



International Association of
Human-Animal Interaction
Organizations

IAHAIO in Australia, June 2018

REPORT

IAHAIO presented two symposia at the ISAZ conference in June 2018 in Sydney Australia:

- 1. Perspectives on Bridging the Gap between Researchers and Practitioners in HAI: Current Challenges and Future Pathways in Animal-Assisted Interventions**
- 2. One Health: Strategies for strengthening global connections**

During the IAHAIO symposia, Marie-Jose Enders-Slegers, IAHAIO President and Brinda Jegatheesan, IAHAIO Vice President Development, presented on the work being done in IAHAIO. The symposia were packed with practitioners and researchers mainly from Australia. A great deal of information was discussed through an interactive dialogue format about past achievements of IAHAIO, current work relevant to the mission of the organization, and showing achievements that have positively impacted the HAI field through examples and cases. Also discussed were future important events (e.g, Amsterdam Symposia 2018, Triennial 2019) and development initiatives that would strengthen global HAI collaborations to bring about innovative solutions and ideas in AAI practice. The sessions provided a valuable networking opportunity and set the stage for further collaborative engagement between practitioners and researchers in addressing pressing and evolving needs in our field.

As Marie-Jose and Brinda (president and vice president of IAHAIO) were giving symposia at in Sydney, they also took the opportunity to visit IAHAIO member organizations in Australia. Marie-Jose reports:

“It was cold in Melbourne. Never thought of it: it was winter over there. We were not adequately dressed, how stupid. So, the (cold) adventure started in Melbourne. We had to take the train to Geelong, where a very hospitable Alicia Kennedy and Natalie Davey of the **Cherished Pets Foundation**, waited for us at the train station. After a sightseeing tour through Geelong we visited a lovely (free) community puppy class, where besides the owners, training their puppies, youngsters with disabilities partnered, trained and enjoyed.

After a tasteful lunch in a beach restaurant, (famous from a television program) with members of the team, we were taken to the home of an older lady that has been in the

program of Cherished Pets for many years already. Here we experienced how the program 'works' and how elderly people are supported in their care for the animals.

Cherished pets Foundation was (only) launched in 2015 to provide home based pet care for elderly and disabled people, living in Ocean Grove, Barwon Heads and the Bellarine. The objectives of the project are to support and maintain pet ownership for elderly and disabled pet owners living independently in the community and at the same time support and maintain pet health and welfare. It proved to be a very well working concept and a much appreciated project. Alicia and Nathalie, the founder and project manager of Cherished Pets, should be very proud of what they achieved in so little time.

The next trip was to a farm where staff of Cherished Pets carry out animal-assisted programs with horses, with lamas and with other animals. A one hour car ride - what lovely country side! And yes, finally Kangaroos popped up at the border of the woods. A real Australian experience. We were very happy. Up to the next event: the wonderful meeting in a stable with staff, with volunteers and interested people, and animals all around (also the cat next to the stove). Great talks from the Cherished Pets people, and we were happy to get the opportunity to tell the audience more about IAHAIO and its mission and goals and of course to tell them also about our own work at our universities. It was a great experience. We were impressed. What a nice atmosphere! What nice people! And what an achievement they make for the health of vulnerable people and for the animals. A real one health/one wellbeing concept.

We had the opportunity to listen to many wonderful stories of the participants/volunteers while sharing together very nice finger food and drinks, just after the event. And yes, we then had to drive back to Geelong to take the train for Melbourne. What a pity!

It was a wonderful day, many impressions, meeting great people that make life better for animals and for vulnerable people. Chapeau. It was an honor to be invited, it was a privilege to be part of it.

So great to have had the opportunity to learn how in other parts of the world wonderful initiatives are taking place and it is super to learn how successful they are. Keywords: professionalism, empathy, energy! Thank you Cherished Pets. It was wonderful to be your guests! We are very proud to have you as an IAHAIO member.

In Melbourne we met Melanie Jones of **Lead the Way**. Lead the Way is an organization that provides clinical services (with and without assistance of animals) to vulnerable people. Melanie is a psychologist and dog trainer and provides with her team animal-assisted therapy. Melanie is a very enthusiastic, hardworking person and she is doing research to gain understanding of underlying reasons, opinions and motivations. We had a lovely and vivid conversation with her, in which she revealed her plans for the near future. We were very pleased to have met her and hope to work more with her in near future. Thank you Melanie for your time; we enjoyed it very much.

Last but not least we had a very interesting talk with Kevin Picker, a very passionate man who is managing the **Centre for Service and Therapy Dogs Australia** and Dr. Pree Benton, a

young, enthusiastic, smart psychologist. They shared with us their ideas about the education of service dogs and assistance dogs. Kevin shared moving stories about his son and the dog that was trained to assist him in daily life. Pree told about all challenges and work that still needs to be done. A wonderful afternoon! We enjoyed the open sharing of information very much and hope to welcome the Centre as an IAHAIO member in near future.”