

Submission
No 39

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

Name: Name suppressed

Date Received: 29 June 2023

Partially
Confidential

To whom it may concern,

Thank you for organising this enquiry. As an equine veterinary surgeon I am in the middle of this problem. I have worked at several clinics in Australia in recent years and the problems have remained the same - attracting qualified veterinarians remains a challenge.

Compared to other countries in which I have worked the hurdles encountered in employing veterinarians in Australia is huge.

Our clinic requires various levels of staffing during the year (season - off season). Hurdles and costs related with VISA applications have become very restrictive in order to get international staff as local veterinarians are not available in sufficient numbers.

One major restrictive process is the protective attitude of local veterinary boards. In order to practice in a State a veterinarian has to be registered with the local veterinary board. The vet boards do not recognise EAEVE <https://www.eave.org> certified diplomas, which is the European standard. Vet boards only restrict to provide certifications to veterinarians with American and Australian/New Zealand education. This protective attitude based on historical reasons lead to reduced ability to get access to qualified veterinarians and lengthy and costly processes without guaranteed success if highly qualified vets are being "imported".

I am myself an example of this. I am an equine veterinarian with 20 years of experience, Have a degree from Ghent University (currently ranked world best veterinary university <https://www.shanghairanking.com/rankings/gras/2022/RS0304> / <https://cwur.org/2017/subjects.php#Veterinary%20Sciences>) which is EAEVE accredited allowing me to work freely in the European Union. I have as such worked and am certified in 7 European countries including the UK.

I further hold two specialist degrees and a PhD in equine surgery. Am an associate professor in equine surgery. Yet, I am not allowed to work unsupervised in Australia. My practice is restricted to University settings.

The irony of my situation is that on a daily basis I teach the next generation of Australian veterinarians, have seen about 500 of them graduate in the last years. And according to the rules two years after graduation they could serve themselves as my supervisor.

This situation has led several private and academic institutions to fail to attract highly qualified staff over the past decades. Positions in Universities have not uncommonly remained vacant for many many years, often never filled because of issues with mutual recognition of degrees.

Veterinary medicine particularly large animal medicine is further not an attractive employment currently. The long hours and pay are not generally the reasons for dissatisfaction. Yet the ongoing demands of the clients and their unwillingness to pay for veterinary services. Australia compared to other countries has poor regulation in relation to veterinary acts and particularly drug use in animals. Animals owners can procure themselves many drugs off the shelves, particularly vaccinations and anthelmintics which would normally be an occasion for veterinarians to annually see an animal and check upon its health. These routine assessments are important for the animals welfare but also for the vet client relationship and to provide steady income streams for practices. Though, owners very regularly only use veterinarians for emergency situations demanding 24/7 care of their animals putting huge logistical, personal and financial pressure on practices.

Australia is a great place to work as a veterinarian, and there are many vets I know that would be willing to move and work here, but can't due to legislation.

Best regards