2027-28 Pre-Budget submission for the Tasmanian Government

Submission of the
Australian Veterinary Association Ltd

November 2026

INVESTMENT SUMMARY

PRIORITY THEMES		INVESTMENT	WHY INVESTMENT IS NEEDED
WORKFORCE AND STUDENTS		**$1.25m over five years** to build on the Veterinary Attraction and Retention Package (VARP) by incorporating: • A targeted veterinarian incentive program • A local veterinary scholarship program • Mental health first aid and wellbeing training	To further encourage the attraction and retention of veterinarians in Tasmania, whilst also attracting young Tasmanians to take up veterinary studies
PUBLIC GOOD FUNDING FOR WILDLIFE CARE		**$800,000 over five years** for a Tasmanian Veterinary Care Emergency Fund Pilot Program for private veterinary businesses to assist in treating Australian wildlife **$100,000 to provide PPE access** to veterinarians for six months and support the biosecurity response	To reimburse the public good work that veterinarians undertake at their own cost To reimburse veterinarians for their work in managing H5 bird flu
UPDATED VETERINARY LEGISLATION		**$500,000 to fund the consultation and updating of the *Veterinary Surgeons Act 1987*** and regulations to address contemporary practice needs, particularly around paraprofessional (veterinary nurses) regulation and team-based care delivery	Make Tasmanian regulation fit for purpose for the veterinary profession
ANIMAL HEALTH AND WELFARE		**The proposed greyhound transition effectively ensures the welfare of all greyhounds impacted** during the transition, including: • Desexing or stronger restrictions on the breeding of greyhounds leaving the industry • Incentivising greyhounds staying in Tasmania • Accurately representing veterinary costs for the transition • Effective welfare data collection The Tasmanian government explores **supporting private veterinarians to provide statewide access to low-cost cat desexing**	To ensure the greyhound transition is focused on the welfare of greyhounds To further encourage cat desexing across Tasmania, with greater statewide coverage

VETERINARY IMPACT IN TASMANIA

Estimated revenue of Tasmanian Veterinary industry[1]

$132m

Registered veterinarians in Tasmania[2]

402

(an increase of 9 from last year)

Agriculture, forestry and fisheries comprises

8.5%

of total Tasmanian industry gross value added[3]

Commodity value of Tasmanian total production from fisheries and aquaculture[4]

$1.4bn

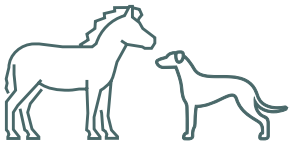
Livestock disposals and livestock products[5]

$1.3bn

- **$412m** for cattle and calves
- **$88m** for sheep and lambs
- **$55.6m** for poultry (2022-23)
- **$9.4m** for pigs
- **$89.2m** for wool
- **$623m** for milk

Gross revenue of racing[6]

$74m



1 IBISWorld 2026
2 Veterinary Board of Tasmania - Annual Report 2024-25
3 Business Tasmania - Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries
4 ABARES - Fisheries and aquaculture statistics
5 ABS - Australian Agriculture: Livestock 2024-25
6 Draft Tasmanian Greyhound Racing Transition Plan 2026

AVA

About the Australian Veterinary Association (AVA) in Tasmania

The AVA has a dedicated Tasmania Division that supports and advocates on behalf of the veterinary profession in the state.

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 vison 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 occupations[1]*.*

[1] Governance Institute 2025

1. Workforce and Students

Investment required

- $1.25m over five years to build on the Veterinary Attraction and Retention Package (VARP) by incorporating:
    - A targeted veterinarian incentive program
    - A local veterinary scholarship program
    - Mental health first aid and wellbeing training.

Supporting evidence and data

- Australia is in its 10th year of a veterinary workforce shortage, particularly pronounced in regional areas. In 2024, AVA data indicated 44% of vacancies in regional Australia were unfilled for more than 12 months or not being filled. This is pertinent for Tasmania, with no veterinary science degree in the state.
- Post-graduation veterinarians earn lower than the median annual salary.
- Veterinary Science is one of the longest and costliest degrees to complete. Veterinary students are required to undertake 52 weeks of placement, but do not qualify for the Commonwealth 'Prac Payment' scheme.
- Doctors who choose to work in regional areas can receive over $100,000 in benefits (depending on the size of their student debt) and NZ offers financial incentives to address the shortage of rural veterinarians.
- Veterinarians play a pivotal role in supporting the agriculture and fishing sector, which is continuing to grow, as demonstrated below:
    - Agriculture, forestry and fishing sector comprises 8.5% of Tasmanian industry gross value added.
    - Over the past 10 years, the agriculture, forestry and fishing industry has experienced a compound annual growth rate of 4.3%.

Why does it matter?

The Tasmanian government is actively working to attract and retain veterinarians through the VARP. VARP has set a bedrock for encouraging veterinarians to Tasmania and for retaining veterinarians in Tasmania. The AVA proposes that the Tasmanian government work with the Commonwealth and industry to make VARP a comprehensive package to build on the current supports. This includes:

- A targeted veterinarian incentive pilot program to encourage 30 newly trained or experienced vets to settle in Tasmania (outside of Hobart and Launceston). This would be a collaboration between the Tasmanian and Commonwealth governments and would provide HECS/HELP relief and a financial incentive of $20,000 spread over 5 years. This is based on how the health system encourages doctors to settle in regional locations, with the expectation that veterinarians will be more price-sensitive to the incentives and encouraged to apply.
- A local scholarship program to provide a financial incentive for 5 local Tasmanians to become veterinarians every year. The proposal is that the Tasmanian government co-

funds the scholarship program with an industry partner. It will provide $20,000 – or $4,000 per year over 5 years (estimated ongoing cost is $50,000 each for the industry partner and the Tasmanian government). The rationale behind the scholarship program is the 'rural background effect', which is a proven tendency where medical students who grow up in country or regional areas are approximately twice greater to work in those same areas as adults. This could result in 5 new veterinarians registering in Tasmania per year, which is about 12.5% of the current average for new veterinary registrations.

- Providing veterinary designed mental health first aid and wellbeing training for 300 veterinarians over five years. This would:
    - ensure that those suffering from poor mental health are provided timely support, reducing risk of attrition due to mental ill-health.
    - educate and apply personal and professional skills to maintain individual wellbeing and positive engagement with others within a veterinary workplace.

This would support Tasmania's large agriculture and fishing industries, as well as animals in entertainment, pets and wildlife.

Additional (non-financial) support the Tasmanian Government can provide:

- Tasmanian government to advocate to the Commonwealth for:
    - Veterinary students to be included in the 'Commonwealth Prac Payment' scheme
    - Commitment to a Rural Practice Scheme forgiving HECS-HELP debt
    - Develop a National Veterinary Workforce Strategy
    - Including veterinarians in rural subsidy schemes and encouraging skilled migration.

2. Public Good Funding for Wildlife Care

Investment required

- $800,000 over five years for a Tasmanian Veterinary Care Emergency Fund Pilot Program for private veterinary businesses to assist in treating Australian wildlife.
- $100,000 to provide PPE access to veterinarians for six months and support the biosecurity response.

Supporting evidence and data

- Studies have indicatively estimated that veterinarians treat around 300,000 wildlife annually (Australia-wide).
- Studies estimating the costs for veterinarians treating wildlife have varied, with the AVA broadly estimating costs to be around $4,000-$5,000 per annum for wildlife treatment (though future studies could show the figure to be underestimated).
- Despite veterinarians being one of the most ethical occupations in Australia, there are misconceptions of being profit driven and driving high costs. This could be driven by misconceptions that veterinarians receive government funding, with 49% of respondents to a Governance Institute of Australia survey believing that some form of subsidy (relative to Medicare) is provided to veterinarians from the government.
- Victoria is currently the only state that provides a subsidy to veterinarians for treating confirmed H5 bird flu cases. It is noted that in many more cases veterinarians will suspect bird flu but will not qualify for the subsidy as it will not be confirmed.
- PPE must be worn when in contact with H5 bird flu infected animals. N95 masks and gowns are infrequently used for other purposes by veterinarians.

Why does it matter?

Veterinarians treat native wildlife at their own costs, with many practices being small local businesses.

There is minimal ‘public good’ funding for veterinary services, yet it is expected that veterinarians provide an extensive range of services that deliver a public good, with these services coming at the cost of the veterinarian. The government mandates some of these through veterinary registration, while others are a community expectation. The list includes:

- Treatment of wildlife and unowned animals
- Biosecurity obligations such as passive surveillance, diagnostic, and reporting
- Treatment of animals in disaster response

Decades of public benefits provided by the private sector without adequate ability to recoup the costs of service have eroded the sustainability of the veterinary profession and, by extension, the public benefit it provides for the community.

This is particularly acute with the rise of H5 bird flu, where veterinarians are managing biosecurity risks, but are not reimbursed for their work, or provided with PPE access.

The rising cost of providing veterinary care to wildlife is unsustainable. The public expects that Australian native wildlife is the responsibility of the government and is often shocked to find that veterinarians don’t receive any assistance with the provision of care.

3. Updating veterinary Legislation

Investment required

- Updating the *Veterinary Surgeons Act 1987* and regulations to address contemporary practice needs, particularly around paraprofessional (veterinary nurses) regulation and team-based care delivery. This would cost the Tasmanian government in staffing and time to consult and develop updated legislation, with an indicative cost of $500,000.

Supporting evidence and data

Activities being undertaken by other states include:

Western Australia

- All practising veterinary nurses must be registered with the Veterinary Practice Board of Western Australia under the Veterinary Practice Act 2021. The Veterinary Practice Regulations 2022, as amended by the Veterinary Practice Amendment Regulations 2025, regulate what acts a veterinary nurse can legally perform and define three levels of supervision: personal, direct and general.
- The 2025 amendments introduced two categories of veterinary nurse — general veterinary nurse and advanced veterinary nurse — with the advanced category recognising nurses with higher-level clinical skills and a broader scope of practice.

Queensland

- Qualified veterinary nurses who are authorised under the Medicines and Poisons (Medicines) Regulation 2021—Schedule 11 can possess and administer medications under the direction or supervision of a veterinarian.

New South Wales

- The NSW government is undertaking reforms to modernise how veterinary services are regulated and delivered. A 2026 consultation outcomes report reported that 88.7% of submissions supported the proposed approach to registration for veterinary nurses and technologists.

Why does it matter?

Tasmania's veterinary legislation requires modernisation so that it can account for contemporary practices. For example, in Tasmania there is no legislation, regulation or statutory code of conduct to practice as a veterinary nurse and no requirement to maintain currency and fitness. Legislation change would allow veterinary nurses to be better utilised within practices.

4. Animal Health and Welfare

What is required

- The proposed greyhound transition effectively ensures the welfare of all greyhounds impacted during the transition, including consideration of:
    - Desexing or stronger restrictions on the breeding of all greyhounds leaving the industry
    - Incentivising greyhounds staying in Tasmania
    - Exploring whether current estimates of veterinary costs for greyhounds accurately represents the true costs for the transition
    - Clear reporting requirements to monitor the welfare of greyhounds
- The Tasmanian government explores supporting private veterinarians to provide statewide access to low-cost cat desexing.

Supporting evidence and data

Greyhound transition

- The current draft greyhound transition legislation provides a ban on breeding from 1 September 2026. However, greyhounds bred as domestic pets will be unrestricted.
- Evidence to support greyhounds being desexed (or having stronger restrictions in place) on leaving the industry is illustrated through the proposed transition modelling, which:
    - requires $2.4 million during the transition period for kennelling;
    - estimates that 1.3 times the rehoming capacity will be required at the cessation date; and
    - highlights the significant increase in whelping of greyhounds.
- The proposed transition model estimates that 348 greyhounds will be exported (leave Tasmania) during the transition period. Compared with the estimated June 2026 figure of 903 greyhounds, this means an estimated 38.5% of greyhounds are expected to leave Tasmania.
- Modelling on average veterinary fees cost per greyhound equals $428.78.

Sterilisation of cats

- The Tasmanian government estimates that 1 in 5 Tasmanians is a cat owner.
- Collectively, roaming pet cats kill 546 million animals per year in Australia.
- 75% – 90% of breeding animals must be desexed to halt population increase.
- Economic analysis suggests that low-cost desexing schemes are effective at raising total community desexing rates.
- In areas with high levels of cat-related complaints, targeted, high intensity and free desexing campaigns can be effective.

Why does it matter?

- The welfare of greyhounds was a key factor to transition out of racing. This standard should be maintained throughout the transition process.
- The Tasmanian government has identified a focus for the next five years to incentivise owners to desex their cats under the Tasmanian Cat Management Plan. The Tasmanian government has provided funding for low-cost microchipping and desexing, however, there is an opportunity for greater impact if private veterinarians are utilised to support efforts due to covering a wider geographic range of Tasmania.

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