THE UNIVERSITY OF SYDNEY

Sydney School of Veterinary Science
Faculty of Science

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Inquiry into the veterinary workforce shortage in New South Wales – Post-hearing responses – 30 August 2023

Please find below responses to questions on notice as outline in the transcript from Portfolio Committee No. 4 – Regional NSW on 30 August 2023 for the inquiry into the veterinary workforce shortage in New South Wales.

Please let me know if you require any further clarity.

Best wishes

Jacqueline Norris

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Question 1

What is the drop-out rate? (page 20 of transcript)

As part of every Australian veterinary school's annual report to the accreditation body, Veterinary Schools Accreditation Advisory Committee (VSAAC), we must report the rate of **relative attrition** (students who have failed, take a year off for health or personal reasons, etc, but intend returning to the veterinary program) and **absolute attrition** (students who have left the program permanently).

Below is a table from the Sydney School of Veterinary Science's 2022 annual report to VSAAC which shows an **absolute attrition rate ('drop-out rate')** of 1% to 3% in any year of the Doctor of Veterinary Medicine with most absolute attrition rates being 1% and mainly in the first couple of years of the degree. It is important to note that the high relative attrition rate in 2020-2021 is related to the COVID-19 pandemic limiting student progression for a range of reasons from financial to requirements to return home to rural areas in Australia or country of origin.

Year of Entry		Original Cohort Size	Class Size in Calendar Year										Students graduating from original cohort (a)
			EoY 1		EoY 2		EoY 3		EoY 4		EoY 5 (if applicable)		
N-4 2018	Relative attrition by calendar year # (%)	21	3	2%	4	3%	12	9%	1	1%	1	1%	
	Absolute attrition by calendar year # (%)	5	1	1%	3	2%	0	0%	1	1%	0	0%	108
	# remaining from original cohort*	133	129		122		110		108		7#		
N-3 2019	Relative attrition by calendar year # (%)	30	1	1%	9	7%	10	7%	10	7%			
	Absolute attrition by calendar year # (%)	7	4	3%	1	1%	2	1%	0	0%			97
	# remaining from original cohort	134	129		119		107		97				
N-2 2020	Relative attrition by calendar year # (%)	14	11	9%	3	3%	8	7%					
	Absolute attrition by calendar year # (%)	3	1	1%	2	2%	0	0%					
	# remaining from original cohort	118	106		101		93						
N-1 2021	Relative attrition by calendar year # (%)	36	30	25%	6	5%							
	Absolute attrition by calendar year # (%)	2	2	2%	0	0%							
	# remaining from original cohort	120	88		82								
N 2022	Relative attrition by calendar year # (%)	8	8	7%									
	Absolute attrition by calendar year # (%)	1	1	1%									
	# remaining from original cohort	120	111										

Question 2 (page 23)

What proportion of the student intake in each year of your schools are students that come from rural and regional areas?

Over the last 5 years the proportion of students entering the Doctor of Veterinary Medicine at the University of Sydney School of Veterinary Science has ranged from 8.3% to 15.7% with an average of 11.6%. Our goal is >25% which we hope to achieve through active student recruitment, altered entry requirements and major scholarship and pastoral support.

DVM student regional and remote data, last 5 years:

Year	Regional	Remote	Total Students	% Students Regional & Remote
2023	19	-	139	13.7%
2022	9	1	120	8.3%
2021	11	1	120	10%
2020	13	1	118	11.9%
2019	20	1	134	15.7%
TOTAL	72	1	631	11.6%

Question 3 (page 24)

Professor Norris I thought the last two dot points of page 16 of your submission were, in particular, quite interesting. Could I ask you to elucidate on them? They are under the heading 'Changes to governance or regulation'.

- **Exploration of opportunities to leverage NSW Department of Primary Industry for assistance with diagnostic testing, surveillance and advice, without cost to veterinarians or practitioners.**

As outlined in submission 204 by Dr Sharanne Raidal, Rural Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratories previously allowed the submission of samples and whole bodies for analysis and necropsies. This service was local to farmers and rural veterinary practitioners and provided a government supported free diagnostic service. This was critical to the early detection of important diseases of production animal species, reduced the cost to the farmer by making the veterinary service more affordable, assisted the veterinary practice to charge only for their time and procedures rather than passing the cost of external diagnostic services to the farmer. Return to this type of diagnostic service would be in Australia's best interest in surveillance of important emerging infectious diseases.

- **Exploration of opportunities to leverage NSW Health services especially in rural and remote areas.**

As outlined in Mr Payne's comments, students studying in any of the human health fields have accommodation and other facilities, bursaries and other support provided to them for clinical placements during their training. This significantly offsets the cost students incur when they visit placements distant from their home whether its urban, rural or remote. Equally NSW Health services such as diagnostic testing (blood tests, diagnostic imaging) could be available at a cost to rural and remote veterinary practices. This would provide a better and more affordable service to veterinary practitioners and their clients than the requirement for expensive machines, transport of patients over long distance for diagnostic imaging or prolonged transport of blood samples to urban areas at great cost via veterinary diagnostic labs and artifactual changes caused by significant delays in sample processing (eg blood for testing taking 2 days to arrive at an urban lab can create major changes in the reliability of the sample being tested).