



Continuing Professional Development for Veterinary Practitioners

Victorian Veterinary Board Guidelines

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Australian Veterinary Association Ltd
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ava.com.au

About the Australian Veterinary Association (AVA)

The AVA is the peak professional body representing veterinary professionals and students across Australia. For more than 100 years we have been the united voice of the veterinary profession.

Veterinarians are among Australia's most trusted and respected professionals, dedicated to safeguarding animal health and welfare and supporting the communities they live in.

Our vision and purpose

Vision A thriving veterinary profession

Purpose Building a vibrant future for veterinary professionals.

At the AVA we champion the veterinary community, advance professional excellence, foster connectivity, and deliver exceptional member experiences to achieve our vision of a thriving profession.

Essential role of the veterinary profession

Veterinary services are essential to Australia's animal health, food security, and economy. They help secure Australia's animal health and livestock supply chain, protecting hundreds of thousands of jobs and easing cost of living pressures through a safe and reliable food supply.

Beyond agriculture, veterinarians support companion animals and their owners, strengthening the human-animal bond and promoting the associated mental and physical health benefits of pet ownership. Animals are not just a part of the Australian way of life; they are deeply embedded in it - socially, culturally, environmentally, and economically, and veterinarians are an essential part of every vibrant Australian community.

Veterinarians play a pivotal role in maintaining the social licence of animal industries, ensuring animal health and welfare meets community expectations. Like human healthcare and education, veterinary services provide both private benefits to individuals and critical public benefits to society, in areas like biosecurity surveillance, wildlife treatment and health and emergency animal disease management.

Recognised among Australia's most ethical and trusted professionals, veterinarians are highly respected and trusted members of their communities. The Governance Institute of Australia's 2025 Ethics Index ranked veterinarians among the nation's top 5 ethical occupations¹.

¹ [Governance Institute 2025](#)



Executive Summary

The Australian Veterinary Association (AVA) welcomes the opportunity to provide feedback to the Veterinary Practitioners Registration Board of Victoria (VPRBV) on *Guideline 10 – Continuing Professional Development*.

The AVA supports the direction set out by the Australasian Veterinary Boards Council (AVBC), as outlined in their paper, [Continuing Professional Development – A New Paradigm](#), in evolving Continuing Professional Development (CPD) from a purely hours/points-based activity toward a broader professional development framework.

The AVA holds the position that regulation should remain proportionate, evidence-based, practical and supportive to avoid the risk of imposing unnecessary administrative burden and workforce consequences that may undermine its intended benefits.

Unintended workforce consequences may include accelerating the retirement of experienced practitioners, reducing workforce participation, increasing the burden of regulation on new graduates, increasing pressure on smaller practices - notably rural and regional veterinarians, and discouraging senior practitioners from supervising and mentoring new graduates.

The AVA recommends a staged, nationally aligned and low-burden implementation model that preserves professional autonomy while strengthening lifelong learning and professional development.

Discussion

Key principles

The AVA supports the principles of lifelong learning, competency-based development, reflective practice, mentoring of early-career veterinarians, non-technical skills development, wellbeing support, and sustainable veterinary careers. CPD frameworks should facilitate practitioner mobility and consistent professional expectations across Australia.

Rather than prescriptive compliance obligations, CPD requirements should align with the principles of the [Australian Veterinary Boards Council \(AVBC\) framework](#);

- Ongoing competency.
- Career-stage appropriate CPD.
- Reflective learning.
- Mentoring and guidance.
- Positive workplace culture.

The AVA welcomes the four competency domains adopted by the Veterinary Practitioners Registration Board of Victoria (VPRBV), particularly the inclusion of the “Knowledge and Skills” domain, which appropriately recognises the diverse ways veterinarians contribute to the profession, including through roles beyond traditional clinical practice.



Reporting and compliance

The AVA is committed to supporting the veterinary profession through the transition to contemporary, outcomes-based CPD models and would welcome the opportunity to contribute to change management, communication and implementation activities associated with any new CPD framework. As part of this commitment, the AVA is currently reviewing its CPD recording and tracking systems with the aim of aligning these services, where practicable, with veterinary board requirements across Australian jurisdictions. The AVA's CPD tracking system has historically been, and will continue to be, a core member service and will play an important role in supporting veterinarians to meet evolving regulatory expectations. Over the past five years, 1,944 AVA members with a Victorian postal address have logged a CPD record with the AVA, contributing 9,266 individual entries and a total of 53,757 CPD points. On average, that is around 28 points logged per member, well above what most current point-based frameworks require, and it reflects a profession that is actively, voluntarily investing in its own development rather than simply meeting a minimum bar.

The AVA strongly reiterates the importance of national harmonisation of CPD requirements. While Australian veterinary boards are increasingly adopting reflective, outcomes-based approaches to CPD, significant differences remain between jurisdictions with respect to competency domains, reflective practice frameworks, recording requirements, and minimum CPD obligations, including whether veterinarians must complete a prescribed number of hours or points over defined periods. These variations create unnecessary complexity for practitioners, employers, CPD providers and professional associations seeking to support compliance. The AVA encourages the VPRBV to continue working with other jurisdictions and the AVBC to promote greater national consistency in CPD frameworks and reporting requirements.

Without greater alignment, there is a risk that veterinarians practising across jurisdictions or using national CPD services will face increased administrative burden and confusion, potentially undermining the intended benefits of reflective practice. National harmonisation would improve clarity, reduce compliance burden, and facilitate the development of consistent tools and resources to support the profession.

The AVA also encourages consideration of the disproportionate impact these proposed requirements may have on sole practitioners, independently owned clinics, mixed practices, and rural and regional veterinarians, who often face unique workforce, time and resource constraints.

The requirement (Guideline 10.5) to produce complete annual plans, logs, and reflections within 7 days of a VPRBV request is not practicable in active clinical practice. The AVA requests that this notice period should be extended to a minimum of 28 business days, aligning with standard statutory production notices.

Clarity of expectations and regulatory certainty

The AVA acknowledges and supports the VPRBV's intention to move away from a purely points-based or hours-based system towards a more reflective and outcomes-focused approach to continuing professional development.

However, the AVA is concerned that the current draft guideline may create uncertainty for veterinary practitioners regarding what constitutes a sufficient level of CPD engagement to demonstrate compliance with the VPRBV's expectations.

The draft guideline states that practitioners are not required to:



- do a set amount of CPD hours within competency domains
- do equal amounts of CPD in all four domains

The absence of any minimum or benchmark expectations may make it difficult for practitioners to determine whether they have engaged in "reasonable" CPD, particularly if their records are later reviewed as part of a complaint, investigation or audit process.

Regulatory certainty is an important component of compliance, which includes practitioners being able to understand in advance the standard against which their conduct and CPD engagement may ultimately be assessed.

The AVA is concerned that, without clearer guidance, practitioners may experience:

- uncertainty regarding the volume and breadth of CPD expected by the VPRBV;
- anxiety about whether their CPD records would satisfy VPRBV scrutiny if a complaint were made;
- defensive over-documentation to mitigate perceived regulatory risk;
- increased administrative burden as practitioners attempt to demonstrate compliance without knowing what threshold applies; and
- inconsistent interpretation of compliance requirements by practitioners, employers and potentially by VPRBV decision-makers.

A system that is intended to reduce compliance burden should not inadvertently create uncertainty that results in greater record-keeping and administrative effort than the current framework. To support this, resources should include examples of acceptable or reasonable approaches to meeting and recording CPD requirements across the four competency domains.

Wellbeing

The inclusion of wellbeing is an important consideration in professional practice and workforce sustainability. The AVA suggests that wellbeing is best promoted through education, practical resources, supportive workplace cultures and professional development opportunities, rather than through mandatory documentation requirements or regulatory scrutiny.

The AVA recommends that wellbeing be approached through a systems lens, recognising that responsibility for wellbeing extends beyond individual practitioners to include teams, leaders and organisations. Educational activities should be complemented by mechanisms that encourage application of learning, reflective practice and organisational change. A wellbeing framework based on the principles of *learn, live, teach and embed* would support veterinarians to develop wellbeing literacy, integrate wellbeing practices into their professional lives, model these behaviours for colleagues and contribute to workplace cultures that prioritise psychological health and wellbeing. Such an approach is more likely to achieve sustainable outcomes than education-focused interventions alone.

The AVA notes its ongoing investment in veterinarian wellbeing through initiatives such as the [THRIVE wellbeing programs](#), which provide evidence-based support while encouraging professionals, as individuals and teams, to engage in wellbeing activities in a meaningful and constructive way.

Mentoring



The AVA strongly approves of structured support for new graduates and early-career veterinarians; however, concerns have been raised about the capacity of the profession to provide sufficient mentors who can meet the prescriptive requirements proposed under the guidelines. Requiring practitioners to identify an appropriate mentor, participate in regular mentoring meetings over the first two years of practice, and maintain detailed records of these interactions may create significant barriers to compliance, particularly in smaller practices, rural and regional settings, and workforce-constrained environments. There is also a risk that these requirements could increase pressure on both mentors and mentees, with potential implications for wellbeing and workforce retention.

The AVA supports the guideline's recognition that mentoring is an important component of professional development, particularly during the transition-to-practice period. The AVA also welcomes the inclusion of mentoring capability within the broader "Knowledge and Skills" competency domain, recognising that effective mentoring is itself a professional skill that requires development and support.

The AVA considers that the quality of mentoring is critical to achieving the intended benefits of the proposed framework. While requiring recent graduates to engage with a mentor may provide valuable professional and personal support, the effectiveness of these relationships depends significantly on the mentor's capability, preparation and understanding of the mentoring role. As noted in the AVBC CPD paper², mentors should function as facilitators, guides and supporters of professional growth rather than assessors or auditors. Effective mentoring requires specific skills in communication, feedback, reflective practice, professional support and boundary-setting.

It is noted that supporting material provided by the VPRBV includes this wording:

A recent graduate's mentor for this purpose may commonly be their employer or manager who can provide current, well-informed and regular feedback about progress and help identify activities and available support for learning. Graduates may choose to engage with additional or alternative mentors.

The AVA recommends that information provided by the VPRBV more clearly distinguish between the requirement for a new graduate to engage with a mentor and any potential interpretation that the mentor must be the graduate's employer, manager or a practice owner.

While an employer or supervisor may often be well placed to fulfil a mentoring role, this will not always be appropriate, feasible or desirable. In some workplaces there may be limited capacity, expertise, time or resources to provide effective mentoring, particularly in small, rural or sole-veterinarian practices. In other situations, an independent mentor may provide additional benefits by offering a confidential and objective source of professional guidance and support. Where suitable mentoring cannot be provided within the workplace, practitioners and employers should be encouraged to utilise external mentoring pathways, including professional association mentoring programs and other recognised mentoring networks.

The AVA also holds concerns that a requirement for mentoring, without corresponding emphasis on mentor capability and training, may result in inconsistent mentoring experiences. Poorly supported mentoring relationships have the potential to create unintended consequences, including increased

² AVBC, *Continuing Professional Development for Australian Veterinarians: A New Paradigm* – Foundation 4: Guidance, Supervision, Mentoring and Coaching, which emphasises that mentors are facilitators of learning and reflective practice rather than auditors or regulators.



stress, frustration or diminished confidence for graduate veterinarians, as well as additional burden on experienced practitioners who may be expected to undertake mentoring responsibilities without appropriate preparation.

Accordingly, the AVA recommends that the VPRBV encourage training and preparation for veterinarians undertaking mentoring roles in alignment with the recognition of mentor development activities as valid CPD. The AVA further recommends that the VPRBV reference established mentoring programs, including the [AVA Graduate Mentoring Program](#), as an example of quality-assured mentor education and support infrastructure available to the profession.

This approach would maintain the intent of the guideline, improve flexibility across diverse practice settings, and help ensure all graduates have access to high-quality mentoring regardless of workplace circumstances.

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