
From: Dr Stephen Van Mil
Sent: Thursday, 28 September 2023 7:20 PM
To: Portfolio Committee 4
Cc: Russell Mills
Subject: Re: Inquiry into the veterinary workforce shortage in New South Wales - Post hearing responses - Tuesday 29 August

Dear Sarah

Apologies for my delay in responding.

First, the transcript pertaining to my evidence is accurate, true and correct.

Secondly, in response to the question on notice re the 16 recommendations made by the Australian Veterinary Association, I offer the following in [blue](#):

Recommendation 1: The NSW Government commit to ongoing recognition and support of veterinarians to continue to build and maintain capacity for Emergency Animal Disease surveillance and response activities. [Strongly agree.](#)

Recommendation 2: The NSW Government consider the pressing concerns experienced by government veterinarians and conduct a comprehensive review and develop a proactive strategy to support the critical work of our government veterinarians, ensure the health of our livestock, and maintain our ability to respond effectively to biosecurity threats and animal welfare issues. [Agree.](#)

Recommendation 3: The NSW Government commit funding to AVA's wellness initiative, THRIVE to support veterinarians and veterinary staff to lead satisfying, prosperous and healthy careers. [I believe this warrants further investigation to assess the effectiveness of the AVA's wellness initiative THRIVE prior to any NSW Government funding commitment.](#)

Recommendation 4: The NSW Government consider funding a public awareness campaign to address the rising rates of verbal and physical assault of veterinary teams and to educate the community on the impact of their actions. For example, similar to the NSW Ambulance 'It's Never Okay' campaign. [Strongly agree.](#)

Recommendation 5: The NSW Government consider funding for the profession to provide work integrated learning (WIL) opportunities for overseas veterinarians wishing to work in NSW as well as funding to assist international NSW applicants undertake the Australian veterinary examination process without financial hardship. [Do not agree.](#)

Recommendation 6: The NSW Government support changes to visa provisions including lifting of the age cap for permanent residency to be in line with the human medical field. [Do not agree.](#)

Recommendation 7: The NSW Government provide resources to fund a think tank to develop an afterhours model that is sustainable for the profession and allows veterinary services to be delivered to the NSW community in both urban and rural areas 24/7. [I believe there are far more effective](#)

initiatives to address sustainable after-hours business models than a NSW Government funded "think tank".

Recommendation 8: The NSW Government Veterinary professionals are extended the same opportunities as other professions that are being encouraged to move to regional, rural and remote areas. [Strongly agree.](#)

Recommendation 9: The AVA calls upon the NSW Government to explore solutions that support the veterinary sector in its role with stray animals, addressing the key issues outlined and promoting overall animal health, welfare, and public health. [Agree.](#)

Recommendation 10: The NSW Government commits funding to develop and implement a framework that provides regulatory and appropriate financial support to the provision of veterinary services for lost, stray and homeless animals, injured wildlife and during emergency situations provided by all sectors of the profession (charities and the private veterinary sector). [Agree in general, and very strongly agree in regard to provision of veterinary services for injured wildlife and during emergency situations.](#)

Recommendation 11: The NSW Government through funding encourages industry and the veterinary profession to collaborate and develop a framework or solution that will improve integration of veterinary services into animal production systems that is workable for all parties. [Do not have a qualified opinion on this.](#)

Recommendation 12: The NSW Government support extending access to the national Translating and Interpreting Service for veterinarians. [Do not have a qualified opinion on this.](#)

Recommendation 13: The NSW Government provide funding to resource the development of prioritisation and planning of the longer-term strategies that will have the most effective workforce outcomes for all stakeholders the veterinary profession serves and the profession itself. [Would need to see more detail on what this request and recommendation is seeking.](#)

Recommendation 14: The NSW Government commit to legislative and regulatory reform to safeguard the role of the veterinary profession in the delivery of animal health and welfare, whilst making it adaptable to a constantly changing environment. This could be achieved by a review of the veterinary practice act and consider the interactions with other legislation including the prevention of cruelty to animals act. [Agree.](#)

Recommendation 15: The NSW Government considers funding around educational fee relief to encourage early career veterinarians to work in rural NSW. [Strongly agree, although this is more likely a Federal Government obligation.](#)

Recommendation 16: The NSW Government includes veterinarians in existing mechanisms to sustain medical and paramedical workers in rural areas of NSW. [Agree.](#)

Could I add please Sarah that in my opinion the major area that the AVA should be focussing on is mental health care for Veterinarians in Australia, and directly addressing the significant suicide rate in our profession, coupled with a very high burnout and dropout rate. Recommendation 3 is completely inadequate in directly addressing this, and quite frankly I am surprised and disappointed that the AVA has failed to recognise and respond to this significant and growing issue in our profession in any meaningful way.

Thank you for including Byron Bay Wildlife Hospital and myself in this Inquiry. I truly hope there are significant and meaningful outcomes

Best wishes

Stephen

Dr Stephen Van Mil
Founder and CEO

Byron Bay Wildlife Hospital www.byronbaywildlifehospital.org
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