

**Submission
No 43**

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

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VETERINARY WORKFORCE SHORTAGE IN N.S.W.

SUPPLY OF VETERINARIANS:

1. UNIVERSITY SELECTION OF VETERINARY STUDENTS.

Currently most Faculty of Veterinary Sciences select undergraduates on the highest ATAR. This selection process has led to a very significant gender bias in the demographic of students entering the Faculty. All educationalists are aware that females mature at an earlier age than males thereby unfairly advantaging females at the end of NSW Secondary Education.

Finally, few universities interview prospective undergraduates to determine the suitability of candidates entering the Faculty.

2. STATE OF UNIVERSITIES' FACULTIES OF VETERINARY SCIENCE.

The Faculties appear to be very underfunded.

This is evident in the closure of a number of Large Animal Facilities which had provided teaching to undergraduates at a number of universities eg Sydney University/Melbourne University.

As a consequence a large percentage of final year students' education is being provided by placements into veterinary practices throughout the state.

This is an abdication of their responsibility in not providing facilities and teaching staff for large animals.

3. SUPPORT OF NEW GRADUATES

The A.V.A. has initiated a mentoring program for new graduates to try and stem the exodus of new graduates from the profession.

Many practices are providing post graduate internships which increases the retention rate.

4. RETENTION OF VETERINARIANS IN PRACTICE.

Remuneration of veterinarians in private practice particularly in country areas is a significant factor in the exit of veterinarians to more lucrative endeavours.

Remuneration in rural areas is very much related to clients ability to pay for veterinary services. The value of livestock also comes into the equation.

With the critical shortage of veterinarians, work hours are extended and "time off " is reduced which further exacerbates the problem.

Work/Life balance needs to be addressed.

Physical ability of veterinarians is also a consideration.



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2.

SOLUTIONS

1. Resolve the gender bias of students entering the Faculties of Veterinary Science.
2. As in some medical schools, entrance should be 50% female, 50% male.
3. The faculties should reinvest in large animal facilities and teaching staff.
4. As there is no medicare support for veterinarians, governments will need to provide assistance for veterinary practices and practitioners in rural areas.

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