



NSW Inquiry into the operation of the approved charitable organisations under the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1979

Public Hearing – Question on Notice and Supplementary Information

Response from the
Australian Veterinary Association Ltd
May 2024

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The Australian Veterinary Association (AVA)

The Australian Veterinary Association (AVA) is the peak professional association representing veterinarians in Australia.

Our members come from all fields within the veterinary profession. Clinical practitioners work with companion animals, horses, livestock, and wildlife. Government veterinarians work with our animal health, public health, and quarantine systems while other members work in industry, research, and teaching. Veterinary students are also members of the Association.

We empower the veterinary profession to thrive by providing a voice, education, community, and support.

AVA Response to Hearing Questions and Comments

Following the [AVA Submission](#) and [Hearing attendance](#), we welcome the opportunity to provide further feedback to the *Portfolio Committee 4 – Regional NSW 2023 Inquiry into the operation of the approved charitable organisations under the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1979* in response to the Committee questions and comments at the hearing on the 26 April 2024.

Please note, the AVA has several policies, and recent NSW submissions that are relevant to the Portfolio Committee 4, this inquiry, and the Committee hearing questions:

Recent NSW Submissions:

- [AVA Submission, hearing appearance](#), and [questions on notice](#) to the [Inquiry into Veterinary Workforce Shortages in NSW](#)
- [AVA Submission](#) and [hearing appearance](#) to the [Inquiry into Pounds in NSW](#)
- [AVA Submission](#) and [hearing appearance](#) for the [Inquiry into proposed aerial shooting of brumbies in Kosciuszko National Park](#)
- [AVA Submission](#) and [hearing appearance](#) for the [Inquiry on Use of primates and other animals in medical research in NSW](#)
- [AVA Submission](#) and [hearing appearance](#) for the [Inquiry in Animal Welfare Policy in NSW](#)
- [AVA Submission](#) for the [Inquiry on puppy farming in NSW](#)
- [AVA Submission](#) on the [draft NSW Medicines, Poisons and Therapeutic Goods Regulation 2023](#)
- [AVA Submission](#) on the [NSW Public Spaces \(Unattended Property\) Act Regulatory Framework](#)
- [AVA Submission](#) to the [NSW Rehoming Practices Review](#)



Relevant [AVA Policies](#):

- [AVA Statement of principles – Animal welfare and ethics](#)
- AVA Policy on [Animal Abuse](#)
- AVA Policy on the [Philosophy on animal welfare and the veterinarian](#)
- AVA Policy on the [Control of feral horses and other Equidae](#)
- AVA Policy on the [Control of native and introduced animals causing damage to agriculture or habitat](#)

AVA robust consultation and development processes for AVA Policies, Positions and Submissions

As in any professional association, it's natural that there isn't always 100% agreement 100% of the time. This diversity of opinion is a strength, reflecting a wide range of perspectives and expertise across the whole veterinary profession.

At the AVA we recognise the value of this diversity and are committed to considering all feedback from our members. By harnessing the collective expertise within our veterinary community, the AVA creates well-rounded and representative policies that best serve the interests of the veterinary profession and the broader community. Our commitment to comprehensive consultation ensures that even when there is not unanimous agreement, every voice is heard, and all contributions are valued in the decision-making process.

The AVA undertakes robust and comprehensive processes for the consultation and development of its policies, positions, and submissions. This ensures that AVA representations are meticulously formed through a collaborative process involving our broad and diverse AVA Members, relevant AVA Committees, Subject Matter Experts (SMEs), and AVA personnel.

As requested by the Committee the development processes for AVA policies, positions, and submissions are outlined below:

AVA Policies and Positions

The [AVA's Policy Advisory Council](#) (PAC) develops the scientific, technical, ethical and philosophical policies of the AVA. These policies are developed through extensive member consultation and wherever possible are underpinned by evidence from the scientific literature. The policies represent the consensus view of AVA members on a range of issues of importance to the profession.

The AVA Policy Advisory Council is an AVA Board Committee and includes a representative from every [AVA Division](#) and [Special Interest Group](#). It develops a range of national policies and position statements for the veterinary profession. These are approved by the AVA Board before becoming official policies or positions of the association.

Any AVA member can suggest a new policy, or revision of existing policies, via their group policy councillor, or directly to the PAC Chair or PAC Manager.

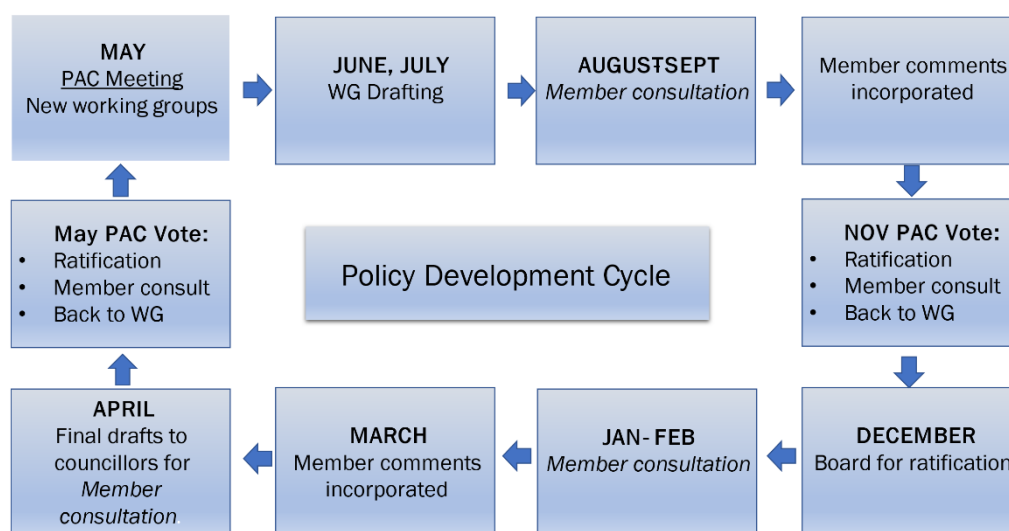
How is a AVA Policy made or revised?

1. A draft is prepared by a working group with subject matter expertise on the topic, usually led by the relevant special interest group representative on the Policy Advisory Council.
2. The draft is sent to Policy Council representatives ahead of their annual face to face meeting, so that they can consult their group executive committees and bring this feedback to the meeting.
3. The draft is then discussed and amended at a Policy Advisory Council meeting in light of the feedback received, and a majority vote agrees to send the updated draft to the wider membership for a formal consultation process.



4. Draft policies for member consultation are circulated to all AVA members through AVA publications and/or email communications, and are also posted on the AVA's member-only discussion forums.
5. All drafts released to members for comment have already been debated at least once by Policy Advisory Council.
6. All member comments are distributed prior to the next meeting and then debated by Policy Advisory Council. Often further changes are made in response to this second debate.
7. Policy councillors are responsible for contacting their group members directly for feedback on all proposed new policies and policy revisions, and for instructions on how to vote.
8. The final draft policy is arrived at by majority (75%) vote, and it is sent to the AVA Board for review. When the Board ratifies the policy it becomes official AVA policy and the website is updated.

In 2023, 18 policies were ratified by the AVA Board. These included new policies in the area of workforce sustainability, drug safety, animal health and welfare, and one health. There are currently 20 working groups updating AVA policies in 2024.



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Please note, only AVA members can access the discussion forums and provide feedback on draft policies. PAC does not take comments from non-members into account. This is important, because, although the AVA undertakes the important work of policy development on behalf of the wider veterinary profession, the process is funded by AVA member subscriptions. The ability to influence policy is thus a member benefit and restricted to those who have chosen to support their professional association.

AVA Submissions

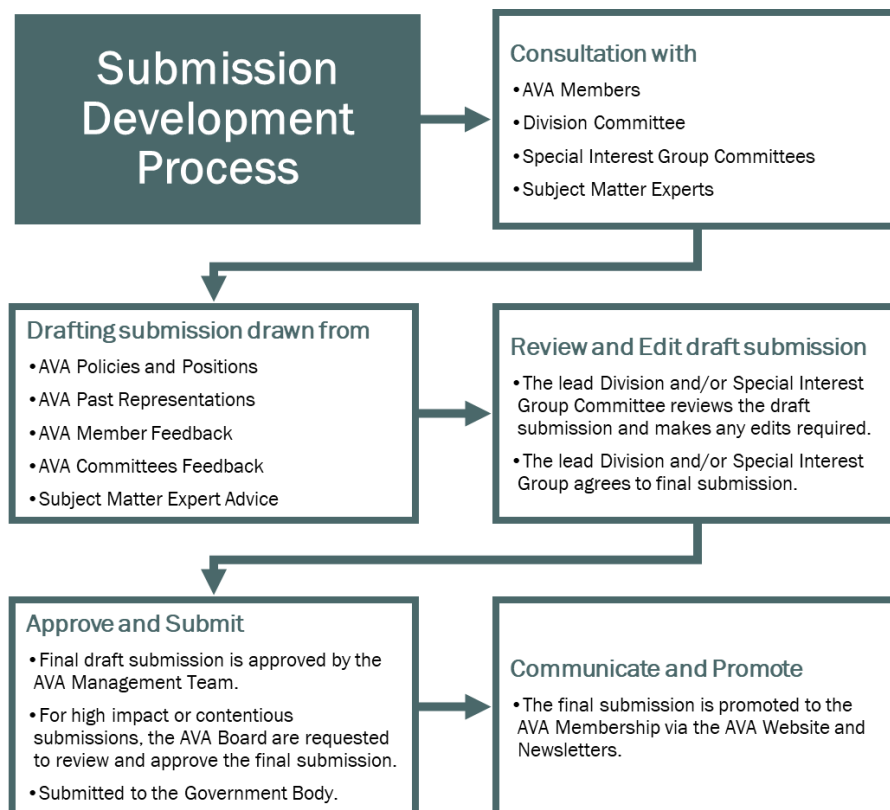
In 2023 the AVA provided **56 submissions** for National and State or Territory jurisdictions.

Every AVA submission has been developed drawing from AVA policies, and in consultation with the diverse expertise of AVA members and the elected representative Division and/or Special Interest Group Committees. For highly specialised or technical topics, the AVA also enlists assistance from recognised subject matter experts to inform AVA representations.

The AVA membership are invited to provide input into AVA submission through a range of avenues, that may include via the [AVA Get Involved Webpage](#), promoted in the broad suite of AVA Newsletters (National, Division, Special Interest Groups, and Student Newsletters), and for urgent or high importance matters through Electronic Direct Mail (EDM).



Following a robust consultation process, the AVA personnel draft the AVA submission for the relevant Division and/or Special Interest Group Committee review, edit and agreement. The final draft submission is approved by the AVA Management Team before submitting to the Government for consideration. The final submission is promoted to the AVA Membership on the AVA Members Update Webpage and through AVA Newsletters.



AVA Division President Elections

There were several Committee comments at the hearing regarding the election process for AVA Division Presidents. To provide understanding of the AVA democratic processes for Division Committee and President representation, please see the following information:

- Every two years for each state and territory, the AVA conducts an election process from its membership for up to 9 volunteer representatives to form the Division Committee.
- At the first meeting following the Division Committee elections, there is a call for nominations amongst the Committee members for the President position and if more than one nomination is received a blind ballot is conducted.

Of note, to address the particular Committee comments regarding the former AVA NSW Division President Dr Zachary Lederhose. Please be advised Dr Lederhose decided not to renominate for the President position and the election of the new NSW Division President Dr Amy Lee occurred amicably. Dr Lederhose remains on the NSW Division Committee and continues to provide his expertise and support for the AVA NSW Division advocacy activities.

AVA policy and representations on feral horses

The control and management of feral horses has historically been a contentious and often emotive issue that generates strong individual opinions.



The AVA has a [policy – Control of feral horses and other Equidae](#), which has gone through AVA's rigorous policy consultation and development processes. It was updated as recently as 2023 through consultation with the AVA's membership and a [unanimous vote](#) by the [AVA Policy Advisory Council](#). **As a result, the AVA is confident that its policy represents the consensus position of our diverse and broad veterinary membership.**

The policy acknowledges that because feral horses can negatively impact the environment, the welfare and sustainability of wildlife, the economy, and social amenity, feral horse control is necessary and supported, provided it is humane and justified.

A model¹ for assessing the relative humaneness of pest animal control methods has been developed to evaluate methods in use and select the most humane methods based on scientific evidence. According to this model, ground shooting is the most humane method of control in feral horses, followed by aerial shooting, then mustering and trapping.

However, every situation should be considered on its merits and involve stakeholder consultation, expert assessment, and sound scientific understanding of the impacts of feral horses in the particular environment.

Please note the AVA recent representations on this matter include:

- [Submission to the NSW Inquiry into the proposed aerial shooting of brumbies in Kosciuszko National Park](#)
- [Submission on the proposed amendments to the Kosciuszko National Park Wild Horse Management Plan](#)
- [Submission to the National Inquiry on the Impacts and management of feral horses in the Australian Alps](#)

Addressing the Committee comments regarding Dr Andrea Harvey

There are [numerous benefits of being a member of the Australian Veterinary Association](#), including the opportunity to inform on the development of AVA policies, positions, submissions, and AVA representations, thus providing AVA with a strong and united voice for the veterinary profession.

In response to the comments by Mr Wes Fang, the AVA provides the following clarifications:

- Dr Andrea Harvey is [not a member of the AVA](#) and as such doesn't have the [membership benefit](#) to advise on AVA policies, submissions or representations.
- Furthermore, Dr Harvey [did not contact the AVA](#) with her views for the NSW brumbies inquiry.

After reviewing the [transcript from the Inquiry on the Proposed aerial shooting of brumbies in Kosciuszko National Park](#), the AVA are concerned that Mr Fang's comments do not reflect Dr Harvey's testimony or the AVA interactions with its members.

Contact

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¹ Trudy Sharp and Glen Saunders, 2012. Model code of practice for the humane control feral horses. Standard Operating Procedure. PestSmart website. <https://pestsmart.org.au/toolkit-resource/code-of-practice-feral-horses> accessed 12-11-2022