

Oceania Openness Workshops – Project Report

May 2025



Title of Activity: **Oceania Openness Workshops**

Name of ICLAS Member Association: **ICLAS Regional Committee Oceania**

In 2022, ICLAS generously awarded € 3,000 of funding to Understanding Animal Research to provide Openness Workshops across the Oceania region in 2023.

This project has now concluded, as all funds have been allocated to workshops. This report updates the interim report sent to ICLAS and ANZLAA as project funders in January 2023 and finalises this project.

Project outline

1. February to December 2023, Proposed to deliver approximately one workshop per month at 11 locations across the Oceania region. The workshop series was initially to be concluded in December 2023. A report detailing project spend, output and outcomes was provided in Q1 2024.

These workshops are usually a considerable benefit to the hosting institution, which support by providing a suitable venue free of charge. In one instance during 2023 the venue charged us for catering, rather than charging the host institution.

2. Across Oceania a series of training workshops were run to support researchers, animal care staff, veterinarians, facility managers and research communicators with skills and insights to talk more confidently to non-scientific audiences on the ethically complex subject of using animals in research.

These workshops allowed participants to focus on the specific skills needed to talk about their research, whatever the particular challenges, with diverse audiences. They worked particularly well with participants from a range of professions, enabling them to hear about others' ideas, passions and challenges. The workshops provided participants with insights into a range of value-sets around animals, why people hold differing views and how to speak to them. They also addressed appropriate ways to cope in the unlikely event of open hostility and aggression.

3. The workshops ran throughout 2023 and 2024. They were the first major outreach initiative for Understanding Animal Research in the Oceania region. The workshops took place at local partner institutions and were open to all those working in the care, use and teaching of laboratory animal science.

4. The workshops were led by Bella Lear (formerly Bella Williams), who was the main point of contact for the funding, and who has successfully run similar workshops over the past 12 years, in and beyond the UK.

Project update – workshops completed

The table below shows the proposed workshops, with the workshops completed indicated with a tick in the right-hand column. It took some months to arrange the sessions, with the first workshop run in Queensland in July 2023.

In total nine workshops were completed over the lifetime of the project.

1	New South Wales	✓
2	Victoria	✓ ✓
3	Queensland	✓
4	South Australia	✓
5	Western Australia	✓
6	Tasmania	✓
7	Australian Capital Territory	
8	Northern Territory	
9	New Zealand North Island	✓
10	New Zealand South Island	
11	New Zealand Capital	✓

Queensland workshop

The Queensland workshop took place in Brisbane on 25 July 2023, hosted by QIMR Berghofer. It was attended by 15 participants from six research organisations in South-Eastern Queensland. Most (13/15) participants rated the workshop as excellent (5/5) for facilities, content and presentation.

Participants enjoyed most:

- “Very practical with lots of opportunities to explore challenges from different angles. I liked how interactive it was.”
- “Strategies to respond to difficult questions”

One participant commented:

- “Should be offered regularly as openness is progressing.”

Since this workshop, two of the participating organisations have joined UAR Oceania and requested workshops for their own staff.

New Zealand workshops

A workshop took place in Central Auckland on 27 September 2023, hosted by the University of Auckland.

The workshop was attended by 12 participants, and feedback was more mixed than previous workshops with content and presentation both scoring 4.5, and facilities scoring a mean of 4 out of a possible 5.

Participants especially enjoyed:

- “The group discussions. It was a great way to bounce ideas and listen to different opinions.”
- “Group discussion with like-minded people.”

One participant commented:

- “Really interesting to learn things about animal research as a comms professional.”

Following further interest in the North Island, a second New Zealand-based workshop ran in Wellington on 23 February 2024, hosted by Victoria University. The session was attended by 20 participants and was rated 3.8 for the venue, and 4.7 for the workshop content and presentation.

One participant commented:

- “The presentation was enjoyable and facilitated extremely well, thank-you.”

Unfortunately, we were unable to secure a further New Zealand workshop within this programme but given the success of the New Zealand North Island workshops, we still hope there is capacity to run a similar session in the South Island in the future.

Victoria workshops

The first Victoria workshop took place as part of the ANZLAA conference in Melbourne, but despite selling out, the workshop was poorly attended, possibly due to the location of the room and the timing of other sessions. Only three participants attended this session, and they did not represent Victorian Institutions – leaving Victoria without a workshop.

To address this, a further workshop was run on 21 November 2023 in collaboration with the Peter Macallum Institute, Parkville, Melbourne. Research organisations from across Victoria were invited to attend. This session was attended by 17 participants, and the venue facilities were rated an average of 4/5, while both the content and presentation were rated 5/5.

Participants enjoyed:

- “The exercises and especially the debriefing with Bella”
- “Interactive, thought provoking”

One participant commented:

- “Very informative and helpful. Perfect balance of slides and interactive workshop tasks. Good group size, not too small or too big.”

Western Australia Workshop

Held on 26 October 2023, this was a very well-attended workshop by an enthusiastic group of participants from research institutions across Perth. A wide range of professional roles and seniority was represented, and a wonderful venue was provided for the workshop by the Telethon Kids Institute.

Twenty-three participants stayed to the end of the session and completed evaluation forms. This was probably the most successful workshop of the project, in terms of the number of attendees and their learning from the event. Feedback was excellent with three quarters of participants stating that the workshop exceeded their expectations.

Participants fed back that they enjoyed:

- “Survey exercise - standing up icebreaker. Good discussions.”
- “Open discussions about animal welfare in conversations with people not in the industry.”

One participant commented:

- “Very useful and practical content.”

New South Wales workshop

The New South Wales workshop was held in Sydney on 5 December 2023 in collaboration with the University of Sydney. It was attended by 15 participants from research institutions, largely from within greater Sydney.

Participants rated the session 5/5 for venue, content and presentation (with only one “4” in facilities and another in content), and most felt the session met their expectations (10 participants), while a smaller number (5) said the session exceeded their expectations.

Participants enjoyed:

- “Activities to engage in applied discussions. Meeting people across the industry and making connections.”
- “Hearing different stories and experiences of Bella and how to interact with people about Animal Research.”

One participant commented:

- “It is good to do this with other institutes / organisations to get different opinions and experiences.”

Tasmania workshop

The Tasmania workshop, hosted by University of Tasmania was held in Hobart on 21 May 2024. It was attended by 11 participants, who shared robust discussions throughout. Feedback was excellent, with most participants rating the session “5” in all categories. Participants especially enjoyed discussing difficult questions with others.

One highlighted:

- “Open communication and sharing with other researchers”

Further comments included:

- “Perhaps real-life examples? Also, some more teaching-focused exercises and examples. It was very research focused.”
- “An interesting topic that isn't addressed enough. Thank-you!”
- “It was really helpful and deeply engaging.”

South Australia workshop

The South Australia workshop ran in Adelaide on 26 August 2024. There were 20 participants in the session, primarily from the two local universities, University of Adelaide and University of South Australia, and from the South Australian government.

Feedback ratings were excellent. Only one participant gave a rating of less than 5/5 – grading both content and venue “4”.

Participants shared that they enjoyed:

- “General discussion - I was expecting more of a "lecture" feel, so pleasantly surprised.”
- “Fantastic presenter, excellent information.”

Two participants shared that their least favourite part was the warm-up, though others stated that they enjoyed this section.

On leaving the session, participant recall of key aspects of the session was high, indicating particularly high engagement within the group.

Final comments indicated high levels of satisfaction, including:

- “Fantastic trainer - made for a very interactive session.”
- “Needs more time to delve deeper.”

Changes to the programme schedule

It took longer than anticipated to start this programme of workshops in 2023, in part due to delays in the set-up of UAR Oceania in Australia. Bella arrived in Australia in April 2023, and the first workshop ran in July 2023, five months later than originally anticipated.

From July 2023 to August 2024, workshops ran approximately monthly, with the Victoria workshop repeated in November, to ensure successful delivery.

It is not possible to run workshops during January in Australia and New Zealand, as the research sector is minimally staffed. The programme paused in November 2023 and resumed in February 2024. During 2024 a second New Zealand workshop ran in Wellington, and further workshops ran in Tasmania and South Australia.

Workshops in Australia Capital Territory (ACT) and Northern Territory (NT) were planned but proved impossible to schedule. In ACT this was due to minimal engagement from potential hosts locally despite several approaches. In NT no appropriate host institution was identified.

A lack of remaining funding meant that a planned further workshop in New Zealand’s South Island did not take place as part of this programme, but UAR Oceania still hope to schedule this workshop at a future date.

Project funding

It was determined that \$7,000 AUD would be needed to fund the outlined programme of work in Oceania. Funding was awarded from two sources:

\$4,660 from ICLAS (equivalent to €3,000)

\$2,340 from ANZLAA

ANZLAA provided funding in return for co-branding on workshop related materials.

A total of nine workshops ran across Oceania. Associated costs were:

Flights:	\$2,097	\$3,767
Venue charges:	\$315	\$315
Accommodation:	\$250	\$1,718
Subsistence:	\$169	\$420
Ground transport:	\$300	\$620
Print:		\$200

Total spend: \$7,040

These costs have been achieved by running workshops back-to-back with marketing activities and meetings for UAR Oceania.

Concluding thoughts

Although fewer workshops ran than had originally been projected, the programme met its objectives in terms of delivering communications training specific to animal research in a format that had not previously been available to the research communities of Australia and New Zealand.

Overall, this programme exceeded expectations in both the range of organisations it reached and the strong participant feedback from the workshops, showing a clear need for training and further communications support relating to the use of animals in scientific research across Oceania. Some harder-to-reach regions, particularly those where UAR Oceania was unable to identify a local partner, require further groundwork to build initial connections to ensure the viability of workshops. While workshop delivery in these areas was not yet feasible, they may be a valuable focus for future programmes, helping to identify and establish links to the wider Australian and New Zealand animal research community. Successful engagement with the research community in these more remote areas would require a specific, focused programme.

The experience of running these workshops has provided UAR Oceania with a strong foothold in the region, having met many key stakeholders. It has also provided a starting point for addressing the challenges of connecting and working with more remote communities in Australia, New Zealand and beyond.

Bella Lear
Chief Executive
UAR Oceania, 14 May 2025