age range of survey respondents

Age range	%
20-29	13.6
30-39	28.2
40-49	24.1
50-59	15.5
60-69	11.4
70+	6.8



Coronavirus response

The emergence of the COVID-19 coronavirus pandemic presented a range of challenges, changes and uncertainty in early 2020. The Board made a number of decisions in response to the impact of COVID-19 on its operations, including deferring scheduled practice inspections, moving meetings to an online meeting platform and deferral of meet the professions events. The Board also approved a reduction in the renewal of registration fee for veterinary surgeons suffering financial hardship as a result of COVID-19. The reduced fee was accessed by nineteen veterinary surgeons who had experienced job loss or a significant reduction in work hours.

In addition the Board developed a guideline, *COVID-19 Advice for veterinary professionals*, to assist veterinary surgeons to continue to provide the best possible care to patients and meet the veterinary service standards where safe and practical. The Board acknowledged that veterinary surgeons may need to depart from best practice in order to look after themselves and their staff during this period. The Board assured veterinary professionals that it would take the broader situation into account when considering complaints.

The Board maintained regular communication with veterinary surgeons via email, to support awareness of emerging issues and developments in Government policy, including the introduction of border restrictions, public health directives and the COVID-Safe workplace framework.

The Chair and Registrar met with the Chief Veterinary Officer and Australian Veterinary Association to provide input into the *COVID-Safe Workplace Guidelines for Veterinary Service Providers*.

Following the introduction of the COVID-Safe workplace framework and easing of restrictions in Tasmania, the Board withdrew its guideline from publication in June 2020, noting that it is the responsibility of individual veterinary service entities and veterinary surgeons to remain informed of COVID-19 requirements, including as circumstances change. The Board will continue to review its approach as the situation evolves.

Communication

Website

The Board maintains a website within the website of DPIPWE. The site provides information for the members of the profession and the public, regarding to the powers and functions of the Board, along with an extract from the Veterinary Register of Tasmania.

Newsletters

The Board issued routine newsletters in July 2019, September 2019 and in January 2020. In the period from March – June 2020, the Board circulated a number of emails to all registered veterinary surgeons in relation to the provision of veterinary services during the coronavirus pandemic.

Publications

In addition to the *COVID-19 - Advice for Veterinary Professionals*, during the year the Board also published an *Information Sheet - Prescribing or Supplying PARS or Scheduled Drugs for Invertebrates*.

Meet the profession

The Board hold *Meet the profession* events every three years in the North, North West and South of the State. These events are an opportunity for veterinary surgeons to meet Board members and learn more about the functions of the Board. The Board held its first 2020 MTP event in February 2020 in Launceston, attended by over thirty veterinary professionals. The North West and South events were deferred due to COVID-19.

Poisons Act 1971

Veterinary Surgeons are subject to the *Poisons Act 1971* and Poisons Regulations 2018 in relation to their responsibilities for scheduled substances under that Act. The Board has regularly liaised with the Pharmaceutical Services Branch, Department of Health and Human Services in relation to matters arising under the Poisons legislation and Therapeutic Goods Administration throughout the year.

Other Statutory requirements

No requests were received by the Board under either the *Right to Information Act 2009* or *Personal Information Protection Act 2004* during the year.

Auditor's Report 2019-20

Max Peck and Associates ABN 40 322 767 816

Principal: Rendell W Ridge B.Ec Registered Company Auditor #161503

Independent auditor's report To members of Veterinary Board of Tasmania

I have audited the special purpose financial report of Veterinary Board of Tasmania for the year ended 30 June 2020.

Audit Opinion

In my opinion, the special purpose financial report of Veterinary Board of Tasmania presents fairly in accordance with applicable Accounting Standards and other mandatory professional reporting requirements in Australia the financial position of the Board as at 30 June 2020 and the results of its operations and its cash flows for the year then ended.

Management Committee's Responsibility for the Financial Report

The Management Committee is responsible for preparation and fair presentation of the special purpose financial report and information contained therein. This responsibility includes establishing and maintaining internal controls relevant to preparation and fair presentation of the financial report that is free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error; selecting and applying appropriate accounting policies; and making accounting estimates that are reasonable in the circumstances.

Auditor's Responsibility

My responsibility is to express an opinion on the financial report based on my audit. I have conducted my audit in accordance with Australian Auditing Standards to provide reasonable assurance as to whether the accounts are free of material misstatement. My procedures included examination, on a test basis, of evidence supporting amounts and other disclosures in the accounts, and the evaluation of accounting policies and significant accounting estimates. These procedures have been undertaken to form an opinion as to whether, in all material respects, the financial statements are presented fairly in accordance with Australian Accounting Concepts and Standards and other mandatory professional reporting requirements (Urgent Issues Group Consensus Views) (where applicable), and statutory requirements so as to present a view which is consistent with my understanding of the Board's financial position and the results of its operations and cash flows.

I believe that the audit evidence I have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for my audit opinion.

Independence

To the best of my knowledge and belief, there has been no contravention of auditor independence and any applicable code of professional conduct in relation to the audit.

Limitation of Scope

As is common for organisations of this type, it is not practicable to establish complete accounting control over cash received from all of its activities. Verification therefore has been limited to the receipt of funds recorded in the Board's financial records.

MAX PECK & ASSOCIATES



Rendell W. RIDGE
13 October 2020

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Special Purpose Financial Report

Income & Expenditure Statement

Veterinary Board of Tasmania

For the year ended 30 June 2020

Account	2020
Trading Income	
Interest income	3,466.61
Other Income	10,000.00 1
Registration Fees	127,789.00 2
Service Fees & Other	2,590.25 3
Total Trading Income	143,845.86
Operating Expenses	
AVBC Levy	7,903.64 4
Bank Fees	54.67
Consulting & Accounting	1,780.53 5
General Expenses	67.27
Inspector Fees - Baxter	1,154.41
Inspector Fees - Harrison	970.21
Inspector Fees - Waterston	334.97
Meeting Expenses	2,586.18
Office Expenses	124.89
Registrar Contract	59,164.50
Reimbursement of Registrar Expenses	1,955.53 6
Stripe Fees	39.22
Superannuation	7,331.69 7
Travel	566.84
Wages and Salaries	17,626.88 8
Workers Compensation	1,312.27
Total Operating Expenses	102,973.70
Net Profit	40,872.16

Balance Sheet

Veterinary Board of Tasmania
As at 30 June 2020

Account	30 Jun 2020
Assets	
Bank	
Bus Online Saver	40,061.08
Veterinary Board of Tasmania	112,343.50
Total Bank	152,404.58
Current Assets	
Accounts Receivable	1,072.00
Term Deposit **408	36,706.58
Term Deposit **752	72,227.59
Term Deposit **884	38,918.05
Total Current Assets	148,924.22
Total Assets	301,328.80
Liabilities	
Current Liabilities	
GST	(490.69)
PAYG Withholdings Payable	858.02
Superannuation Payable	284.62
Wages Payable - Payroll	287.48
Total Current Liabilities	939.43
Total Liabilities	939.43
Net Assets	300,389.37
Equity	
Accumulated Funds	259,517.21
Current Year Earnings	40,872.16
Total Equity	300,389.37

Notes to financial report:

1. This income reflects the Government's coronavirus cash flow boost for employers of \$10,000.
2. Annual renewal fees are payable by 30 June for the forthcoming registration year. The annual renewal fee the 2020-21 registration year remained at \$408. The registration renewal income represents payments made in May-June 2020. Nineteen renewals were at the reduced COVID-19 hardship fee of \$208, which was approved by the Board for veterinary surgeons who experienced job loss or a significant reduction in work hours as a result of the coronavirus.
3. The Board charges an administrative fee for services (Letters of Good Standing, copies of the Register and for follow-up practice inspections).
4. The Board pays an annual levy (plus GST) to the AVBC in January each year based on the number of registered vets as at 30 June of the preceding year.
5. Consulting and accounting expenses in 2019-20 relate to services to support the implementation of single touch payroll and a new accounting system as well as the digitisation of VBT files.
6. The Board reimburses administrative expenses incurred by the registrar in carrying out the Board's functions– for example: telephone, internet, stationery, postage costs.
7. Although the registrar is a contractor, the ATO ruling is that superannuation must be paid for the registrar. The Board also pays superannuation on the Board members' remuneration.
8. The Board is responsible for Board members' remuneration (sitting fees) and expenses. The amount shown reflects the after tax sitting fees and travel expenses for six Board meetings (double sessions – one in-session and one out-of-session). The fee per meeting was \$457 (chair) and \$347 (members). Travel expenses are paid at the government rate. The DPIPWE member does not receive a sitting fee.

Statement of Certification

The accompanying financial report of the Veterinary Board of Tasmania is in agreement with the relevant accounts and records and have been prepared to meet the administrative reporting requirements of the Board, to present fairly the financial transactions for the period ended 30 June 2020 and the financial position as at the end of the year. At the date of signing, I am not aware of any circumstances which could render the financial report misleading or inaccurate.



Dr Tering Davies
Chairperson
13 October 2020



Amelia Jones
Registrar
13 October 2020