AUSTRALASIAN VETERINARY BOARDS COUNCIL Inc.

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MRA Review
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SUBMISSION TO MUTUAL RECOGNITION REVIEW FROM AVBC INc.

The Australasian Veterinary Boards Council Inc (AVBC Inc.) was incorporated in Victoria in December 1999 as an incorporated association by agreement of the state and territory Veterinary Boards of Australia and the Veterinary Council of New Zealand. This is to provide for a legally recognised entity that has the authority to speak and to act on behalf of all registering authorities after formal and informal discussion and agreement of the members. A goal is the standardisation of acceptable qualifications for veterinary registration and other legislative provisions in relation to the regulation and control of the practice of veterinary science in Australia. The AVBC Inc. has no legislative power to impose any decisions made at meetings on any participating Boards.

Currently veterinarians are required to register separately in each state/ territory in which they wish to practise and adhere to the particular legislation in force in that jurisdiction.

The veterinary registration boards of Australia, in conjunction with the AVBC Inc., have embraced the principle of mutual recognition of veterinary qualifications within Australia and between Australia and New Zealand. Adopting mutual recognition under the Trans Tasman Mutual Recognition Act (TTMRA) with New Zealand was initially daunting. However, dialogue with the Veterinary Council of New Zealand within the forum of the AVBC Inc., led to a harmonisation of the qualifications accepted in both countries as entitling the holders to apply for registration without further examination. Although minor differences still exist under the requirements of the legislation in New Zealand, the veterinary registration boards of Australia accept and understand the vagaries of such legislation and pressures from other governmental sources in New Zealand.

It is believed the various state and territory veterinary registration boards have provided details of the numbers of veterinary surgeons applying for registration under the TTRMA to date. These veterinarians have been accepted for registration in cases where no conditions have been applied to their registration in the originating jurisdiction as is required under the respective mutual recognition acts. While the application process of each registering authority may vary in terms of extent of documentation to be submitted, no additional documentation requirements are placed on mutual recognition registrants than are placed on all applicants.

The AVBC Inc has facilitated an agreement between the Australian registration boards to progress the adoption of a secondary registration system where any veterinarian required to register in more than one jurisdiction in Australia need only pay a discounted secondary fee for registration in each other jurisdiction outside their home jurisdiction (the introduction of this has difficulties related to changes required to individual State and Territory legislation). A national registration system would be the optimal system to remove the barriers to the movement of veterinarians in Australia. Various other statutes are relevant to the practice of veterinary science by a person once registered as veterinary surgeons. These are not limited to but include animal welfare and health (drugs, poisons, radiation use and safety). Registrants are expected to acquire knowledge of these legislative provisions before commencing practice in each jurisdiction. They do not represent any impediment to the eligibility of a veterinarian to register to practice, however may act to delay full participation in practice.

Introduction of the mutual recognition agreements forced a change in the content of either the primary or subordinate legislation administered by the veterinary registration board of each state/territory. There is no evidence to demonstrate that the standards in the veterinary profession have eroded due to these changes. In terms of the TTMRA, the eligibility of graduates of accredited overseas veterinary institutions to register in Australia has broadened and this is a positive outcome in terms of the public benefit.

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