

Submission
No 86

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

Organisation: Name suppressed

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Partially
Confidential

The ability to provide professional and timely veterinary services has become harder and harder. We have become busier, with the expectations (and anxiety) from the public higher, and the resources to perform those procedures harder to come by. This has increased the stress on the workforce, leading to a decrease in satisfaction and mental wellbeing.

We are a group of 3 clinics that currently employs 11 vets. Over the last 3 years we took the decision to stop visiting horses and other large animals due to the inability to service these calls as our small animal practice grew. This caused some stress within the community but was a decision that was needed to protect the practice despite a potential negative outcome for patients and the clinics perception.

We have managed to employ a vet from South Africa recently. Supposedly this was a fast tracked method but it still took 7 months to achieve, despite paying for immigration lawyers. The application apparently sat dormant for 2 months whilst awaiting a police check in South Africa. There seems little point in fast tracking this end if things are at a snail pace elsewhere. The obvious question is why are we forced to poach vets from other countries who presumably could do with their own trained vets, why are we unable to produce enough of our own with enough varied skills for both rural and urban requirements?

There is an increasing number of complaints to the vet surgeons board. There will be multiple factors involved but primarily, my belief, is it is due to a difficulty to provide first class service 24/7, day after day, with reduced resources and increased (possibly unrealistic) expectations from the public. These complaints lead to suffering on the vets part, we are in a caring profession and to be accused of failing in that leads to self doubt, feelings of failure and not unsurprisingly people leave. Whilst some complaints may be justified, a lot appear relatively frivolous/minor made by people wanting to be heard and I'm not sure a full blown complaint to the vsb is the best avenue for this.

Currently it feels as though the vet profession is in a downward spiral, which is interesting in an industry with increased demand. Most industries with the same increase in demand over the last few years would be blowing their trumpets from the tree tops. Increased workload and expectations are being managed by fewer vets leading to burn out and more leaving the industry. Worse still a lot of those leaving are experienced vets who have brought forward retirement because it's not as rewarding as it used to be and far more demanding so why keep fighting on an uphill struggle.

We are struggling to accommodate the requests for consults. We occasionally can not offer appointments as required. Occasionally telling clients to seek help elsewhere. This has led to detrimental results for pets and negative comments on social media accusing us of not caring because we have been unable to see them. There becomes pressure to squeeze more in because you don't want to be accused of not helping, but that will only lead to overwork, risk of missing a diagnosis, more complaints and then dissatisfaction and people leaving the industry.

We need more access to employ vets, vets who are willing to work outside of Sydney and give it a fair crack. We would be able to expand our business and offer improved facilities and outcomes. There is an oversubscription for the vet courses and yet a lack of available vets. Many places in the vet courses are for overseas students so the universities can earn more money from them, so there are fewer places for local students, fewer local graduates. Then local vet clinics like ourselves need to employ overseas educated vets (without local training and experience in local diseases and conditions) and pay extra for the privilege. It seems a very bizarre state of affairs and the situation is likely only to get worse without rectification.