

Submission  
No 201

## INQUIRY INTO VETERINARY WORKFORCE SHORTAGE IN NEW SOUTH WALES

**Organisation:** Veterinary Nurses Council of Australia

**Date Received:** 21 July 2023

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12/07/23

To Parliament of New South Wales.

Attn: The Director, Portfolio Committee 4, Parliament House, Macquarie Street, Sydney NSW 2000.

[PortfolioCommittee4@parliament.nsw.gov.au](mailto:PortfolioCommittee4@parliament.nsw.gov.au)

Veterinary workforce shortage in New South Wales - Inquiry submission

Organisation: Veterinary Nurses Council of Australia Inc.-

<https://www.vnca.asn.au/>

Contact name: Gary Fitzgerald, President

Please find below a submission on behalf of the Veterinary Nurses Council of Australia (VNCA) and its members regarding the inquiry into Veterinary workforce shortage in New South Wales. This submission addresses the pressing issue of the veterinary workforce shortage in New South Wales (NSW) and the impact on the delivery of essential services by veterinarians, veterinary nurses, and technicians, particularly in regional, rural and remote areas. The current shortage not only places animals at risk but also jeopardizes the well-being of those employed in the veterinary profession. The reduced capacity resulting from the shortage long term will have severe implications on the production animal aspects of primary industry for biosecurity and food security, particularly in terms of surveillance. The inadequate availability of veterinary knowledge and services poses a significant risk to community demand and animal welfare.

The VNCA welcomes this inquiry and is hopeful that the outcomes will facilitate strategies and solutions to be implemented in NSW that can be used on a national level. The VNCA would also like to note the necessity of ensuring that suitably trained, qualified, and regulated professionals are providing the provision of veterinary health care services is of the utmost importance in safeguarding the public interest, protecting public health, and maintaining high animal welfare standards. A key outcome the VNCA would like to see from this inquiry is the registration and regulation of veterinary nurses and technicians in the state of NSW and we would encourage the NSW government to work with AVBC and the Veterinary Nurses' Council of Australia (VNCA) to advance this initiative.

Please see responses below addressing the Terms of reference set out by the committee.

The Veterinary Nursing Council of Australia is the professional association that promotes the interests of Veterinary Nurses and Technicians across Australia. Twenty-nine percent of the VNCA's members reside and work in New South Wales (NSW) and come from all fields within the veterinary profession.

For this submission, the VNCA includes the title of Veterinary Technologist, in addition to Veterinary Nurse. In this context, Veterinary Technologists will be referred to by their common title of Veterinary Technicians as both terms can be assumed synonymous.

The VNCA recognises the skills and contributions of both veterinary nurses and veterinary technicians in the veterinary industry and within veterinary practice. Currently, the national vocational qualification (Vocational Education & Training Sector) for veterinary nurses in Australia is the Certificate IV in Veterinary Nursing established in 1998. The role of a 'veterinary nurse' in practice can be performed by a vocationally qualified veterinary nurse or by a higher education graduate with a Bachelor of Veterinary Technology.

<https://www.vnca.asn.au/public/11/files/Position%20Statements/Discussion%20paper%20VN%26VT.pdf>

<https://www.vnca.asn.au/membership/recognised-qualifications/>

***(d) the role of, and challenges affecting, veterinary nurses***

**The role of a veterinary nurse and veterinary technician**

Veterinary Nurses and Veterinary Technicians are integral members of the collective veterinary healthcare team. They provide specific veterinary nursing care and support under the direction and supervision of Veterinarians. They contribute to and support positive patient outcomes in veterinary practices across Australia including metropolitan, regional, and rural areas and within a range of practices including General Practice (small and large animals), Specialist Referral, Ambulatory, Wildlife and Teaching Facilities.

Veterinary Nurses and Technicians:

- Administer high-quality patient care throughout the patient's hospitalisation period.
- Educate and advise pet owners regarding preventative health, care and husbandry.
- Contribute to the health and wellbeing of society relating to the human animal bond and issues of public health.
- Perform complex technical skills to aid the veterinarian in the diagnosis and treatment of the patient.  
Including but not limited to:
  - Diagnostic imaging (licensed to take x-rays in some States)
  - Collection and processing of blood and other biological specimens for analysis
  - Intravenous access, fluid therapy, drug administration, chemotherapy and oxygen therapy.
  - Administration and monitoring of anaesthesia
  - Administration of medical treatments prescribed by the veterinarian
  - Patient Triage and Urgent and critical patient response and intervention
  - Veterinary practice infection control implementation (standard and transmission-based precautions)
  - Wound Care and management
  - Handling and restraint of patients managing Patient/Client/Staff safety.
  - Surgical nursing of patients during the periods of pre, peri and postsurgical procedure.

The National Industry Advisory Group for Veterinary Nursing (Australia) has provided an updated information statement on the role of a veterinary nurse and technician.

*Appendix A - Labour Market Insights Document from NIAG*

**Challenges in relation to the role of veterinary nurses and technicians include:**

The challenges faced are complex and multifactorial, involving both long-term trends and short-term forces beyond our control. The challenges we report do not exist in isolation, rather they are interrelated and can contribute to a compounding effect, where one challenge may amplify the impact of another. Challenges include:

- Definition of a veterinary nurse or technician and protection of title.
- Professional registration and regulation
- Skills utilisation and impact of the profession on the public and private sectors to sustain animal welfare, advocacy and industry
- Remuneration
- Opportunity and accessibility for career progression
- Education and training standards
- New graduate and return to industry support



- High Attrition rates
- Health and Wellbeing

#### **Definition of a veterinary nurse or technician**

Current Australian legislation fails to define what a veterinary nurse is. Outside of Western Australia there is no mandatory regulation or statutory code of conduct and no requirement to maintain currency and fitness to practise within veterinary nursing. It is agreed by industry professional bodies that veterinary nurses and technicians are an integral part of modern veterinary practice and that the registration, quality training, and continuing professional development of veterinary nurses and technicians are essential components of practice: in the public interest and in the interests of the health and welfare of veterinary patients. Pets are now considered members of the family, and pet owners seek high quality, complex veterinary services delivered by the veterinary health care team.

Currently the nationally recognised minimum qualification for veterinary nurses is the Certificate IV in Veterinary Nursing. Specialised vocational diplomas in veterinary nursing (dental, surgical and general practice) and bachelor's degree qualifications in veterinary technology/veterinary nursing are also offered.

The VNCA in conjunction with the Australian Veterinary Nurse and Technician (AVNAT) Voluntary Registration scheme defines the titles of Veterinary Nurses and Technicians below.

**Registered Veterinary Nurse** - A person with a nationally recognised veterinary nursing qualification (minimum AQF level 4) and who is registered with a recognised governing body.  
(note: includes Diploma AQF level 5 and associate degree in veterinary nursing AQF level 6, Bachelor of veterinary nursing AQF level 7)

**Registered Veterinary Technician** - A person with a nationally recognised degree (minimum AQF level 7) in veterinary technology or equivalent major and who is registered with a recognised governing body.

Furthermore, the VNCA Day One Competency Standards have been developed to encompass a benchmark of essential clinical skills for a veterinary nurse and technician to demonstrate in the workplace. This document sets out the minimum essential competences that the VNCA expects all veterinary nursing and technician students to have met when they graduate, to ensure that they are safe to practise on day one.

<https://www.vnca.asn.au/vnca-day-one-competency-standards/>

The AVA states "All persons using the title 'Veterinary Nurse' must possess veterinary nurse qualifications and conform to standards appropriate to professional veterinary practice." The standards should be subject to regular review by a national professional body. The Veterinary Nurses Council of Australia (VNCA) and their Australian Veterinary Nurses and Technicians (AVNAT) Registration Scheme are recognised and supported by the Australian Veterinary Association.

<https://www.ava.com.au/policy-advocacy/policies/accreditation-and-employment-of-veterinarians/veterinary-nursing/>

#### **Registration and regulation of the profession**

Outside of WA there is no mandatory regulation or statutory code of conduct and no requirement to maintain currency and fitness to practise within veterinary nursing. The VNCA has taken the position that unqualified and unregulated veterinary staff potentially expose the public and animal patients to harm and increase liability for veterinary practices. On 1 April 2019, VNCA launched Australian Veterinary Nurse and Technician (AVNAT) Registration Scheme a national registration scheme for veterinary nurses and veterinary technicians involved in clinical, management or academic areas.



The regulation of veterinary nurse and veterinary technician professionals will:

- Raise minimum standards and facilitate consistency in education,
- Improve standards of practice, and assures the public of the quality of veterinary nursing practices
- Make veterinary nurses and technicians accountable for professional practice and conduct,
- Provide better protection in relation to animal health and welfare,
- Align with international standards,
- Safeguard the public interest and protect public health.
- Allow veterinary nurses and technicians to do more to relieve the veterinarians workload
- Allow veterinarians to delegate more tasks to reduce their workload
- Allow veterinary businesses to improve margins.
- Reduce cost of veterinary services.

The VNCA is currently working with the Australasian Veterinary Boards Council (AVBC) to implement mandatory national registration and regulation of veterinary nurses and technicians in Australia. By ensuring that we have a national standard for the professional practice of veterinary nurses and technicians in Australia and protection of title for “Veterinary Nurse and Veterinary Technician” we provide better protection in relation to animal health and welfare, safeguard public interest and protect public health.

The work conducted on this project is often done at the cost to individuals involved on a voluntary basis. Investment into strategies, involving key and relevant stakeholders, would significantly benefit the further development and implementation of this project and provide a solutions-based approach to the challenges faced.

<https://www.vnca.asn.au/public/11/system/newsAttachments/AVBC%20Workshop%20and%20VNCA%20Joint%20Statement%20on%20Regulation%20Vet%20Nurse%20and%20Techs%20-%2029%20May.pdf>

[https://www.vnca.asn.au/public/11/system/newsAttachments/AVBC\\_VNCA%20Press%20Release\\_Final.pdf](https://www.vnca.asn.au/public/11/system/newsAttachments/AVBC_VNCA%20Press%20Release_Final.pdf)

### **The utilisation of veterinary nurses and veterinary technicians in the veterinary industry**

In the VNCA’s most recent workforce survey results (2021), while the data shows that many veterinary nurses and technicians are utilising their skills and training appropriately, there are still many that are not performing all tasks as described in the VNCA Day One Competency Standards day one skills for the minimum Certificate IV Vet Nursing qualification. Survey results also demonstrated that 50% of respondents work in a practice that does not employ an animal attendant, suggesting that this role is significantly underutilised, and that veterinary nurses and technicians are performing this job role in practice in addition to their more complex daily tasks and job roles. Of all respondents, 17.45% indicated that they were not performing the full range of tasks they have been trained to do and that they are not performing in their role. This is a slight reduction from 2019, where 22.62 % of veterinary nurses/ technicians revealed that they were not able to perform to their full potential.

*Appendix B - VNCA Veterinary Nursing Industry Survey Report 2021*

VNCA Position Statement: Utilisation of Veterinary Nurses and Veterinary Technicians in veterinary practice, December 2021

<https://www.vnca.asn.au/public/11/files/Position%20Statements/Position%20Statement%20Utilisation%20of%20VNs%20and%20VTs%20in%20vet%20practice.pdf>

According to the AVA statistics there are 15, 000 registered veterinarians to look after 30.4 million pets, this does not include livestock or wildlife. According to the Australian government’s *Labour Market Insights* occupation profile on veterinary nurses there are 10,700 employed veterinary nurses in Australia (29.5% being employed in the

state of NSW) with only 51% working full-time. This approximates to a veterinary nurse to vet ratio of 1:1.5 (1 nurse to every 1.5 vets). Data from Canada and the US has determined that there is a link between use of credentialed veterinary technicians and business revenue substantiating the significant role and potential of veterinary nurses and technicians to help alleviate the veterinarian's workload while adding to the economic viability of veterinary practice. For example, an Ontario Veterinary Medical Association study reported that clinics with higher non-DVM (veterinarian) to DVM ratios (from 2.9 to 4.2 per FTE DVM) function more effectively and have a higher net practice income (Osborne & Richardson 2006). A more recent study from the US found a \$78 118 increase for every additional technician per veterinarian (Shock, Roche, Genore & Renaud 2020).

In alignment with this, the Veterinary Futures Commission, set up by the American Veterinary Medical Association and the Association of the American Veterinary Medical Colleges in the US, has reported that by better leveraging the entire healthcare team, using a model of team-based care, leads to increased efficiency, effectiveness, profitability and less burn-out! (Veterinary Futures Commission 2019, p. 17-18)

<https://www.ava.com.au/siteassets/advocacy/veterinary-workforce/inquiry-into-veterinary-workforce-shortages-in-nsw--ava-initial-summary.pdf>

<https://labourmarketinsights.gov.au/occupation-profile/veterinary-nurses?occupationCode=3613>

AVMA-AAVMC Veterinary Futures Commission 2019, *Executive Summary: The Future of Veterinary Medicine*, AVMA-AAVMC, USA, viewed 10 March 2022, chrome-extension:///https://www.aavmc.org/assets/Site\_18/files/Newsletter\_Files/Feb%20VME%20Future%20of%20Vet%20Med.pdf

Osborne D & Richardson F 2006, 'Non-DVM staff: Doing more with more', *The Canadian Veterinary Journal*, vol. 47, no. 11, pp. 1125-1127.

Shock, DA, Roche, SM, Genore, R & Renaud, DL 2020, 'The economic impact that registered veterinary technicians have on Ontario veterinary practices', *Canadian Veterinary Journal*, vol. 61, pp. 505-511.

### **Opportunity and accessibility for career progression, education and training**

Having pathways for career progression is aligned with job satisfaction. A recent literature review looking at factors that influenced retention of veterinary nurses in the UK, found that job satisfaction and a clearly defined career structure with opportunities for progression helped with retention (Jeffrey & Taylor 2022). The RCVS *2019 Survey of the Veterinary Nurse Profession* revealed that 32% of respondents stated that improved opportunities for career progression 'would make the veterinary nursing profession a better place to work' (Robinson et al. 2019, p. 94). Survey results also showed that "a pay structure linked to a career pathway framework, such as in human-centered nursing" warranted further investigation (Jeffrey & Taylor 2021).

Jeffrey, A & Taylor E 2022, 'Veterinary nursing in the United Kingdom: Identifying the factors that influence retention within the profession', *Frontiers in Veterinary Science*, vol. 9, 927499.

<https://doi.org/10.3389/fvets.2022.927499>.

Robinson, D, Edwards, M, Akehurst, G, Cockett, J, Graham, KA & Martin, A 2019, 2019 survey of the veterinary nurse profession: A report for the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons, Institute for Employment Studies, Brighton, UK, viewed 6 March 2023, <<https://www.rcvs.org.uk/news-and-views/publications/the-2019-survey-of-the-veterinary-nursing-profession/?&type=rfst&set=true#cookie-widget>>.

### **Education and training**

Education and training play a key role in the provision of suitably trained, qualified, and regulated professionals are providing the provision of veterinary health care services in NSW. Areas that require further consideration include:

- Development of 'micro credentials' rather than continuous upgrades of the veterinary nursing training package which incur a cost burden to veterinary nurses.



- Supporting career pathways for veterinary nurses and technicians by encouraging greater cooperation between the vocational education and training sector and higher education sector. This would involve credit transfer arrangements recognising employment experience as well as qualifications.
- Linking remuneration in the Animal Care and Veterinary services Award to the Australian Qualifications Framework and levels of expertise.

#### **New graduate and return to industry support**

It has been recognised that most new graduate veterinary nurses and technicians receive very little support in their first year of practice in relation to professional guidance or coping mechanisms that are required to fulfil their role. Every veterinary nurse or technician regardless of if they are a new graduate or experienced is required to continually learning to meet advancing industry and workplace demands. To a new graduate this can be overwhelming and often leads to very little job satisfaction in their first 12 months of practice. With current industry shortages of qualified and proficient veterinary professionals, now more than ever there is the need to develop and implement programs that provide support systems, guidance and facilitate personal and professional development in the veterinary nursing profession.

There are some barriers for veterinary nurses and technicians who are returning to work after an absence from the industry. There is little to no opportunity for refreshers to bring them up to the current industry standards. The VNCA in consultation with key stakeholders and Industry have developed the Day One Competency standards and Day One Skill for Veterinary Nurses, which outlines a benchmark of essential clinical skills for a veterinary nurse and technician to demonstrate in the workplace. There is also the complexity that Veterinary Nurses and technicians more commonly must fund their own continued professional development. Overall, it seems that there is a need for more flexible and accessible options for returning veterinary nurses and technicians to upskill and re-enter the industry. From the perspective of the VNCA, funding made available to candidates wanting to undergo a return-to-work program would not only encourage but provide effective solutions and opportunity for skilled workers to re-enter the industry.

#### **High attrition rates, remuneration and mental health and wellbeing**

Yet to be published results from a recent survey of nurses and technicians indicated a number of occupational stressors within their day-to-day roles. These included staff shortages (Veterinary Nursing is on the national skills priority list), low remuneration, high client expectations and heavy workloads as priority concerns. Alarming 70% of those surveyed reported their passion and motivation were negatively affected by these stressors. This compounded into 40% indicating uncertainty about remaining in the veterinary industry within the next two years. Furthermore, a concerning 65% expressed uncertainty about their future in the industry within the next five years. The level of attrition indicated by these statistics is devastating and contributes significantly to the ongoing pressures faced by veterinary business owners, veterinarians, veterinary nurses and technicians. It not only affects the loss of historical knowledge, experience, and mentorship but also impacts the standard of care provided. Results from a study conducted in 2016 (Deacon & Brough, 2016) indicated the mean level of work-related burnout in veterinary nurses and technicians exceeded that of normative samples in human health-care professions. It also found that although both generic and occupation-specific job demands were significantly associated with levels of psychological strain and burnout, generic job demands accounted for a greater proportion of variance.

Positive changes in this area are essential to address these issues and create a supportive environment. Veterinary nurses and technicians play an indispensable role within the clinic, often described as the glue that holds everything together. Despite their vital contributions, their duties and actions often go unrecognised or happen behind the scenes.

Sustainability of the profession can also be improved by reducing financial vulnerability and implementing strategies to reduce educational debt relief for Bachelor of Veterinary Technology and Bachelor of Veterinary Nursing Graduates, particularly those that work in regional, rural and remote areas of NSW.

Australian Veterinary Association 2021, *Australian Veterinary Association: Veterinary Wellness Strategy, Final Report*, September 2021, Australian Veterinary Association, Sydney, Australia, viewed 10 September 2022, <<https://www.ava.com.au/wellness/>>.

<https://labourmarketinsights.gov.au/occupation-profile/veterinary-nurses?occupationCode=3613>

[Veterinary nurses psychological well-being Rebecca E. Deacon and Paula Brough \(2\).pdf](#)

<https://www.nationalskillscommission.gov.au/topics/skills-priority-list>

***(e) the role of, and challenges affecting, overseas trained veterinarians***

The VNCA supports the position of the Australian Veterinary Association (AVA). Furthermore, the VNCA maintains its position that overseas qualified veterinarians who hold a degree that is not considered equivalent to an Australian veterinary degree are also not suitably qualified to work as a veterinary nurse or technician. To maintain standards of professional practice and safeguard public interest in the state of NSW, if the ambition of the person is to work as a veterinary nurse in the state of NSW, they must undergo formal training or a skills assessment and GAP training to ensure they meet the day one competency standards of a veterinary nurse. More accessible and flexible training options need to be considered.

***(f) the arrangements and impacts of providing after-hour veterinary services***

The VNCA supports the position of the Australian Veterinary Association (AVA). Furthermore, veterinary nurses are required to support after-hours services, especially in regional areas where there is no access to 24-hour veterinary practices. In many instances the veterinarian cannot perform procedures without a veterinary nurse or technician to assist. Additionally, the on-call rate for a veterinary nurse is \$20.60, and the rate for a veterinarian is \$50.35. These on call rates reflect the impact on personal life while not at work, not the role performed at work, and therefore should be equal, regardless of the role being performed. The reduction in available staff to perform on-call and out of hours duties, means that the frequency of burden is increased per individual, making this unsustainable for many practices and staff members. The result of this is that regional practices may ultimately be required to refer to their nearest emergency centre, which may be many hours away, negatively impacting patient care in order to maintain staff wellness and sustainability.

***(g) the impact of the current legislative and regulatory framework on veterinarians***

The VNCA supports the position of the Australian Veterinary Association (AVA). Furthermore, the VNCA would like to see the inclusion a veterinary nurse/technician member on the Veterinary Practitioners Board of NSW to provide input into legislative matters and the codes of professional conduct that effect the practice of veterinary medicine in the state. This change would also recognise the important role veterinary nurses and technicians play within the veterinary health care team; the skills and knowledge and the contributions they make to the health and welfare of animals. The VNCA also recognises the need for the implementation of a more supportive and transparent approach to how complaints are handled and when appropriate a rapid resolution avenue.

***(i) the role played by veterinarians in providing care to lost, stray and homeless animals, injured wildlife and during emergency situations***

The VNCA supports the position of the Australian Veterinary Association (AVA). Furthermore, the VNCA would like to see strategies put into place to assist veterinary healthcare teams to manage and provide care to animals and





injured wildlife during emergency situations including funding for training and resources made available for remuneration of qualified workers during state emergencies.

***(j) the impact of the current veterinary shortage on animal welfare, including the impact on the economy, members of the public seeking veterinary care for animals, pounds and shelters, the animal agribusiness industry, companion animal breeders and others***

The VNCA supports the position of the Australian Veterinary Association (AVA).

***(k) current barriers to accessing veterinary care for members of the public, particularly those with lower incomes or who live in regional, rural and remote locations***

The VNCA supports the position of the Australian Veterinary Association (AVA).

***(m) strategies to improve access to veterinary care***

The VNCA supports the position of the Australian Veterinary Association (AVA). Furthermore, the VNCA supports Veterinary Social Work, One Health Practice model and Contextualised Care initiatives. The need for allied services, such as veterinary social workers and community veterinary care workers plays an important role in the wellbeing of the public and will contribute to human-animal bond with being able to keep human and their animals together and improve accessibility to veterinary care. We also view the role of veterinary social work and community care as a professional learning and career pathway for veterinary nurses and technicians.

#### One Health Practice

- The One Health practice model in the veterinary context is an interdisciplinary approach that recognises the interconnectedness of human, animal, and environmental health. It emphasizes the collaboration and cooperation between professionals from various disciplines, including veterinary medicine, human medicine, public health, and environmental science.
- In the One Health model, the health of humans, animals, and the environment is viewed as interconnected and interdependent. It acknowledges that diseases can be transmitted between humans and animals and that environmental factors can influence the spread of diseases.
- This practice model promotes a holistic approach to addressing health issues. It involves conducting research, surveillance, and monitoring to detect and prevent diseases that can affect both animals and humans. It also focuses on promoting health and well-being through preventive measures, such as vaccination programs and hygiene practices.
- One Health encourages the exchange of information and collaboration between veterinary professionals, medical professionals, and other relevant experts. By working together, they can better understand and address the complex health challenges that arise from the interactions between humans, animals, and the environment.
- The One Health practice model in the veterinary context aims to improve animal welfare, protect public health, and ensure the sustainability of ecosystems. It recognizes that promoting the health of all living beings is crucial for the well-being of individuals, communities, and the planet as a whole.

#### Veterinary Social Work (VSW)

- Attend to the human needs at the intersection of veterinary and social work practice
- Veterinary Social Work utilises qualified Social Workers who have undertaken further training to recognise and consider the role that the Human-Animal Bond plays in the lives of our clients.
- They also have an understanding of the unique challenges and stressors on those working in the veterinary field.
- They are Social Workers who view situations through a human-animal bond and veterinary world lens.



- VSW support veterinary clients and veterinary teams with Treatment decisions, Euthanasia support, Grief & loss counselling / support groups, De-escalation and difficult conversations, Assessment tools & referral to human support services, Education & follow-up

#### Contextualised Care in veterinary practice

- Provide care that is best for a patient & their human/s
- Within the team's competence & business environment, accounting for ethics, societal pressures & the ecosystem in which we all live.
- We make decisions with our clients, without judgement of them or ourselves
- We don't feel we are letting ourselves down or the animals down, or our clients down if we don't conform to one standard or another.

<https://www.ava.com.au/policy-advocacy/policies/professional-practices-for-veterinarians/animal-welfare-and-human-wellbeing-vulnerability-of-clients-and-veterinary-staff/>

#### ***(n) any other related matter***

#### **Investment in strategies, involving key and relevant stakeholders (Industry related) to find solutions.**

The AVBC's Sustainable Practice Committee (SPC) has investigated regulation of veterinary nurses in Australia. A survey conducted in 2022 indicated overwhelming support for veterinary nurse and technician regulation, with 88% of respondents in favour. The preferred option for regulation was state-based veterinary legislation defining a veterinary nurse/technician as a person with suitable qualifications who is registered with an independent national body such as the AVBC. Such an approach aligns with the principles of right-touch regulation. It offers the potential for a consistent regulatory framework across jurisdictions, and we encourage the NSW government to work with AVBC and the Veterinary Nurses' Council of Australia (VNCA) to advance this initiative.

Parliamentary workforce groups often fail to include key industry stakeholders involved in industry, misrepresenting the "true" challenges faced in the sector. The VNCA believes that making funding available to form working groups to research, develop and implement strategic planning and initiatives that will provide solutions and identify clear pathways on how, as a profession we can move forward into a more sustainable workforce is of critical importance. The VNCA would like this to be a key priority noted in this inquiry.