

**Submission
No 8**

**INQUIRY INTO VETERINARY WORKFORCE SHORTAGE
IN NEW SOUTH WALES**

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I am writing my submission as a part of the veterinary workforce, as a rural mixed practice vet (NSWV12625). Working in the New England region of NSW in the small town of Guyra and being a recent grad (2022 graduate) I have seen first hand the impact of the veterinary crisis on surrounding clinics and communities my colleges work in.

The factors that I believe which are impacting veterinary care in NSW and Australia wide are a lack of practicing mixed and small animal vets. The lack of vets is evident as seen in job advert websites such as Kookuburra employment which has at the time of writing this 108 jobs in regional NSW alone. This number has stayed the same since my class graduated last year, which should have taken 60 jobs of the market. CSU Wagga is in a lucky position in which we have 0-minimal international students, meaning more jobs are filled by Australian graduates, unlike other universities which have commonwealth supported places only reserved for approx. 20% of each year cohort. For international placed students which is similar in all degrees and evident especially in medicine degrees, it is cheaper for them to complete their degrees in Australia then return to their home countries such as the USA. These students once graduated return back to their home country leaving the rest of Australia stranded with minimal fresh faces in our OWN workforce.

Dr Oliva Liyou, summed up the problems in the vet industry extremely well in an AVA presentation he performed. These include

- "1. Long hours for pay
2. Failing to seek mental health and physical health services.
3. Massive attrition rates- avg years of work is 5.
4. Despite ample amount of graduates- shortage of vets
5. Unhealthy lifestyle due to the make up of the industry, missing lunches due to workload not being able to exercise due to long and consistent work hours.
6. Public perception vets are paid equally when compared to human medicine.
7. Lay persons directly competing with vets- these professions have substantially lower overheads, answer to no disciplinary board and don't undertake the amount of training and debt veterinarians do.
8. People turning to other professions for animal health enquiries."

There is immense pressure from lay people such as cattle pregnancy testers and equine tooth floaters, which compete for our day to day work. Things such as pregnancy testing and equine dentals are the bread and butter of many regional/rural clinics which keeps them alive. Leaving many vets and clinics having to do much of the left over 'emergency work' which is high stress for both the client and vet. This leaves us more vulnerable to mental and emotional abuse from clients as they are highly strung at these times. If we left to take the leftovers from professions like this it undermines business models. Understandingly with the shortage of working vets servicing all these clients with these services is hard. I know professions such as farriers and equine tooth floaters are pushing to be allowed radiation licenses and access to sedation. This will not fix any problems but indeed will put undue stress on the veterinary profession.

I myself have seen this first hand responding to a colic horse, when I arrived the horse was laterally recumbent with the owner stating the farrier gave an unknown sedative to ease the pain, this made for proper treatment of this horse extremely hard, and compromised the welfare of this animal. This farrier would have acquired these sedatives from somewhere and would have been under the instructions to use for shoeing horses, but went outside their limits and was practicing an act of veterinary medicine. These drugs have a wide range of side effects and can be extremely dangerous in the hands of untrained people. This is not a once of story and many clinicians have similar.

In short I believe some solutions that could be used to combat this shortage of vets in practice are:

- More commonwealth supported places at universities AND/OR compulsory 2-3years work placement in Australia post graduation

- More support for graduating vets to enter regional practice, whether that is a monetary value in regards to HECs debt or other support such as relocation bursaries.
- Public education through support of the AVA, to educate the public that human medical services are markedly more expensive than they are charged which has a direct impact on consumers expectation of our costs
- A greater emphasis placed on the importance of vets for monitoring and diagnosing exotic and endemic diseases which have a direct impact on the Australian economy. Diseases such as foot and mouth and lumpy skin disease which if was diagnosed in Australia would have devastating impact on the economy and food supply within Australia.
- Government overhaul of the pet insurance industry allowing it to be more transparent and allow us to push this for our clients more. Easing the financial pressure on the profession and the client. Resulting in better outcomes for the animal
- Regulate lay persons. This includes insurance, history taking similar to us and license them, tax invoices, ensure they know the acts of veterinary science and ensure they don't cross the line.