



2026 VICTORIA STATE ELECTION PRIORITIES

Australian Veterinary Association Ltd
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ava.com.au

WHAT VETERINARIANS REQUIRE

PRIORITY THEMES		PRIORITIES	WHY IT IS NEEDED
VETERINARY WORKFORCE AND STUDENTS		• Victoria to provide regional placement scholarships • Victoria advocate to the Commonwealth to improve veterinarians workforce and student outcomes.	• To avoid placement poverty and encourage students to regional areas • To break the 9-year labour shortage for veterinarians.
MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT		• \$500,000 per year over four years for veterinary designed mental health support.	• To provide mental health supports that are fit for the profession.
REGULATION & LEGISLATION IMPROVEMENTS		• The Veterinary Practice Act 1997 is updated for contemporary practice • Ensuring drugs and poisons regulations support veterinarians to do their jobs • Meaningful engagement on the merging of Vetboard Victoria.	• Make Victorian regulation fit for purpose for the veterinary profession.
FUNDING EQUITY FOR VETERINARIANS		• Access to PPE for veterinarians dealing with H5 bird flu • Funding the public good wildlife care provided by veterinarians • Enabling access for the Animal Welfare Fund for private veterinarians.	• Effective H5 bird flu PPE support • Veterinarians should not be required to take care of wildlife at their own cost • Improving the impact of cost effective services.
ANIMAL HEALTH AND WELFARE		• Pass the Animal Care and Protection Bill • Veterinarians have a clear role in natural disasters • Ban duck hunting.	• Victoria is increasingly out of date and out of step with the rest of Australia.

The Australian Veterinary Association (AVA) has a dedicated Victorian Division that supports and advocates on behalf of the veterinary profession in the state.

Veterinarians are highly regarded, trusted community members.

The AVA has provided a united voice for the veterinary profession for over 100 years and is committed to championing and empowering the veterinary profession to thrive.

INDUSTRY SNAPSHOT



Assisting
1.4 million
Victorian households
to care for their pets



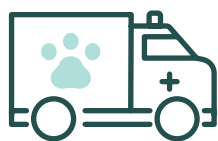
Supporting food
security for
all Victorians



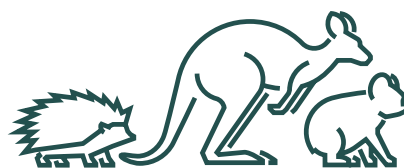
Supporting
17,992
Victorian livestock
businesses¹



Servicing
communities
across Victoria



Providing
emergency care
for Victorian wildlife



Helping
protect iconic
Victorian species

¹ Meat and Livestock Australia State of the Industry Report 2024-25

TOP PRIORITIES FOR VICTORIA

To ensure sustainable veterinary care for animals and the community, the Victorian Division of the AVA has identified these priority themes:

1. WORKFORCE AND STUDENTS

2. MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT

3. REGULATION & LEGISLATION IMPROVEMENTS

4. FUNDING EQUITY FOR VETERINARIANS

5. ANIMAL HEALTH AND WELFARE

1 WORKFORCE AND STUDENTS

What is required

- > That the Victorian Government provides scholarships to veterinary students to encourage them to undertake placement in regional areas, following in the footsteps of New South Wales and Tasmania
 - > That the Victorian Government advocates to the Commonwealth Government for:
 - Veterinary students to be included in the “Commonwealth Prac Payment” scheme. Currently Veterinary students are required to undertake 52 weeks of practical placement during their degrees
 - Investment to develop a National Veterinary Workforce Strategy
 - Commitment to a Rural Practice Scheme forgiving HECS-HELP debt
 - Including the veterinary sector in other rural subsidy schemes and encouraging skilled migration.
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Why this matters

- > To deal with the chronic shortage of veterinarians, particularly in regional areas
- > To avoid “Placement poverty” for veterinary students and encourage rural and regional placements.

2 MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT

Investment needed

- > **\$500,000 per year for four years** to fund veterinary mental health and wellness initiatives in Victoria. This funding is for AVA mental health programs, including the Cultivating Safe Teams training program, mentoring, and 24/7 counselling.
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Why this matters

- > The veterinary workforce plays an integral role in animal and public health, requiring a resilient, healthy professional community to meet growing demands
- > High mental health risks within the profession, driven by factors including burnout, financial stress, and workforce shortages, threaten retention and productivity
- > Dedicated mental health programs and workplace support systems reduce psychosocial risks, enhancing professional well-being and ensuring service continuity
- > Vetboard Victoria has recently consulted on a draft new continuing professional development (CPD) Guideline 10, which mandates mentoring for veterinarians working in Victoria for their first two years after graduation.

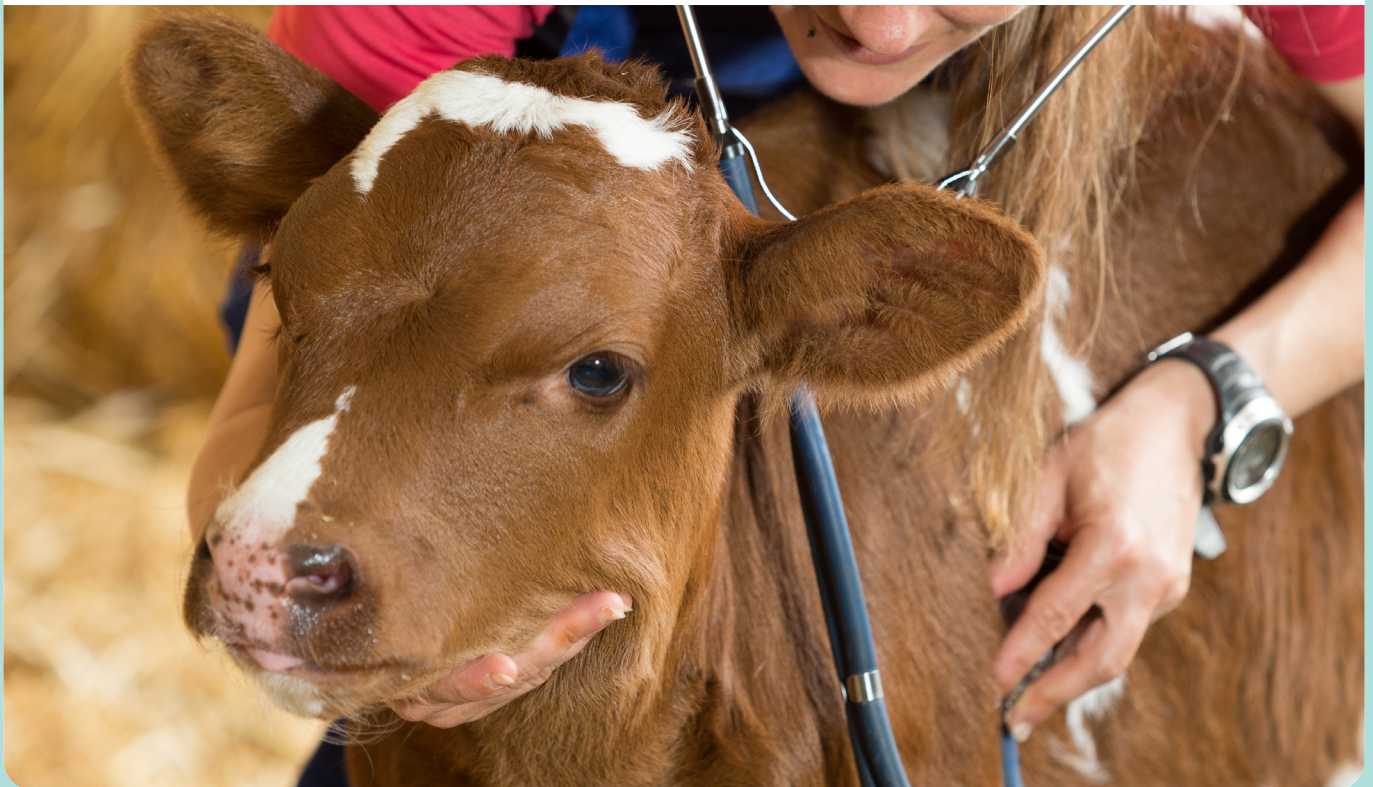
3 REGULATION & LEGISLATION IMPROVEMENTS

What is required

- > Updating the ***Veterinary Practice Act 1997*** to address contemporary practice needs, particularly around paraprofessional (veterinary nurses) regulation and team-based care delivery. This would require adequate resourcing of the Veterinary Practitioners Registration Board of Victoria (Vetboard Victoria) to support implementation
 - > Updating the Drugs, Poisons and Controlled Substances regulations to have workforce permissions, including the inclusion of veterinary nurses in the Regulations, drawing on Queensland reforms and existing Victorian precedents for other assistant workforces
 - > Meaningful consultation with the sector on Vetboard Victoria merging into a new Business and Professions Regulator.
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Why this matters

- > Victoria is falling out of step with other jurisdictions to account for contemporary veterinary practice. For example, in Victoria there is no legislation, regulation, statutory code of conduct to practice as a veterinary nurse or no requirement to maintain currency and fitness
- > AVA emphasises that Victoria's medicines and poisons regulatory framework has been developed primarily for human healthcare delivery models, such as hospitals, general practice and pharmacy settings
- > Veterinary regulation is highly specialised, underpinning animal health, welfare, biosecurity, and public safety. Merging Vetboard Victoria into a broader authority risks undermining the integrity and effectiveness of this bespoke regulatory framework. Vetboard is self-funded, cost-recovery based, and collaborates nationally to ensure consistent standards and efficiency. Disruption could introduce unnecessary complexity that disadvantages the profession.



4 FUNDING EQUITY

Investment needed

- > Access to PPE (including N95 masks) for veterinarians to help manage the H5 bird flu spread
 - > **\$2 million per year for four years** for a pilot program providing treatment for wildlife from private veterinarians
 - > Exploring opportunities for the Animal Welfare Fund to be open for private veterinarians to apply.
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Why this matters

- > It is currently unclear whether veterinarians will be supported with access to PPE in Victoria to help manage the H5 bird flu spread
- > Veterinarians are reimbursed for caring for wildlife that have contracted H5 bird flu. However, veterinarians are not reimbursed when they take care of wildlife who are sick or injured for other reasons
- > Veterinarians deliver vital public goods such as wildlife care, disaster response, and biosecurity, which benefit the broader community
- > Decades of underfunding for this public good work have strained private veterinary practices, jeopardising their ability to sustain these essential services
- > Increased financial backing supports private practitioners who provide public good veterinary services, enabling consistent care that safeguards animals, public health, and community safety
- > Private veterinarians are excluded from the Animal Welfare Fund, despite having the dispersed geographic distribution of practices to improve outcomes for animals getting the treatments they require of the veterinary workforce.



5 ANIMAL HEALTH AND WELFARE

What is required

- > For the Victorian Government to introduce, and pass, the ***Draft Animal Care and Protection Bill***
 - > That veterinarians have clear deployment arrangements post natural disasters, as recommended by the inquiry into the 2026 summer bushfires
 - > Victoria to ban duck hunting.
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Why this matters

- > The ***Draft Animal Care and Protection Bill*** was released for public consultation in 2023. The Bill has not progressed since this time, despite significant public consultation
- > The AVA considers that this draft Bill has been a long time in the making and represents a significant step forward for animal welfare in Victoria, highlighting a shift towards proactive measures and encouraging modern standards
- > Animals are often disproportionately impacted by emergency events, as demonstrated by the 2026 summer bushfires that estimated more than 45,000 livestock deaths and an incalculable loss of wildlife. The inquiry demonstrated that there is more work to be done in ensuring clarity on the role of veterinarians during natural disasters. This is particularly pertinent with H5 bird flu infiltrating Australia
- > Victoria, along with South Australia, Tasmania and the Northern Territory have declared 'open seasons' in which some species of ducks and other waterfowl are permitted to be shot for sport
- > The AVA opposes terrestrial animals (including birds) being hunted purely for sport or recreation. Where animals are killed for food, or as part of a government mandated feral animal control program, this must be regulated and conducted humanely.



VETERINARY IMPACT

Pet care expenditure¹



\$6.6bn



Spending on Vet services
and medicines in Victoria²

\$1.8bn

Veterinary Practitioners
registered in Victoria³

4,223

Victoria has graduated

1,191 vets

Veterinary Science students
between 2014-23⁴

The real value of production
from fisheries
and aquaculture⁵



\$4bn



Livestock disposals and
livestock products⁶

\$11.7bn

\$3.7bn

for cattle and calves

\$2.4bn

for sheep and lambs

\$1bn for poultry

\$430m for pigs

\$542m for wool

\$3.6bn for milk

The gross revenue of racing
(horse and greyhound)⁷

\$5.6bn



^{1,2} Victorian Pet Census 2023

³ Vetboard Victoria Annual Report 2025

⁴ <https://www.education.gov.au/higher-education-statistics/student-data>

⁵ ABARES AFAS Collection July 2026

⁶ Australian Bureau of Statistics Livestock 2024-25

⁷ Size and Scope of Victorian Racing Industry 2024-25

About the Australian Veterinary Association

The Australian Veterinary Association (AVA) is the peak body representing the veterinary profession in Australia.

Veterinarians are highly regarded, trusted community members.

The AVA has provided a united voice for the veterinary profession for over 100 years and is committed to championing and empowering the veterinary profession to thrive.

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.

For more information

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