



National Competition Policy analysis 2025

Submission of the
Australian Veterinary Association Ltd
June 2025

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 2023 Ethics Index ranked veterinarians among the nation's top 10 ethical occupations¹.

¹ Governance Institute 2023 (<https://governanceinstitute.com.au/app/uploads/2023/11/2023-ethics-index-report.pdf>)



Veterinarians

Occupational licencing

Veterinarians are currently regulated by State and Territory veterinary practice boards that operate under State and Territory veterinary legislation.

In 2006, the Australasian Veterinary Boards Council (AVBC), the AVA and the Animal Health Committee (AHC) worked together to develop a model for National Recognition of Veterinary Registration (NRVR) in Australia.

The model aimed to ensure that veterinarians, registrable in Australia, could be registered to practise nationally on the basis of a single application and single fee. The reasons given for the need for these changes were that separate regulatory systems in each state and territory hinder the mobility of veterinarians within Australia, hinder interstate competitiveness, add financial burdens to veterinarians (multiple registrations) and inconvenience clients with interstate or national interests as well as those requiring particular veterinary expertise only available outside of their own state or territory.

In 2007, there was agreement to proceed with legislative change in each state and territory to allow this to occur, with a timeline set by December 2008. Unfortunately, legislative change took much longer. WA only passed enabling legislation in 2021 And the Northern Territory had not adopted the changes before the Commonwealth Mutual Recognition legislation was updated in 2021 to encompass veterinarians – hence delivering on the intent of the original agreement, if not the method.

Which occupations would be best-suited to a national licensing scheme?

Veterinarians operate in a national labour market and their base qualifications are the same in each state and territory. With limited veterinary specialists in some fields, regular movement between jurisdictions is common and the profession seeks to service the needs of growing markets for veterinary services. Further, veterinary businesses are increasingly operating across state borders. These factors demonstrate that there is significant value to be achieved in improved harmonisation of veterinary regulation.

What would be the first steps towards a national licensing scheme for selected occupations?

Identification of the appropriate model for national registration and potential implementation of an applied laws model to ensure consistence of legislation between jurisdictions.

Why did previous attempts at a national licensing scheme, such as the National Occupational Licensing Scheme, fail? How could a renewed attempt overcome the barriers to a national licensing scheme?

While the implementation of NRVR has been successful, significant issues still complicate the ease of movement of registered veterinarians across the country. A registered veterinarian from one state or territory may work temporarily in another jurisdiction without formally registering in that jurisdiction. However, each state and territory continues to have different legislation, regulations, and policies that need to be complied with. It can be difficult for these to be clearly understood – particularly with eight different jurisdictions.

There is a significant need for harmonisation of these between states and territories to facilitate the movement of veterinarians around the country.



What benefit would a national licensing scheme provide over an expansion of the automatic mutual recognition scheme?

The increased benefits of a national registration scheme would be improved harmonisation of the regulations that veterinarians are required to work under.

How could the PC best quantify the benefits of a national licensing scheme?

- Improved likelihood of veterinarians working in other jurisdictions.
- Reduced business compliance costs
- Reduced business costs associated with understanding multiple different regulatory environments.

Veterinary Nurses and Technologists

The above submission deals with veterinarians, however many of the arguments also apply to veterinary nurses and technologists. The Australian Veterinary Association endorses the separate submission to this review made by the Regulation of Veterinary Nurses and Technologists Working Party.

Contact

Graham Pratt

National Manager, Advocacy

publicvetaffairs@ava.com.au