

**Submission
No 50**

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

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Vet Mental Health

Factors contributing to stress of veterinarians

- Low pay. Inadequate Animal Industry Award.
- Long working hours. Tiredness management
- Lack of professional support in Practice.
- Lack of Mentors.
- Feeling of not being able to change roles/job in older vets
- Access to lethal drugs
- Lack of recognition and management of mental conditions such as depression, anxiety, bipolar, perfectionism, . Mental health first aid courses.
- Lack of community understanding of generally low veterinarian remuneration
- Lack of public understanding of costs of veterinary hospital provision.
- Lack of community respect/esteem for the profession?
- Harassment by clients: - verbally, physically and on social media.
- Lack of veterinary health insurance for pets.
- Lack of collegiality and social gathering between vets in some areas and teams in some practices.
- Difficulties caused to families by the vet's role.
- Performance of patient euthanasia, especially subjective "economic euthanasia"
- Lack of community understanding of vet fees and the
- "rip-off" response.
- The sometime perception of clients of the "cheapness" and disposability of animal life.
- Levels of confidence with doing surgery and running technology.
- Burden of HEC debt.
- Ability to do affordable quality CPD/CE particularly in rural areas.
- Access to internet and technology in isolated areas.
- Lack of flexibility to work in with parenting and family responsibilities.
- Graduates are not "practice ready" when arriving from University.
- Incidence of quitting the profession. Why are people quitting? At what stage post graduation?

LOW REMUNERATION.

The perception that the Award is seriously flawed: -

- Wage amounts grossly inadequate.
- Need for more incremental steps.
- More rapid movement through the steps.
- Recognition of skills such as management, surgery, etc.

Paying above award allows trade off on welfare provisions of Award such as length of shifts, total hours worked, breaks, after-hours loading, call-in fees, penalty rates, split shifts.

Ideally should stick to welfare conditions of Award when paying above Award.

Setting ludicrously low starting and low ceiling pay rates is alienating to new vets and discouraging to experienced vets.

Award should offer sureness of remuneration, security and flexibility. Award should encourage longevity in employment (in profession and in each job)

EDUCATION OF PUBLIC ON COST STRUCTURE OF A VETERINARY HOSPITAL

- Facility cost...rent, purchase.
- Maintenance costs.
- Utilities ... electricity, water, gas, phone, social media, O2,
- Waste management
- Rates ... council, body corporate etc.
- Registrations and licensing.
- Equipment purchases and maintenance
- Drug/pharmacy inventory costs.
- Staff ... reception, managers, veterinarians, nurses, kennel attendants and others
- Compliance costs with OHS, etc., etc.
- Insurances.
- Continuing education.
- Pathology fees.
- Support of Animal Welfare initiatives e.g. Native animal care.

The public compares our fees to their own medical costs, which are largely subsidised by government.

The PBS pegs the costs of medications for people.

Compared to the same procedures performed in people, our costs to animal owners are shoestring and have great value. We individually need to promote the VALUE of the work we do.

OTHER AWARDS AND RATES OF PAY FOR OTHER PROFESSIONS

- Dentistry, Medicine, Pharmacy, Engineering, Agriculture?
- Actual wages paid in the profession via previous surveys.
- Comparison to retail, ancillary medical fields.

AGEISM

Lack of perceived value of experience?

Perception of older vets that they are trapped in the profession/Practice/job.

Lack of utilization of the wide range of soft skills possessed by older practitioners in teaching inexperienced veterinarians.

Unfamiliarity with new diagnostic modalities can be challenging to self-confidence.

Lack of skills/hobbies out of the profession in readiness for retirement.

PET INSURANCE.

Spreads out the economic burden of animal care for clients.

Enables fuller treatment of cases where economic euthanasia may have previously occurred.

Permits fuller investigation of cases and a higher level of animal care and professional satisfaction.

UNIVERSITY TRAINING OF VETS.

Resilience, coping strategies taught?

Business training?

Practice ready graduates?

Reluctance of grads to move away from population centres.

MOTIVATION TO BE A VET

Advice given on the cost of course and the remuneration to be expected?

Are decisions made on warm and fuzzy perceptions ...? "I love animals"

Our profession is a people handling profession. Do incoming people have these skills?

COMMITTEE TO LOOK AT VETERINARY MENTAL HEALTH.

- Vets/nurses who have attempted suicide.
- Family members of suicided vets.
- Retired vets with compassion and commitment to this cause.
- Representatives of universities.
- Corporate practice representative.
- PhD student to conduct targeted research.
- AVA
- Psychologist with mental health background
- HR
- Clients
- Small practice reps
- Small animal and large animal
- City and rural.