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The CHAIR: You've got a voluntary registration scheme at the moment and you said that you have 1,000 members already registered. Is there a registration fee or an accreditation fee that you charge for that?

GARY FITZGERALD: Yes, there is a registration fee.

The CHAIR: What is that fee? You can take that on notice if you like.

Answer 1:

The annual registration fees for the voluntary Australian Veterinary Nurse and Technician Registration Scheme (AVNAT), can be accessed here: [Categories and fees \(vnca.asn.au\)](http://vnca.asn.au). Please note that the fees mentioned here are accurate at the time of this reply.

Our registration fees go towards the administration of the scheme by our association administration company contracted by the VNCA as all positions within committees and the boards are held by volunteers.

For non-members, the AVNAT registration for Registered Veterinary Nurses (RVN) or Registered Veterinary Technologists (RVT) is \$140.00 (excluding GST). The AVNAT listing for Student Veterinary Nurses (SVN) or Student Veterinary Technologists (SVT) is \$70.00 (excluding GST).

If you are a member of the VNCA, you benefit from a significant discount. VNCA members pay \$70.00 (excluding GST) for AVNAT registration (RVN or RVT) and \$35.00 (excluding GST) for AVNAT listing (SVN or SVT).



Question 2: Page 8

The CHAIR: My only other question for you is that one of the other suggestions you say that regulation will provide is an alignment with international standards. Once again, are you talking about that postgraduate education or are there also concerns about the alignment of our current diploma courses et cetera with international standards? Do we need to look at our vocational education courses and our university courses in terms of their alignment with international standards as well?

It's essential to recognize that the consistency of training can vary among providers of the Certificate 4 program in terms of course structure, student support, and assessment methods. Additionally, the clinical training environment, where students undertake placements, can also influence their training experience. Various veterinary clinics possess varying capabilities in training and mentoring students, as well as differing access to facilities, experienced staff with clinical teaching skills, and equipment.

The high attrition rates among veterinary nurses and technicians transitioning out of clinical roles result in students losing access to experienced and highly skilled individuals within clinics. As highlighted in our submission, these attrition rates are associated with factors such as inadequate remuneration, underutilization, lack of recognition, and the absence of clear career pathways within clinical settings.

Furthermore, it's crucial to understand that new graduates are expected to possess certain day-one competencies, which represent a minimum standard. Experienced veterinary nurses and technicians should continuously build on these day-one competencies through ongoing clinical and non-clinical training and skill development. We believe that Veterinary Nurse and Technician registration and regulation can significantly impact the workloads of our veterinarian colleagues in this context. Ambiguous legislation currently restricts the roles of veterinary nurses and technicians, allowing unqualified individuals to assist veterinarians in clinical tasks without proper training, potentially affecting animal welfare.

Expanding the utilization of Vocational Veterinary Nurses and Degree-Qualified Veterinary Technologists and Nurses, granting them autonomy and accountability in their roles, would positively affect veterinarians and create opportunities to enhance access to veterinary care, particularly in areas with limited veterinarian availability, such as rural and regional areas, biosecurity, wildlife treatment and care, production animal and animal shelters.

In clinical settings, it would be advantageous to establish a structured framework that includes an advanced Veterinary Nurse position or Nurse Practitioner role, filled by registered degree-qualified technicians and nurses, as well as registered experienced Certificate 4 veterinary nurses. With clearly defined roles, these positions could significantly alleviate the workload while maintaining a high standard of care, especially when veterinarians are unavailable.



Question 3: Page 11

The Hon. CAMERON MURPHY: is there a particular model that you would suggest should be adopted in New South Wales? Does Western Australia work or does it have issues with it? What's your preferred view of how that should happen? I am happy for you to take it on notice.

Our preference leans toward the establishment of a national registration body, ideally under the AVBC, responsible for accrediting qualifications and providing protection of title. This body could make recommendations to individual states for integration into their respective legislation. Specifically, for mandatory registration, both the WA model and the AVNAT scheme are suitable options.

However, the challenge lies in addressing issues related to utilization and autonomy within the Veterinary Nurse and Technician cohort. While registration, as seen in the WA model, controls who can work as a veterinary nurse, it currently lacks a value-adding structure for roles, accountability, and autonomy. To effectively alleviate the workloads of veterinarians, we need experienced and qualified professionals who can operate beyond basic competencies. This necessitates recognition of higher education, such as bachelor's degree programs and potential specialization opportunities for Veterinary Technicians within Australia. Presently, no option in any state accommodates this level of professional growth.

These issues also align with the outdated Award. Roles within the Award often terminate at the minimum qualification level. For instance, a Certificate 4 veterinary nurse with ten years of experience may receive the same pay as a new graduate with the same qualification, despite significant differences in their contributions. Moreover, the Award fails to recognize higher education programs, such as the Diploma of Veterinary Nursing, Bachelor of Veterinary Technology, and Bachelor of Veterinary Nursing, as well as specialization. These professionals are restricted in providing additional value, as they currently lack recognition in legislation or by a mandatory regulatory body.

For meaningful change, it is crucial to consider a national award that can align with individual state-based registration while benefiting from the oversight and recommendations of national regulatory bodies. Additionally, we recommend the inclusion of Veterinary Nurse and Technician representatives on governing boards, mirroring the positive experience observed in Western Australia.

In summary, our key proposals are:

1. Achieve nationally recognised accreditation of qualifications, mandatory registration and protection of title with qualification-based definitions for Registered veterinary Nurses and Registered Veterinary Technologists.
2. Task the regulatory body with defining roles and responsibilities that can be incorporated into state-based legislation.



3. Modernize the Award to encompass "value-added" roles.
4. Incorporate Veterinary Nurse and Veterinary Technologist representatives into state and national governing bodies to ensure stakeholder inclusion in the governance of the Veterinary Nurse and Technician profession.

For the purpose of mandatory registration only, the WA model or AVNAT scheme would both be appropriate.

For more information on our AVNAT scheme Framework and policies can be found here.

<https://www.vnca.asn.au/avnat-registration-scheme-/framework-policies/>