

AVA Public Affairs & Advocacy 2024/2025

Dr Robyn Whitaker
Senior Advocacy Officer

February 2025

AVA Advocacy and Policy is a cornerstone of value to AVA members – *and to the entire veterinary profession*



Policy is our collective aspiration about the way things should be....
Advocacy is about turning that aspiration into reality.

What we do

- ☐ **Advocate** to uphold and enhance the value of veterinarians.
- ☐ **Deliver** on advocacy priorities as outlined in the AVA Strategic Plan that has been member driven.
- ☐ **Position** the AVA as a thought leader on veterinary and animal welfare issues.
- ☐ **Proactively influence** the future of the veterinary profession.

Veterinary Policy & Advocacy

What sort of Advocacy and Policy work is done?



Sustainability of Australia's veterinary services through:

- ☐ Promoting the need for a comprehensive **National Veterinary Workforce Plan**
- ☐ Recognising the **unpaid public good that the veterinary profession delivers**, its impact on veterinary businesses, and seeking funding to support it.
- ☐ Working to **support rural and regional veterinary practice** through campaigning for financial support to recent grads and students in regional areas.
- ☐ Securing the **legislated role of the veterinarians lead team** as the leader in delivering animal health and welfare.

Our work in this is underpinned by:

- ☐ Rigorously developed **expert policy** on animal health and welfare
- ☐ Quality **data collection** on the veterinary workforce to understand trends and inform government policy solutions
- ☐ **Promoting the value of the veterinary profession** to decision makers, stakeholders and the public.

Veterinary Policy & Advocacy

AVA National Data 2024



13
Media
Releases



52
Submissions



299
External
Engagement
Opportunities



Over
3500
Media
Mentions



35
'Get Involved'
Opportunities



Evidence of the work undertaken in 2024 by the Veterinary Public Affairs and Advocacy (PAA) team to advocate for our profession

Advocacy work included:



Member consultation was engaged and subject matter expertise utilised to lodge submissions for;

- NT Animal Welfare Legislation review
- Management Plan for Saltwater Crocodiles in the NT

NT Veterinary Board

- Strengthened relationships and communication channels with the NTVB
- Ongoing discussions around access to veterinary services (including medicines & poisons regulation reform)

Northern Australia Coordination Network (NACN)

- The AVA Advocacy Team contributed to information for a National report to the *Northern Australia Coordination Network* on the surge capacity of veterinary services in the event of an EAD incursion.

Advocacy NT focus



NORTHERN
TERRITORY
DIVISION

Key responsive advocacy included:



Animal Management, Welfare and Ethics

- Renewing Australia's national animal welfare strategies
- Animal Welfare Legislation, Standards and Codes of Practice review and reform
- Legislation review and reform for breeding practices and companion animal management

Veterinary Regulation and Value of the Profession

- Amendments and reviews of veterinary legislation and frameworks
- Regulatory reforms impacting the veterinary profession eg medications
- IV Fluids shortage response and resources
- Responses to public commentary on costs of veterinary services

Biosecurity

- Biosecurity consultations, reviews and roundtables
- Veterinary input into biosecurity risks and responses

Education, Training, and Workforce

- Veterinary workforce classification and occupation reviews
- Contributions to university-level accord discussions and strategy building.
- Response to NSW Parliamentary Inquiry into the Veterinary Workforce Shortage Report
- Support for Vet Student Prac Placement funding

Disaster Preparedness and Resilience

- Avian Influenza prep and response
- Emergency response plans for animals and their welfare in disasters
- Contributions to Australia's disaster resilience strategy

**National Advocacy
Responsive**

Proactive advocacy and policy work included:

- Mental Health – THRIVE – including the “Cultivating Safe Teams” program
- Policy developments and reviews
- Workforce - including 2023 workforce survey, rural & regional support, skills & migration
- Value of the profession - including the Public Good Survey
- Veterinary legislation - including contribution to drafting of a comprehensive legal text
- OSCA (ANZSCO) Classification of veterinarians as health professionals
- Medicines & Poisons Legislation reform
- Compounding medications & electronic prescriptions legislation
- State & Federal Election Priorities and Budgets
- Regulation of veterinary professionals (Veterinary Nurses/Techs, Authorised persons)
- After Hours Services Model project
- Animals in Residential Aged Care facilities - guidelines
- Inclusion & Diversity of the veterinary profession
- DFV - the role of animals and the veterinary profession
- Disadvantaged communities - including support for the emerging field of Veterinary Social Work

**National Advocacy
Proactive**

Policy and Technical work:



- ❑ In 2024, through **34 working groups**, Policy Advisory Council (PAC) developed **11 new policies** and worked on **updating 23 existing policies**.
- ❑ There are currently **20 PAC working groups** progressing further policy updates and new drafts for the next cycle.
- ❑ The AVA provided technical input to a number of National Standards reviews including **AUSVETPLAN** Destruction Manual, Abattoir Standards, **Australian Animal Welfare Strategy (AAWS)**
- ❑ Completion of the **Feedlot Antimicrobial Prescribing Guidelines** to add to the suite of livestock AMR guides.

National Policy

2025 Federal Election



Five urgent priorities identified by the AVA to safeguard animal health and welfare, biosecurity, public safety, and the wellbeing of the Australian veterinary workforce.

The following priorities call for policies, investment, and funding to secure a sustainable and resilient veterinary sector:

1. ROBUST WORKFORCE
2. MENTAL HEALTH FOR VETS
3. PUBLIC GOOD FUNDING
4. VETS FOR TOMORROW
5. ANIMAL HEALTH AND WELFARE



2025 Advocacy

Strategic Plan 2025-2028



VISION

A thriving veterinary profession

PURPOSE

Building a vibrant future for veterinary professionals

GOAL 1

Champion the Profession



- 1.1 Drive advocacy and policy to advance issues of importance to the profession.
- 1.2 Raise public awareness of the value, diverse and vital role of the veterinary profession in community, animal health and wellbeing.
- 1.3 Be the trusted voice for government and media on profession-related issues.

GOAL 2

Advance Professional Excellence



- 2.1 Provide technical and scientific guidance and knowledge to support the profession.
- 2.2 Leverage partnerships with external providers to deliver high-quality education.
- 2.3 Deliver strategic CPD to address education gaps.

GOAL 3

Empower Connectivity



- 3.1 Enable networks that facilitate strong professional collegiality and connections.
- 3.2 Support early-career veterinarians in their transition into the profession.
- 3.3 Address issues within the profession affecting mental health and wellbeing.

GOAL 4

Deliver an Exceptional Experience



- 4.1 Deliver a seamless, efficient, user-friendly experience by modernising business rules, processes, and digital ecosystems.
- 4.2 Advance a relevant, contemporary and inclusive membership model and governance structure.
- 4.3 Cultivate a purposeful and collaborative culture.

Key Advocacy work Q1 2025



South Australian Parliamentary Inquiry into the Mental Health and Wellbeing of Veterinarians

- The AVA will be lodging a submission to this Inquiry which was called to address critical issues affecting the profession and **will examine the economic and social value of veterinary services, workforce retention and conditions, suicide prevention, and financial pressures associated with providing care to animals, including wildlife.**
- It will also assess the **regulation of veterinary practices, the role of veterinary nurses, and access to veterinary care** amid rising costs.
- While state-based, this Inquiry is **expected to have national implications**, influencing policy and support for veterinarians across Australia.

Western Australian State Election

- The AVA are advocating for greater government support to address critical challenges facing the veterinary profession — particularly in regional and remote areas.
- We are calling on Government to support **rural and regional veterinary workforce initiatives, veterinary student support, public good veterinary services, mental health support for veterinarians, and legislative reforms to reduce regulatory burdens.**
- The AVA's election priorities have been shared with all political parties, key ministers, and shadow ministers.

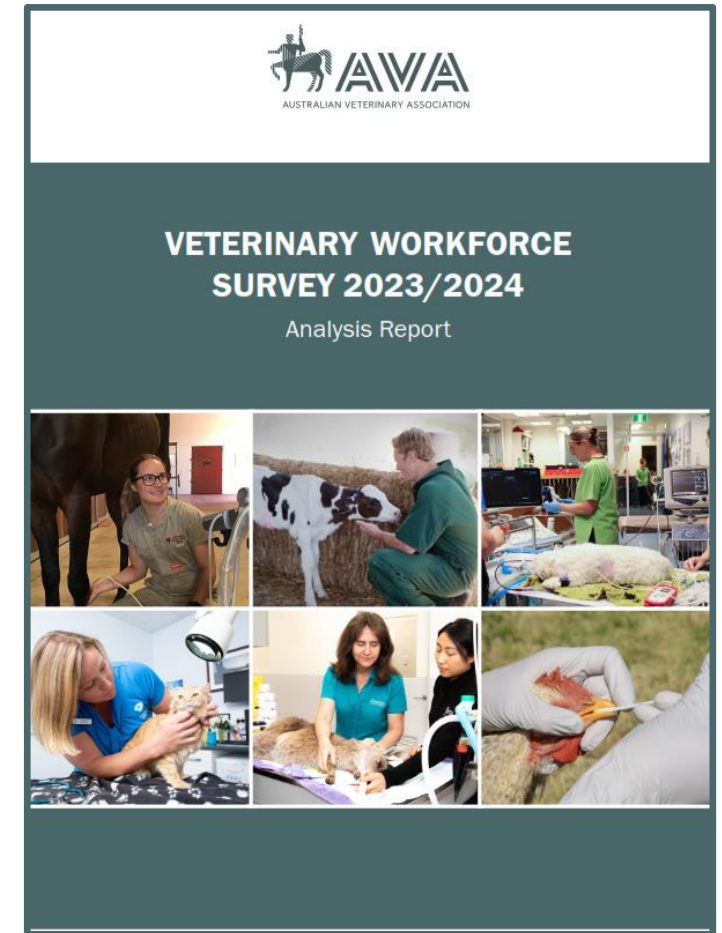
2025 Advocacy

AVA Workforce Survey over 2,300 participants

The AVA Workforce survey remains one of the few key data collection projects looking at the veterinary workforce.

Over the past decade the survey has been conducted 7 times providing invaluable information that has informed and supported AVA advocacy.

The information will help the profession, government, veterinary boards, and others to understand how the provision of veterinary services may be affected by various factors, including graduate numbers, changes in career, breaks in employment and those working part-time.



Data is crucial

The Report included the following findings:



Population Characteristics

- The profession's gender distribution continues to skew towards females (69% in 2023/24). Most veterinarians were born in Australia (74%).

Growth in Student Debt

- Median student debt has risen from \$5,000 in the 1980's to \$84,640 in the 2020's.

Work Distribution

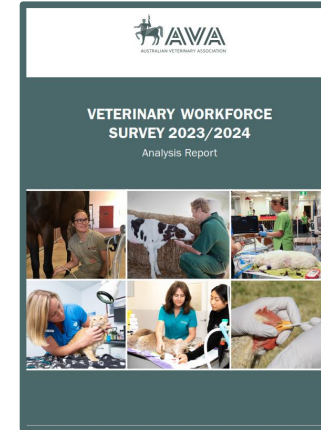
- The majority of respondents work in clinical veterinary practice (78%), followed by government roles (7.3%).

Clinical Practice Trends

- Almost 50% of respondents worked in clinics with 2-5 veterinarians (Full time equivalent)
- 11.75% worked in single vet practices
- 23.3% worked for a corporate group

Work Hours and Remuneration

- Men work slightly longer hours than women on average.
- Equine practitioners tend to work longer hours, spend more time on call, and have a lower effective hourly rate than other groups



Employment Trends

- Female representation in veterinary practice is rising, and younger graduates dominate the workforce.
- Part-time work is more common among females, mainly due to family care responsibilities.

Regional Challenges

- Practices in regional and remote areas face disproportionate difficulties in filling vacancies due to smaller practice sizes and higher after-hours demands.

The work of the AVA is not possible without the expertise, experience and generous contribution that AVA members make through their involvement in Divisional and Special Interest Group committees and subcommittees, national working groups, forums and advisory groups.

We are very appreciative of this contribution and look forward to continued involvement in 2025.

Thank you