



ANNUAL REPORT 2018/2019



PRESIDENT'S INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the 2018-2019 annual report of the Veterinary Board of the Northern Territory. This report summarises the activities, achievements and challenges of the Board during the 2018-2019 reporting year.

I would like to thank the Board members for their continued commitment and support without which the activities and achievements in this report would not be possible.

Dr Susanne Fitzpatrick
PRESIDENT
October 2019



LEGISLATIVE CHARTER

The Veterinary Board of the NT is a body corporate and was established under Part 2 of the *Veterinarians Act*. The board administers the *Veterinarians Act*, regulations and the code of conduct. The Act charges the Board with responsibility for the registration of appropriately qualified persons as veterinary surgeons and veterinary specialists, enabling them to practice veterinary surgery in the Territory.

The functions of the board are:

- promoting high standards of professional conduct in the provision of veterinary services
- determining applications for registration from veterinarians and veterinary specialists wishing to practice in the NT
- exercising the disciplinary powers conferred by the Act
- investigating matters relating to the professional conduct of registered veterinarians or veterinary specialists, or the provision of veterinary services
- issuing guidelines in relation to standards to be observed by registered veterinarians and veterinary specialists in connection with the provision of veterinary services.
- making the public aware of its existence and its functions
- giving advice, where requested, on matters relating to the professional conduct of a registered veterinarian or veterinary specialist or the provision of veterinary services
- investigating suspected offences against the Act and prosecuting such offences.

VETERINARY BOARD MEMBERS

The Board consists of elected veterinarians pursuant to the Act (Section 5 – Membership of the Board) and members appointed by the Minister.

Current member of the Board are:

President

Chief Veterinary Officer - Dr Susanne Fitzpatrick

DPIR

Vice President - Dr Ian Gurry (elected member)

Board Member - Dr Sarah VanderStelt (elected member)

Board Member - Dr Elizabeth Stedman (appointed member)

Public Interest Member - Ms Marion Davey (appointed member)

Members of the Board are elected or appointed for a period of three years with the exception of the Chief Veterinary Officer (CVO).

Activities

The Board has been busy this year with the departure of the CVO and President of the Board Dr Kevin De Witte in December 2018, and the temporary appointment of Dr Anthony Kettle until the position of CVO was filled. The new CVO and President of the Board is Dr Susanne Fitzpatrick. Dr Fitzpatrick commenced in May 2019.

The term of the two elected veterinarians to the Board expired in April of 2018 and there were 2 vacant positions. There were two nominations, Dr Ian Gurry and Dr Sarah Vanderstelt. Both veterinarians were elected to the vacant positions in July 2018.

The current term of the Public Interest Member on the Board ends on 19 July 2019. Applications were sought and three nominations were received. After careful consideration of the applicants, the Board elected to put forward Dr Marion Davey for appointment by the Minister. The Minister confirmed the appointment.

The Board addressed the following topics during the year:

- Policy/guideline review
- Professional standards for veterinary surgeons
- Helping veterinarians avoid adverse events and complaints, including record keeping and communication articles in the Vet Board Newsletter

Update of the *Veterinarians Act*

The Board is continuing their work on the changes to the *Veterinarians Act*, Regulations and Code of Conduct. Substantive changes are planned, and will include adoption of National Recognition of Veterinary Registration (NRVR). This would allow vets who hold primary registration in another state or territory to perform locum work in the Northern Territory under that registration.

Other areas the Board are considering for inclusion in the changes is the introduction of further guidance on telemedicine, registration of veterinary premises registration of veterinary paraprofessional pregnancy testers for cattle.

The Board will also change the fee structure of registration and renewals within the updated Act. Fees are currently based on revenue units, which are determined annually by the NT Treasury. The changes proposed would see the Board being able to set fees for registration and renewals and provision of Letters of =good standing to other boards.

The changes to the Act are expected to take around 18 months.

Newsletters

The Board produced three Newsletters for veterinarians registered for the 2018/2019 year. These newsletters provide veterinarians with information on national issues,

disease control, exotic animal disease, National Significant Disease Investigation Program (NSDIP), and relevant surveys being conducted for veterinarian input as well as many other issues for veterinarians.

Continuing Professional Development

Although the current legislation does not mandate continuing professional development (CPD), registered veterinarians have a duty under the Northern Territory Veterinarians Act and Code of Conduct prescribed in the Regulations to maintain contemporary professional standards of veterinary science.

Sections 28(1)(a) and 28(2) of the Veterinarians Act, provides that a registered veterinarian is guilty of misconduct if he or she is incompetent if he or she is unable or fails to uphold or maintain contemporary professional standards.

In addition, section 4(1) of the Code of Conduct requires that “A registered veterinarian must maintain knowledge of the current standards of practice of veterinary surgery or veterinary medicine in the areas of veterinary science relevant to his or her practice. It is essential that veterinarians actively seek to keep abreast of new advances and current standards of veterinary science in their chosen field of veterinary practice.

Northern Territory registered veterinarians need to take note that Continuing Professional Development (CPD) is already mandatory in most other jurisdictions in Australia and will need to be included in proposed amendments to the Northern Territory Veterinarians Act in the interest of:

- achieving consistency and uniformity in Veterinary Board requirements across all States and Territories (which is an important part of the national recognition of veterinary registration process)
- meeting community expectations and maintaining consumer confidence in the veterinary profession.

Complaints against Veterinarians

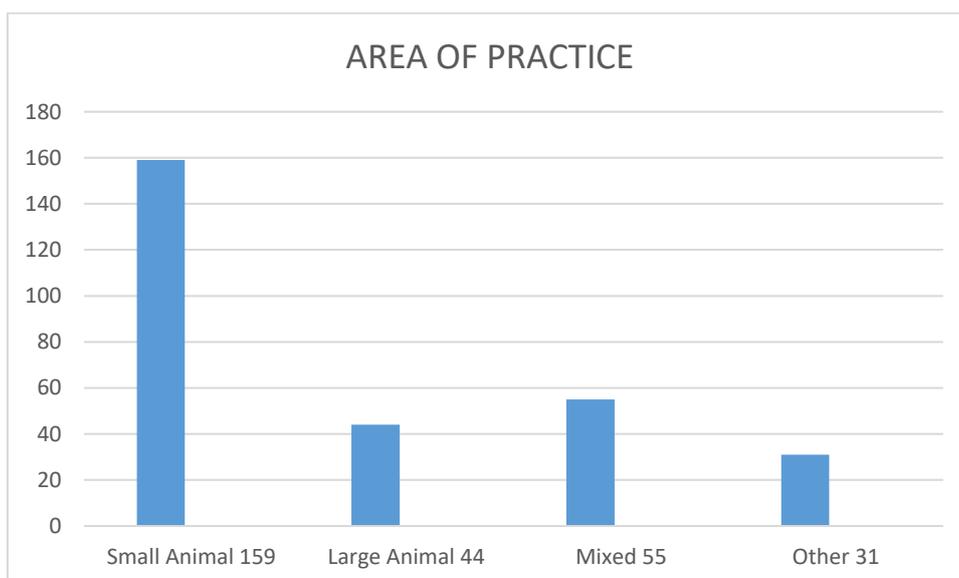
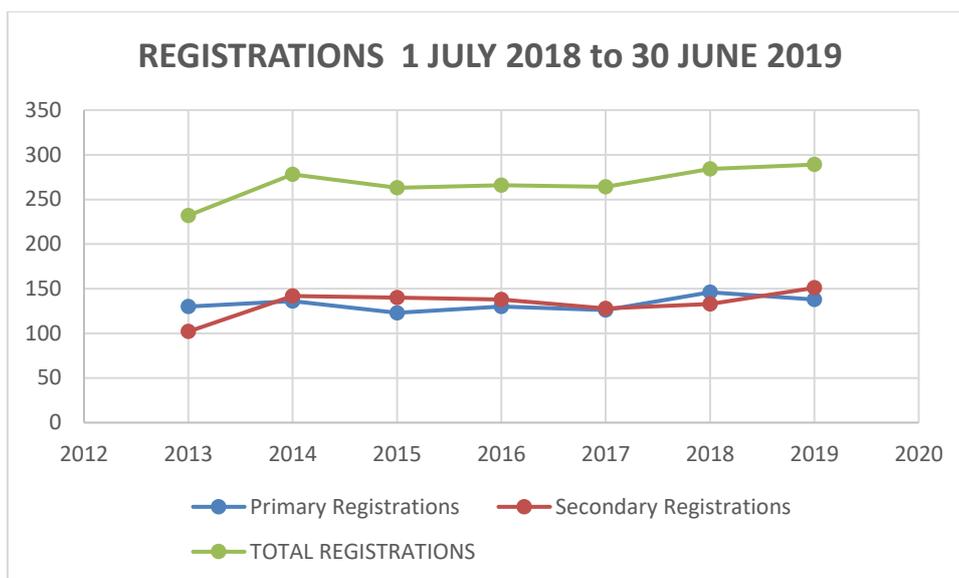
The Board received seven complaints during the 2018/2019 year. This was an increase from 2017/2018 where the Board received three complaints.

Meetings

Under the *Veterinarians Act* the President shall call such meetings of the Board as are necessary for the exercise of its powers and the performance of its functions. The board holds a minimum of four meetings each year. These meetings were held in February, May, August and November. The Board also holds out of session meetings for any urgent issues that may arise.

Registrations

At 30 June 2019, there were 289 veterinary practitioners registered in the Northern Territory. Of the 289 registered veterinarians, 138 are Primary Registered veterinarians who permanently reside in the Northern Territory and 151 Secondary Registered Veterinarians who do not permanently reside in the Northern Territory but work as locum veterinarians or volunteers working on remote indigenous dog programs.



Recognised qualifications

The Act provides that a person is qualified to be registered as a veterinary surgeon if the person has attained a qualification approved by the Board, and is a fit and proper person to practise as a veterinary surgeon in the Northern Territory.

The Board has approved the qualifications recognized by the Australasian Veterinary Boards Council Inc. (AVBC) as providing a holder with eligibility to apply for registration as a veterinary surgeon in Australia and New Zealand without further examination. The full list of qualifications is set out on the AVBC website, but in summary, all Australian and New Zealand veterinary degrees are approved:

Accredited faculties:

- University of Sydney
- Murdoch University (WA)
- Charles Sturt University (NSW)
- University of Melbourne
- University of Queensland
- James Cook University (QLD)
- University of Adelaide and
- Massey University (NZ)

Overseas trained veterinarians who have been awarded the Australian National Veterinary Examination Certificate (NVE) or the New Zealand National Veterinary Examination Certificate (NZNVE) are also recognized. The NVE is administered by the AVBC.

Upon successful completion of the NVE a candidate is issued with a certificate as proof that they have satisfied the examination requirements and are therefore able to register with Australian and New Zealand Veterinary Boards.

Subject to some requirements, degrees and qualifications obtained overseas from universities and colleges accredited by the following bodies are also recognized:

- Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons (RCVS) United Kingdom
- American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA)
- South African Veterinary Council (University of Pretoria).

Australasian Veterinary Boards Council Inc.

The Australasian Veterinary Boards Council Inc. (AVBC) is a legal entity which has authority to speak and act on behalf of all veterinary registering authorities in Australia and New Zealand. Although it has no legislative power to impose any decisions made at meetings on any participating Boards, it has a valuable advisory function and makes recommendations to the Boards in the areas of:

- the accreditation of veterinary schools and courses leading to a degree in veterinary science or medicine;
- assessment of suitability for practice in Australia and New Zealand of persons with foreign qualifications, including the running of the NVE;
- uniform criteria for recognition of qualifications for registration;
- provision of advice on matters concerning the occupational regulation of veterinarians, including general and specialist registration; and
- encouraging harmonisation of the standards, regulations and quality assurance of veterinary services provided to the community in all jurisdictions.

The state and territory Veterinary Boards of Australia, the Veterinary Council of New Zealand, the Australian Veterinary Association (AVA) and the New Zealand Veterinary Association Ltd (NZVA) are members of AVBC.

AVBC members have discussions bimonthly, primarily by teleconference, with a face to face meeting for the AVBC AGM and the annual registrars meeting. The AVBC Northern Territory delegate, Dr Elizabeth Stedman, and the registrar Susan Gillis attended the AGM, ordinary meeting and workshop. The registrar also attended the annual face to face meeting of all veterinary board registrars these meetings were held in Canberra in May 2019.

The AVBC is financed by a levy on participating jurisdictions, based on the number of veterinary surgeons holding primary registration in that jurisdiction.

Liaison with the Australian Veterinary Association (AVA)

The Board maintains liaison with the AVA to ensure a free exchange of views and information. The AVA provides continuing education, mentoring and other forms of assistance to veterinarians in the NT. This is particularly important for new graduates. The Board takes this opportunity to acknowledge the cooperation of the AVA.

FINANCE

In the financial year 2018/2019 the Veterinary Board costs were as follows:-

Expenditure

Regulatory Advisory Boards/Committees Fees	\$2,584.00
Office Expenses	\$4,145.60
General Expenses	\$ 467.00
Salary Registrar	\$80,810.40

TOTAL EXPENDITURE **\$88,007.00**

Income

Registration and Renewals 2018/2019 **\$15,426.00**

The income from registrations is based on the Primary Registrations. There is no payment for Secondary Registration. The Veterinary Board expenditure is therefore supported by the Department of Primary Industry and Resources.

