

## #53: What are we so afraid of?

With Drs Kate Clarke and Magdoline Awad



*Kate and Mags are veterinarians who both have experience as board members for the Victorian and NSW Vet Boards, respectively.*

*In addition to her role on Victoria's Vet Board Kate is, amongst other things, the founding director of Engaged Solutions, a veterinary HR consultancy, and is leading the development of a new not-for-profit called Sustainable Veterinary Careers that aims to create better veterinary workplaces and thriving veterinary team members through a groundbreaking funding model. Somewhere in between all of that Kate also has veterinarian husband and two teenage kids.*

*Mags is Chief Veterinary Officer at Greencross and has served on the NSW Veterinary Practitioners Board since 2019, is member of the UNSW Animal Care and Ethics Committee and the NSW representative for the AVA Welfare and Ethics special interest group. She was Chief Veterinarian at RSPCA NSW from 2008-2015, after starting with the organisation in 1996, and she's been involved in the development and management of community programs in remote regional areas of NSW, working with local veterinarians and government to improve the welfare of pets in those communities.*

## Highlights

"The boards are there to make sure that the legislation is enforced. Part of the legislation is the welfare of animals, but also to ensure that the consumers of the services that we provide are informed about the competencies of the vets, and that there is an acceptable standard of care. It really is about making sure that we provide those services as best we can and mitigating risk to the public as well."

"When we're looking at complaints, we're not looking at gold standard. We encourage best practice where you can, but what the actual measurement for us under the act is whether a behaviour meets the expectations of the vet's peers and the public. We know on the boards that there's no one way of doing things. Even the six vets sitting on the board would probably do something slightly different themselves. What we're looking for is a logical informed progression of thoughts and decisions that is based on a contemporary knowledge and the guidelines."

"The whole complaints thing is just an opportunity for feedback."

"People need three things:

1. To be heard.
2. ,To understand what happened.
3. To make a difference. The most common thing that we hear at the end of any complaint is "We don't want this to happen to other animals." It's really not about blame and shame and punishment.

"You have a one in 25 chance of actually getting a complaint."

"Even the most amazing vets will get complaints."

## Resources

Victorian Vet Board: <https://www.vetboard.vic.gov.au/>

NSW Vet Board: <https://www.vpb.nsw.gov.au/>

Sustainable Veterinary Careers: <https://sustainableveterinarycareers.org/>

Contribute to the change here: [https://researchsurveys.deakin.edu.au/jfe/form/SV\\_oGjh72evf7AXVhY](https://researchsurveys.deakin.edu.au/jfe/form/SV_oGjh72evf7AXVhY)

Victoria Board Guidelines on record keeping: [https://www.vetboard.vic.gov.au/VPRBV/VPRBV\\_Guidelines/Guideline\\_07\\_-\\_Veterinary\\_medical\\_records.aspx](https://www.vetboard.vic.gov.au/VPRBV/VPRBV_Guidelines/Guideline_07_-_Veterinary_medical_records.aspx)