

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

Name: Name suppressed

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Partially
Confidential

My thoughts on vet practice nowadays after working as an employed veterinarian in mixed and small private practice over more than 20 years.

1. Viability of rural practice. When I first was in practice, rural practice was supported and subsidised by government disease control programs and government funded laboratory testing was available for livestock producers. This helped make rural practices viable in smaller towns, and able to offer some wage parity with urban practices. Producers were more likely to use veterinarians for additional nongovernment work when the mileage costs and callout fees were paid as part of government programs, rather than full fee call out to a single on farm case. This served to get vets onto farms and their potential for input be recognised and used

2. Centralisation. The centralisation of after hours care has emerged, relieving the after hours burden on urban practices - but making practices (such as rural practices) doing their own after hours work less attractive for vets looking for work. Current wage disparity between urban and rural practice wouldn't be helping here either. Outer urban practices also do have some wage and workload disparity, as owners cannot afford veterinary fees as easily in lower socioeconomic outer urban areas. There is a price point where clients cut back on use of veterinary services, which is noticeable in the outer urban practice where I work during the current interest rate cycle.

Practices in an outer urban area, such as where I currently work, also seem less able to attract veterinary staff because of long commutes and less access to inner urban amenities and social life.

3. Employed veterinarian wages, career paths. General practice wages for experienced vets are much less than those for vets in specialist practices, and it seems that many graduates now head into higher level training. The high student debt burden no doubt in my mind would be a factor in seeking the higher wages and specialist training. In general practice there is no mandated wage recognition or increase for employed vets after two years from graduation, despite the higher expectations and training workload on very experienced longer term employed vets.

4. The lack of employees wanting to fill positions in outer urban general and rural practice, plus low wages for remaining employees working harder because of this, is what I find is very demoralising. As no doubt do other employed vets.

5. Client expectations have also changed, and often are now based on many not so reliable sources of advice online, not just solid veterinary advice. We seem to have to work harder to overcome such misconceptions and have some pet owners to accept good veterinary advice which will help their animal,