

Submission
No 147

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

Name: Name suppressed

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Partially
Confidential

The shortage of veterinarians in Australia has resulted in a number of problems. Firstly, there is a lack of access to veterinary care particularly in rural and remote regions. This means that animals in these areas may not receive the necessary medical attention, leading to potential health risks and suffering.

The limited number of veterinarians results in increased workloads for those in practice, which can have negative implications for both animal welfare and the well-being of the veterinarians themselves. Animals are unable to receive the treatment they require, and veterinarians are faced with overwhelming workloads.

With limited facilities in the cities for impounded animals and councils seemingly invested in convenience killing, veterinarians and their staff must deal with damaging mental health effects of euthanasing healthy and often young animals on a daily basis.

According to the Australian Pet Welfare Foundation, 42% of all cats impounded by Australian councils are euthanased (Chua 2022 MPhil thesis) . In some shires in NSW rates are over 70%.

Veterinarians are people who have a passion for animals and their welfare. They study for at least five years but on completion they then face the reality in general practice of killing many healthy animals and having to treat those animals that are subjected to the worst cruelty that humans inflict on defenceless creatures. It is well documented that veterinarians and their allied staff have increased mental health issues: an increased risk of depression; traumatic stress; substance abuse; high blood pressure; sleeplessness; burnout and suicide.

Key suggestions to help alleviate the mental health decline and abandonment of Veterinary practices would be -

1. For governments to Fund the desexing of all cats and dogs in NSW. In the cities this is the Number One need to reduce Veterinarian burnout and has the bonus of helping to reduce Councils need for convenience killing and for cat and dog welfare simultaneously as there would be fewer stray and abandoned animals.
2. To increase the number of veterinarians which would ease the workload and shortages of vet care governments could reduce university fees and provide financial incentives to work in areas of greatest need (such as rural and regional areas).
3. Fund the treatment of wildlife and animals that are unowned who are brought to the attention of veterinarians as vets must fund this care themselves. This adds to their workload and costs and means wildlife and free-living animals who are often victims of injuries from guns, fences and cars, may fail to receive the care they need.

Thankyou