

The Post Graduate Foundation in Veterinary Science of the University of Sydney

In the early 1960s a few veterinarians with a vision for the future recognised the need for continued learning by veterinarians, and especially those working in the rural areas where they were isolated from their colleagues. This small group, comprising practitioners including government veterinary officers in the field, industry veterinarians, and veterinary teachers, proposed a series of short courses. This proposal was declined by the Australian Veterinary Association and by the Veterinary Faculty in Sydney, as both organisations felt it fell outside their areas of responsibility. Consequently a committee was formed under the Senate of the University of Sydney. This Post Graduate Committee, as it was named, reported directly to the Vice Chancellor.

Progress was slow until, in 1965, the Senate approved the formation of the Post Graduate Foundation which enfolded the Committee, gathered funds for continuing education for veterinarians, and provided guidance for the activities of the committee. When, in 1968, Dr Tom Hungerford, a leading practitioner, was appointed part time to be Technical Director, the Foundation began to move quickly to provide relevant and affordable learning opportunities for veterinarians at work. Practitioners from all over Australia soon learnt of the value of the Foundation to them, and began to provide substantial donations, which supplemented the contributions of government and industry organisations that had helped to get the Foundation started.

Tom set the pattern for significant refresher courses, inviting leading veterinarians from overseas as keynote speakers, and Australian veterinarians and scientists as support speakers. His courses were very well planned and developed, and the presentation was superbly managed to provide the ideal environment for learning. Before each course a detailed and comprehensive proceedings was produced, with a fully cross-referenced index. He also began the publication of a review series to cover all the important areas of veterinary science. He prepared article summaries from the literature and made these available for veterinarians. Tom also developed a regular bimonthly publication titled *Control and Therapy*, which was a forum for veterinarians and which soon became the most read publication in the profession in Australia. When in 1974 he was appointed Director of the Foundation and the Committee, there began a rapid escalation of activities. When Doug Bryden was appointed Associate Director in 1979 the Foundation began to run workshops and seminars in many rural venues in the eastern States.

Courses were supplemented by workshops and in 1980 the Vade Mecum series was launched. 'Vade mecum' is latin for 'go with me' and these were handbooks of information on control and therapy for the different species.

The Foundation had become well known and by the mid-1980s was used as a learning resource by veterinarians in more than 50 countries around the world. In 1987 Doug Bryden was appointed Director and continued to increase the established activities of the Foundation. In addition new initiatives were introduced. The Symposia, which were intensive programmes of learning using simulated case material, became popular. In 1988 the TimeOut series was begun in the capital cities of the eastern States. These were originally seminars for veterinarians who had been away from clinical practice. However it was not long before many practising veterinarians were

attending and the seminars were held also in regional cities from Darwin and Cairns in the north to Adelaide and Hobart in the south.

In 1991 Dr Bryden introduced the Distance Education program, which enabled practitioners to study a single topic in detail for a whole year under the guidance of a tutor. World class tutors were selected and the course was delivered in ten monthly modules from February to November. Participants spend about 30 to 40 hours a month in study and submit assignments and exercises to the tutors for assessment. Two workshops are conducted each year as a part of the programme. This series has grown from two subjects in 1991 to 12 subjects in 2000, and under the guidance of Director, Bill Howey, and more recently Acting Director, Michele Cotton, has been expanded to 22 subjects.

The Foundation now has much of the material available on the website and is moving to full delivery of the distance education program via the internet.

In 1998 the Foundation moved offices to the new Conference Centre in the veterinary precinct of the University of Sydney, a building to which it contributed more than \$1,000,000. The Foundation has always encouraged veterinary undergraduates to use its resources and many attend the Foundation courses and purchase the publications of the Foundation. Undergraduate and graduate veterinarians are always welcome to visit the Foundation.

Douglas Bryden

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