

Submission
No 69

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

Name: Name suppressed

Date Received: 9 July 2023

Partially
Confidential

I appreciate the opportunity to lodge a submission. I am writing as a small animal veterinarian working for a corporate owned suburban clinic.

I have been a vet for 16 years. I began in mixed animal practice but left due to geographical isolation, risk of injury and low pay compared to "city salaries". I have worked in small animal practice for small business owners and now work for a corporation. I have mentored new graduates for most of my career.

I propose the following:

Improved selection of veterinary students. While a high level of knowledge and skill is required to be a vet, emotional intelligence and resilience are just as important. Most graduates are either not suitable or are unprepared for "real world" veterinary care. There should be an interview process to assess a student's suitability for veterinary practice.

Unlike IQ, EQ is not "fixed", it should be taught as part of the veterinary degree.

Students need to be taught how to manage conversations with clients about money, to understand when clients are emotional, upset and stressed, to manage conflict with clients.

Students need to be taught strategies to manage their own stress and build their resilience.

Ongoing support of new graduates after graduation. Corporations have great internship options. They provide education, mentoring and emotional support for graduates. They should have retention bonuses set up for 1-5 years to help support veterinarians to stay in the industry.

Review of the current award and banding for the industry based on qualifications, years of experience and skill set. The current award is not in line with industry standards. Most veterinarians have to negotiate pay in relation to how much income they can generate. This type of negotiation can be difficult for people that are in a service industry and can result in pay inequality between vets within clinics and within the industry.

The AVA to play a larger role in support of veterinarians, through representation of vets and more visible media campaigns. The current cost of AVA membership is very high compared to the "value" of membership. Traditionally the AVA has not been representative of the majority of the working vet population. They are not a union and traditionally represented clinic owners rather than employees. They have not adequately represented veterinarians in regards to award reviews, fair pay and work life balance.

Client education about the true cost of veterinary care. We are very lucky in Australia to have a Medicare and PBS systems. Clients often simply do not know how much diagnostic testing, medications, surgery and treatments cost.

More affordable and flexible childcare options. A huge barrier to female vets returning to work is the cost and inflexibility of childcare. Parents working within industries with skills shortages like ours should be given additional rebates.

I highly recommend this book to everyone involved in this inquiry:

Coping with Stress and Burnout as a Veterinarian

An Evidence-Based Solution to Increase Wellbeing

By: Nadine Hamilton

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