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Productivity Commission

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Mutual Recognition Schemes Review

Draft Report 2015

Submission from the Australian Veterinary Association Ltd



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Submission from the Australian Veterinary Association Limited

21 July 2015

The Australian Veterinary Association (AVA) is the national organisation representing veterinarians in Australia. Our 8500 members come from all fields within the veterinary profession. Clinical practitioners work with companion animals, horses, farm animals, such as cattle and sheep, and wildlife. Government veterinarians work with our animal health, public health and quarantine systems while other members work in industry for pharmaceutical and other commercial enterprises. We have members who work in research and teaching in a range of scientific disciplines. Veterinary students are also members of the Association.

Australia's veterinarians provide essential services to our livestock and racing industries which together create billions of dollars' worth of value to our economy. Veterinarians not only provide services to prevent and cure disease, but also to increase production, ensure food safety, improve biosecurity, monitor for exotic disease incursions, and respond to emergency animal disease outbreaks.

Veterinarians are also important to the two-thirds of households with pets, who are increasingly valued as important family members. There is a significant body of evidence that pet ownership has benefits for the health and wellbeing of individuals, the community and the economy.

Mutual recognition schemes and the veterinary profession

The AVA supports the general principles of the Mutual Recognition Agreement (MRA) and Trans Tasman Mutual Recognition Arrangement (TTMRA) of increasing the freedom of movement of service providers across our national market.

The AVA supports the draft findings and the recommendations contained in the draft Mutual Recognition Schemes report.

The report recognises the veterinary profession as a leader in reforming its regulatory framework in line with mutual recognition principles. The veterinary profession is an early adopter of automatic mutual recognition (AMR). The Australian Veterinary Association, was involved in the development of the AMR scheme for veterinarians endorsed by the COAG Primary Industries Ministerial Council in 2006 (PISC 2006).

The scheme is currently operating in all Australian states except Western Australia and is still to be implemented in the ACT and Northern Territory. South Australia was the most recent participant to join, commencing on 1 January 2015. There is broad stakeholder agreement that the scheme is working well and there is widespread support that the continue extension into the other jurisdictions should be expedited.

The benefits to the professions that were clearly identified in the regulatory impact statement in 2006 remain relevant:

- relatively high mobility of veterinarians, especially early in their careers
- need to respond promptly to natural disasters, and livestock emergencies such as avian flu or the Hendra virus
- requirement for many veterinarians, such as feed lot, racetrack or Australian Government employees to operate in multiple jurisdictions (PISC 2006)

The AVA has been disappointed in the rate of implementation across the states and territories. The original projected timeline was for completion in 2008.

The AVA proposes that **Draft Recommendation 6.1** be extended to include that State and Territory Governments should, through the Council for the Australian Federation, give higher priority to expediting the completion legislative change that allows AMR for veterinarians.

The AVA also agrees with the report's conclusions that AMR is only viable when there is relative

harmonisation across state and territory legislation. To ensure that there is a continued harmonisation of veterinary legislation the AVA has developed a list of Key Principles for Veterinary Acts that should be considered whenever veterinary Acts and Regulations are reviewed.

One of the problems identified by the AVA with the implementation of AMR is the lack of knowledge of veterinarians practising in a specific jurisdiction by that Board. The AVA believes this can be adequately addressed by the introduction of a simple online notification by the visiting practitioner before they undertake work as identified in the report.