

Inquiry into the veterinary workforce shortage in NSW

Australian Veterinary Association – Initial Summary

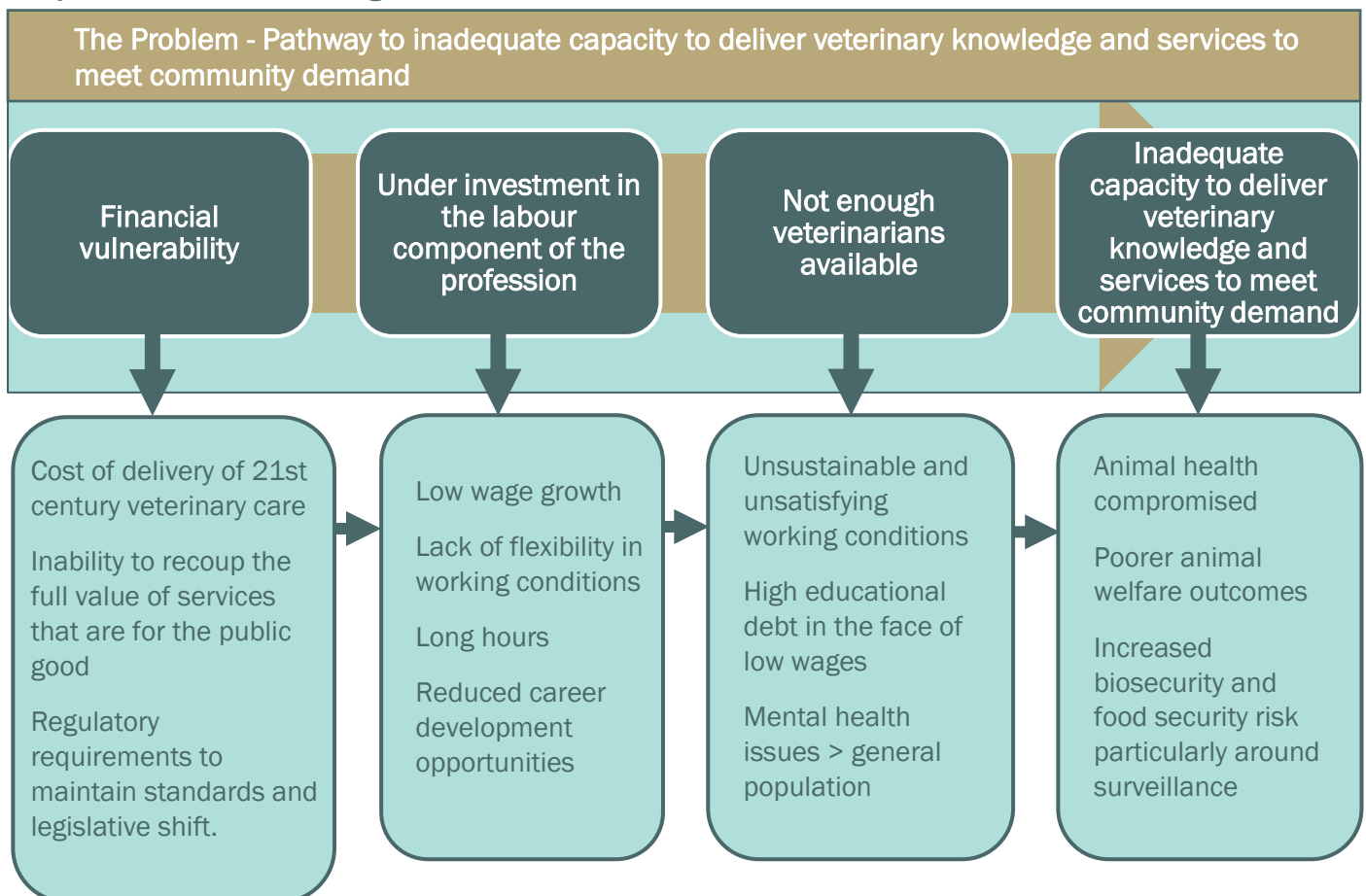


The Australian Veterinary Association (AVA) is the peak national organisation representing veterinarians in Australia. Thirty percent of the AVA’s membership reside and work in NSW and come from all fields within the veterinary profession.

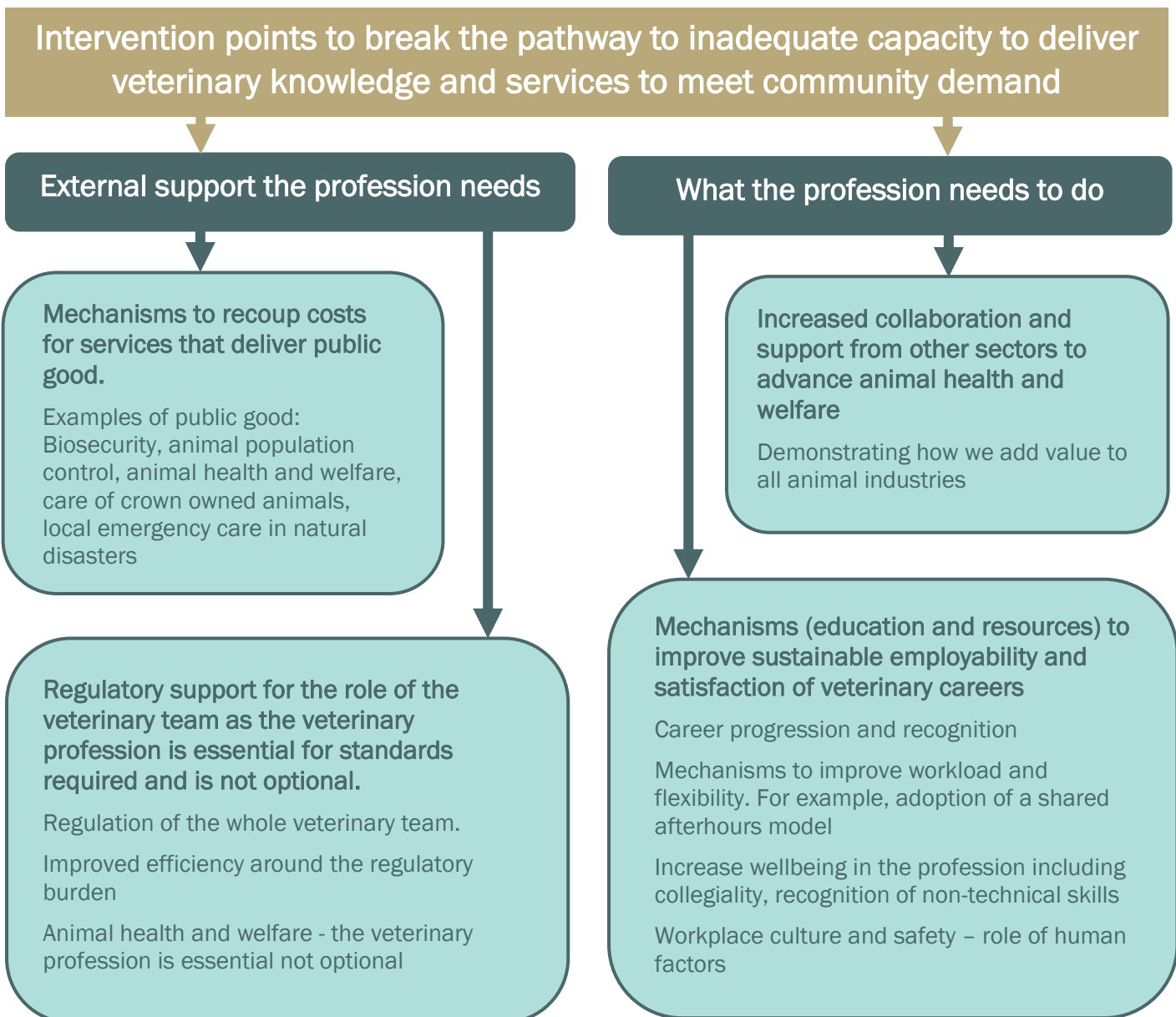
Veterinary Profession Summary

- In Australia there are 15,000 registered veterinarians to look after 30.4 million pets, this does not include livestock or wildlife. To provide a comparison there are about 130,000 doctors to look after 26.5 million people.
- In NSW there are 4396 registered veterinarians. 61% are within metro area. 31% in Inner Regional Australia, 8% rural and remote. 30% of Australia’s veterinary practices are within NSW, which is around 1000 private veterinary businesses.
- The veterinary shortage is felt across the whole profession in NSW and nationally across every sector, including clinical (small and large animal practice), government, academia, research, industry, and pathology. For the last 7 years it has been formally recognised by the National Skills Commission Skills Priority List that the whole veterinary sector has workforce shortages.
- In 2021 in NSW 40.51% (compared to a national rate of 38.65%) of veterinary job vacancies took more than 12 months to fill. When separating out rural practices 46% were not filled after 12 months

Why are there not enough veterinarians available?



The Solutions



The solutions required to address this issue are complex and multifactorial, and will need to be considered in the context of long-term outcomes and unintended consequences.

The AVA believes we need some interventions with short term outcomes to provide breathing space while the longer-term outcomes are addressed. The short-term policy projects that would be of assistance now are:

- Educational fee relief to increase the number of early career veterinarians into rural areas.
- Improvements in the migration pathway to assist veterinarians and veterinary nurses to enter the country and get PR would also be useful.
- Inclusion of registered veterinarians within other current mechanisms to sustain medical and paramedical workers in rural areas, under the accepted OneHealth model approach for health in Australia.

Further data and resourced creative strategic thinking are required to progress the longer-term solutions that will provide the greatest impact.

With collaboration and careful thinking this problem can be solved. We are hopeful that outcomes of this inquiry will allow strategies and solutions to be developed and actioned in NSW, that will not only make NSW a sought-after destination to attract and retain veterinarians, and appropriately sustain veterinary practices, but also as a pilot for how this issue could be addressed at a national level.