

Submission  
No 47

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

**Name:** Name suppressed

**Date Received:** 4 July 2023

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Partially  
Confidential

I have worked in the veterinary industry mostly, mixed practice, since 1993. Like most employed vets I have worked in permanent, part time and casual roles whilst raising children.

Problems with regional practice is the demand for on call and the poor wages of vets compared to other professionals. When I first graduated cheap housing and a less stressed clientele, due to more affordable vet services, made the sacrifices of regional vetting worthwhile.

The award pay rates for veterinary surgeons remains appallingly low and should be addressed through an industry submission. Veterinary employers must value their employed vets. I think the old idea was, you do the hard yards ( poor pay and long hours) and then become a partner. These days have gone, partly because of a female dominated workforce and the corporate models. If you are raising children the partner with the lower income typically keeps less employed hours to manage family needs.

The HECS debt is too high and a submission to have this reduced or exempt for regional vets should be supported. The HECS debt of my daughter at Sydney University studying Veterinary Science is already at \$52 316 and is being indexed at 7.1%. I graduated with a HECS debt of about 6K and noted the impact of the extra tax on take home wages. I am sure the take home pay of graduating vets today will be an inadequate reward for study.

The emergence of corporate vets is a disaster, with protocol style medicine increasing costs to clients and not improving outcomes. This has an immediate effect on client relationships which reduces job satisfaction. Vets are being compared to dentists even though the workers remain on wages far below those with similar University Qualifications. Vet practices should be managed by vets as the HR models being adopted by non veterinary practice managers is accelerating work place tensions. The veterinary job has always needed informed flexible managers that know the job, vets. I have watched multiple vets resign over the last few years in a busy regional practice.

The solution to less vets is NOT to flood the market with lower qualifications. This will never allow for a long term attraction of our top students. The Veterinary Schools need to demand high standards as the job requires this. Veterinary skills are well regarded because of the need to think creatively and problem solve. This is embedded with 5 years of hard study to understand multidisciplinary knowledge. Technology and veterinary nurses can not replace the highly trained skills of vets. I have experienced the move towards allowing nurse consults and believe this is a lesser service to our clients. The corporate model is not working as it does not enable young vets to aspire to own a practice and run their own business.

To attract vets to the regions recognise it as an essential service and provide housing, remove HECS and support wage increases. Ideally encourage competition away from corporates . Government Pet insurance for pensioners might help to reduce the day to day stress vets experience in practice. DPI roles could be extended as higher wages from State Government awards and a more mentored approach for new graduates might make regional vet work less isolating and appealing.