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## **Australian Story – Monday 2 October, 8pm, ABC and ABC iview.**

### **CALL OF THE WILD – BELINDA GREEN AND DR HOWARD RALPH**

Former Miss World Belinda Green wasn't expecting her life to change radically in her sixties. But that's what happened when she moved to the country and began working with a vet who specialises in wildlife.

Belinda's life had already taken some interesting twists and turns. Her beauty was the ticket out of a harsh and difficult childhood and, in 1972, she was crowned Miss World on a London stage.

"It was like that split second changed my life forever," she says.

Back in Sydney, she became the "it" girl of the 1970s. She was a successful model and married high-profile advertising executive John Singleton. When that relationship ended in divorce, she forged a career in daytime TV and raised their daughters, Jess and Sally.

But something was missing.

Following a move to the bush with her new husband Steve, she began caring for injured kangaroos and wallabies. It was while trying to find help for one of these animals that she heard about a brilliant vet specialising in wildlife.

Dr Howard Ralph runs his charity, Southern Cross Wildlife Care, out of an old woolshed near Braidwood in NSW. People drive for hours with sick or injured wildlife to visit the clinic.

"If Howard can't fix it, no one can," Belinda says.

Both a medical doctor and a wildlife vet, Howard brings a lifetime of experience to caring for animals that are generally forgotten or discarded by the side of the road.

"Wildlife *can* be treated," Dr Ralph says, "and equally importantly they *should* be treated."

That meeting with Dr Ralph would change Belinda's life completely. Inspired by his passion and dedication, Belinda began a veterinary nursing course.

“To study a university course online, for a person that can’t work computers that well, was a big, big task but she stuck to it,” husband Steve says.

In a country that often takes its wildlife for granted, Belinda had finally found her life’s calling.

“That empty little piece of me that’s always been there, which I guess is finding that passion inside me, now has been filled thanks to Howard,” she says.

Producer: Vanessa Gorman.

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