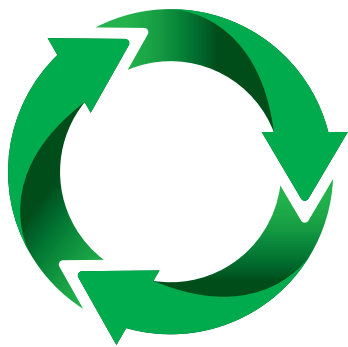




Sustainable Practice Forum 2022

Event Report





Sustainable Practice Forum 2022

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Introduction

The AVBC Sustainable Practice Forum was a challenging, stimulating and overwhelmingly positive event. Organised by the new Sustainable Practice Committee (SPC), the Forum showcased the work of AVBC and sought broad collaboration and input from veterinary stakeholders. Born out of AVBC's commitment to supporting Australasian veterinary regulators, the SPC works to deliver a fit-for-purpose veterinary profession in Australia & New Zealand.

The SPC is working to address critical areas of concern, such as:

- mental health of the veterinary team
- utilisation of veterinary paraprofessionals
- complaints handling
- standardisation of regulations and registration requirements across jurisdictions.

For regulators, sustainable practice is about preventing incidents requiring the board's attention before they happen and having a viable, long-term workforce to service the community's needs and maintain animal welfare standards.

The Forum focussed on how we can create an ecosystem in which veterinarians sustain continued growth and professional satisfaction throughout their careers. Assisting veterinary professionals to thrive in their careers will achieve better animal welfare outcomes, enhance services provided by veterinarians to the public and build more public confidence.

At the Forum, we achieved our goal of gathering unique perspectives and insights on how to deal with the complex problems we face. The outcomes and energy from the Forum influenced AVBC's 2023-2027 Strategic Plan, which will be released in March 2023.



Forum Overview

Presenters

We were fortunate to welcome a combination of high-calibre speakers in-person and through the wonders of Zoom. Speakers from the US joined virtually on both mornings of the Forum.

In-Person Attendees

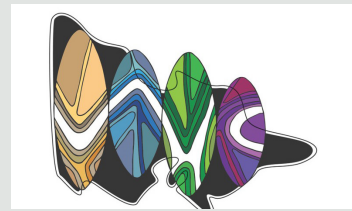
Approximately 70 delegates attended both days of the Forum. There were representatives from the Australian Veterinary Boards, the Veterinary Council of New Zealand, AVBC Standards Committees (Chairs and committee members), the AVA & NZVA, Veterinary Schools (including Deans, staff & students), as well as veterinarians from various sectors, veterinary nurses, veterinary mental health and workplace safety experts.

Virtual Attendees

A contingency plan was implemented to ensure that key stakeholders unable to attend in person due to unavoidable circumstances could attend part of the Forum virtually. We welcomed eight virtual attendees from the UK, the US and New Zealand on both mornings.

Acknowledgement of Country

Thanks to Dr Cam Raw, indigenous veterinarian and tutor in indigenous engagement, traditional knowledge and clinical teaching at the University of Melbourne for setting the tone with a moving Acknowledgement of Country.



2022 Sustainable Practice Forum attendees

AVBC Speakers

Dr Zoe Lenard

SPC Chair

Dr Lenard is a registered specialist in veterinary radiology and veterinary practice owner based in Perth, WA. She has served as President of the Australian and New Zealand College of Veterinary Scientists (ANZCVS) from 2018–2021. Given her background, Dr Lenard understands the importance of continuing professional development, standards for continuing registration, evidence-based regulation and free movement of veterinarians across the mutual recognition zones.

During her tenure as President of the ANZCVS, Dr Lenard oversaw a major restructure, with the appointment of a CEO and the transition of the Board (Council) from operational to strategic. Under her leadership, the College was able to be agile through the disruption of Covid-19 and pivot to an online scientific series to replace the in-person Science Week, as well as run Fellowship exams remotely.



University of Pennsylvania, before returning to Sydney University to teach. Under her leadership as Dean, the Faculty of Veterinary Science at Sydney celebrated its centenary in 2010, increased its research quality and disciplinary rankings, expanded its clinical programs and introduced its flagship BVB/DVM degree. Prof Taylor is a past Chair of the Veterinary Schools of Australia and New Zealand (VSANZ) and a previous board member of the AAVMC. Currently she works as an education consultant and is Co-Chair of the AAVMC Competency Based Veterinary Education Advocacy Group, as well as leading AVBC's review of accreditation standards.

Professor Jennie Hodgson

VSAAC Co-Chair

Prof Hodgson is the Associate Dean for Professional Programs at the Virginia-Maryland College of Veterinary Medicine and Professor in the Department of Population Health Sciences. She received her veterinary degree from the Faculty of Veterinary Science at the University of Sydney, a PhD in microbiology at Washington State University and she is a Diplomate of the American College of Veterinary Microbiology. Prof Hodgson has taught veterinary microbiology in both Australia and the USA and has received several awards for her teaching over the course of her career. Currently she is Co-Chair of the Council on Outcomes-Based Veterinary Education and a member of the Veterinary Medical Educational Initiative. Previously Prof Hodgson Chaired the American Association of Veterinary Medical College's (AAVMC) Academic Affairs Committee and was Co-Chair of the Competency Based Veterinary Education Working Group.

Emerita Professor Rosanne Taylor

VSAAC Co-Chair

Prof Taylor is a former Dean of the Sydney School of Veterinary Science (2009–2017). She received her veterinary degree from the University of Sydney before going on to complete an internship in large animal medicine and surgery and a PhD on the treatment of canine fucosidosis. After several years working for the NSW Department of Agriculture's Animal Welfare Branch, Prof Taylor trialled gene and stem cell therapy for neurological disease as a Kleberg Fellow in Medical Genetics at the



Professor Jon Hill

ACRVS Chair

Professor Hill is Executive Dean for the College of Science Health Engineering and Education at Murdoch University. Prior to this role, he had a 25-year career in USA and Australian Universities and research institutions. Prof Hill was a University of Queensland (UQ) Professor in Veterinary Reproduction from 2008-2021. In 2008, he joined UQ as Dean and Head of School during a transformational period when the Veterinary School relocated to newly constructed facilities at the UQ Gatton Campus and achieved global accreditation of the UQ veterinary program.

Prof Hill joined AVBC in 2013 as the Convenor of the Advisory Committee on the Registration of Veterinary Specialists (ACRVS). In the nine years at the helm of the Committee, Jon has worked hard with the Committee to maintain the reputation of the Australian and New Zealand veterinary specialist qualifications and uphold the standards expected of veterinary specialists by AVBC, the veterinary boards and the public.



Mr Iain McLachlan

SPC & FARMC Member

Mr McLachlan is CEO & Registrar of the VCNZ. He is responsible for leading and managing the organisation as well as carrying out the functions of the Registrar, as set out in the Veterinarians Act. A practising lawyer, Iain also gives legal advice to the Council.

Before joining VCNZ, Iain worked in professional regulation in New Zealand and the United Kingdom



and in private practice. He has a Bachelor of Laws and a Bachelor of Commerce and Administration, both from Te Herenga Waka – Victoria University of Wellington.

Iain is heavily involved with AVBC, serving as a member on FARMC and providing invaluable regulatory insights as a member of the SPC.

Dr Anne Quain



Forum Moderator

With her quick wit, Dr Anne Quain (University of Sydney, Veterinary Ethicist) kept everyone on the alert and focussed on solutions. Dr Quain helped attendees identify critical issues and design human-centred pathways to resolution.

Anne is a senior lecturer in the Sydney School of Veterinary Science. She is a Member of the Australian and New Zealand College of Veterinary Scientists Animal Welfare Chapter and a Diplomat of the European College of Animal Welfare and Behavioural Medicine in Animal Welfare Science, Ethics and Law.

Anne is the co author of Veterinary Ethics: Navigating Tough Cases with Dr Siobhan Mullan, and co-editor of The Vet Cookbook, a collegial collaboration to promote wellbeing in the veterinary sector.

She has written over 70 academic articles and book chapters, and completed her doctoral thesis on ethically challenging situations encountered by veterinary team members.

Keynote Speakers

Emeritus Professor Rick Read

Royal Perth Hospital, Australia.

After 40 years working as a veterinarian, researcher and administrator, Rick began a new career as the Junior Doctors' Wellbeing Officer at Royal Perth Hospital. In this role, he convened peer groups that provide a safe and supportive environment for junior medical officers to debrief and destress, and develop new skills in stress management, selfawareness, resilience, teamwork, and self-care.

Rick has an extensive understanding of the challenges that workplace culture has on individual and team performance. His team's programs to help improve medical culture have been extended to embrace all healthcare professionals at Royal Perth and Bentley Hospitals and many other large hospitals are showing interest in developing similar programs. Rick's career in both veterinary and human medicine gives him great insight into the challenges of working in a high-pressure, health environment, dealing with burnout and being happy with both yourself and your career.



Dr Valerie Ragan

Center for Public and Corporate Veterinary Medicine, Virginia Tech, USA.

Valerie is the director of the Center for Public and Corporate Veterinary Medicine at the Virginia-Maryland College of Veterinary Medicine (VMCVM). The Center trains students for veterinary careers outside of private practice. This includes the areas of public health and policy, disease control and eradication, corporate veterinary medicine, systems thinking and implementing a One Health approach, and international veterinary medicine. The Center also works to increase opportunities for student engagement in national and international veterinary and animal health organizations involved in public veterinary practice, and provides training and guidance to veterinarians interesting in transitioning from one career area in veterinary medicine to another. Valerie also continues to work around the world on the control and eradication of brucellosis, a major disease of importance in livestock and human health, and on projects related to veterinary capacity building.



Dr Andrew T. Maccabe

**American Association of Veterinary Medical Colleges (AAVMC),
Washington D.C., USA.**

Dr Maccabe brings a background in the military, law, public health, veterinary medicine and his current leadership position as the Chief Executive Officer of the American Association of Veterinary Medical Colleges (AAVMC). Prior to his appointment at the AAVMC, he served as a liaison at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), coordinating policies and programs between the CDC and the U.S. Food and Drug Administration. On receiving his DVM in 1985, Dr. Maccabe worked in a mixed animal practice with primary emphasis on dairy herd health. He was commissioned as a public health officer in the U.S. Air Force in 1988 and retired in 2017. His military career included domestic and international assignments in public health, preventive medicine, epidemiology, communicable disease control, risk assessment and health promotion. While serving in the Air Force, Dr. Maccabe completed his Master of Public Health degree at Harvard University in 1995. He completed his Juris Doctor degree from the James E. Rogers College of Law at the University of Arizona in 2002. He holds memberships in professional organisations such as the American Veterinary Medical Association, the American Bar Association, the American Veterinary Medical Law Association, and the District of Columbia Veterinary Medical Association. He is a member of the Bar of the District of Columbia and a licensed patent attorney.



Continuing Professional Development (CPD)

Part 1: Career sustainability, attrition and lifelong learning

Dr Zoe Lenard

In her first presentation, Dr Lenard reviewed the work and purpose of AVBC and the Sustainable Practice Committee (SPC), summarised some reasons why veterinary careers may not be sustainable, and asked what a sound CPD system looks like, zooming in on the new graduate transition phase. She highlighted that now, more than ever, people need to find meaning in their work. She suggested that by implementing a better CPD system to engage veterinarians, we can support the veterinary profession through this cultural realignment.

Current CPD requirements (in Australia in particular) focus on quantity (not quality) and technical skills and do not require reflection or relate to the veterinarian's health and wellbeing. She suggested that to create a better system, we need to improve knowledge and skills while:

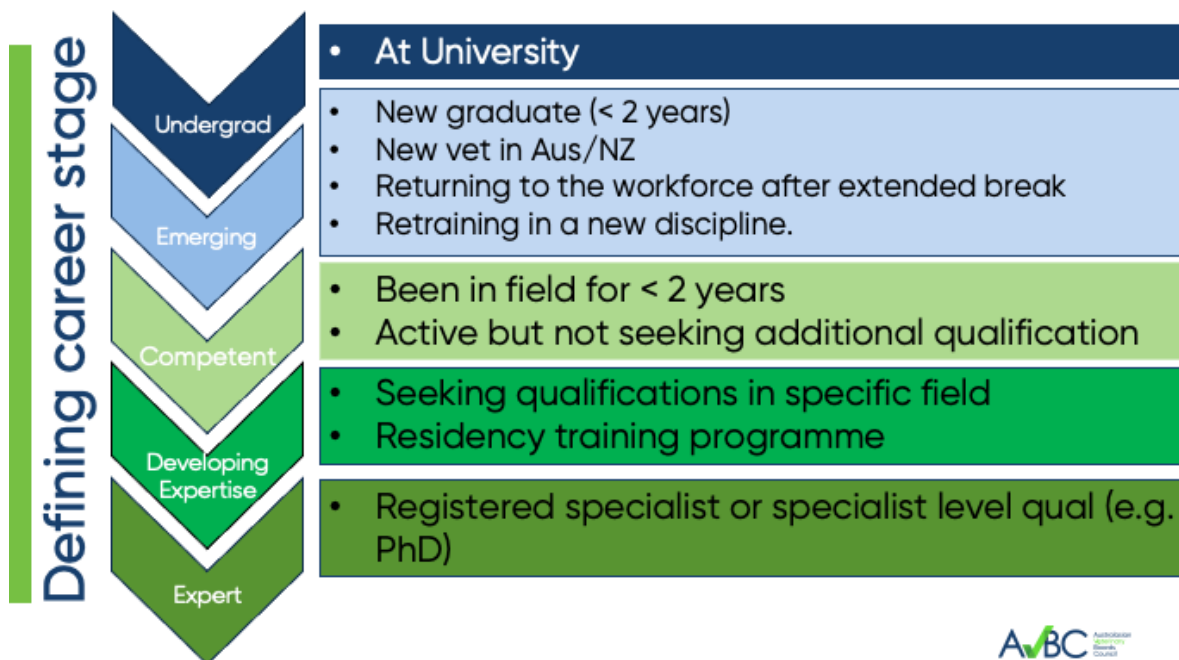
- having measurable outcomes
- not imposing unreasonable burdens on the profession or accrediting bodies
- being easy to administer and record
- providing value for the participants (professionally & personally)
- benefitting the end user (patients/clients/government)

Dr Lenard reviewed a study from New Zealand by Gates et al. (2021)¹, where they found that CPD should promote evidence-based veterinary medicine and behavioural change, competence should be defined by career stage, systems should be developed to assess competencies and external review of competence is required (via feedback on strength and weaknesses). She introduced the audience to the five clinical domains currently used by the VCNZ's CPD programme (see above) and the five career stages defined by Caroline Mansfield in her report for the SPC.²



¹ Gates MC, McLachlan I, Butler S, Weston JF. Building Veterinarians beyond Veterinary School: Challenges and Opportunities for Continuing Professional Development in Veterinary Medicine. *J Vet Med Educ*. 2021 Aug;48(4):383–400. doi: 10.3138/jvme.2019-0148.

² Mansfield C. Summary of Continuing Professional Development Options and Recommendations for the Future. 2022 Jan.



Veterinary Career Stages defined by Dr C. Mansfield (2022)

Part 2: The status quo is not fit for purpose

Dr Zoe Lenard

In this session, Dr Lenard looked at planning and reflection in CPD, non-technical skills and mentoring, coaching and supervision. She explored how employees can be maximally engaged in their work, introducing Maslow's hierarchy of needs, where job security and fundamental needs form the pyramid's base. Maximal engagement is achieved only by a sense of purpose and alignment between work and larger personal goals. Dr Lenard suggested that to achieve this in the veterinary profession, we need to shift the focus of CPD towards a combination of technical and non-technical skills (NTS). By utilising the career stages defined by Mansfield², we can also tailor CPD requirements more intentionally to gain better engagement.

As well as examining CPD in the veterinary profession, Mansfield and the SPC reviewed other industries' approaches. The "plan and reflect" approach to CPD has been implemented by the VCNZ and many other health industries. When combined with a holistic approach, incorporating aspects such as critical reasoning, professional identity and personal well-being, the likelihood of engagement increases and the risk factors for attrition may be reduced.

Dr Lenard briefly summarised the VCNZ CPD model, emphasising the advantages of its simplicity and shared emphasis on the five clinical domains, including NTS. Other professions actively teach and assess NTS, acknowledging their importance for high-performing teams in safety-critical disciplines. Building

Continuing Professional Development (CPD)

cultural safety and NTS to maximize employee engagement requires a considerable investment in time and money. The challenge lies in convincing our peers that this investment away from ACTUAL INCOME GENERATION is worthwhile. And how can regulators support this training?

While the importance of mentoring in the new graduate transition to practice phase is acknowledged widely, Dr Lenard explored whether there is a place for formal mentoring beyond this phase. Anglican priests, psychologists and mental health care workers must have professional supervision, regardless of career stage. There is good evidence that ongoing mentoring/professional supervision provides clear accountability, support, and non-critical, non-judgemental feedback to enable reflective growth and improve overall professional effectiveness. Looking at veterinary professional sustainability, this may be an important area to explore further.

Aotearoa New Zealand's new graduate programme for vets

Mr Iain McLachlan

In his presentation, Iain provided background on why the Veterinary Council of New Zealand created their new graduate programme, introduced in 2021. Although VCNZ data demonstrated that new graduates were under-represented in complaints and concerns, retention was less of an issue based on recent workforce data. There were still calls from multiple sources to address the issue of support for this cohort.

The VCNZ began their investigation with a literature review, which identified the following:

- Overseas veterinary regulators have implemented/are considering new graduate support programmes, but their focus is on building clinical knowledge and technical skills.
- Employers and new graduates have primarily identified non-technical skills such as client communication and business management as key areas for new graduate development.
- Most new graduates rely heavily on their colleagues to develop their skills and prefer informal learning opportunities over formal courses and structured checklists.
- Veterinarians tend to self-select CPD topics. This is of potential concern due to the Dunning-Kruger effect, a well-documented cognitive bias where individuals with the least knowledge or competence in an area are the most likely to overrate themselves. Individuals may need help to accurately self-identify the areas where they need the most improvement.
- CPD is most effective when individuals are directly involved in creating plans that are tailored to their specific needs.

While there is no clear evidence favouring any particular format of CPD, some themes emerged from the literature, including the importance of interactions with peers, the value of including some form of assessment or self-reflection at the end of a CPD activity and the benefit of encouraging practitioners to

think about how their learning can improve their performance.

The VCNZ then conducted research in four areas:

- Experiences of new veterinary graduates in their first employment position and preferences for new graduate support programmes
- Opinions and experiences of employers and colleagues with new graduate veterinarians during their first year in clinical practice
- Building veterinarians beyond veterinary school: challenges and opportunities in continuing professional development
- Practices and preferences of New Zealand clinical veterinarians for continuing professional development

The research uncovered that approximately 45% of the new graduates surveyed had left their first place of employment, with the most common reasons cited as **toxic practice culture** and **lack of adequate support**. When asked about their experiences at their first place of employment, respondents tended to disagree that employers checked on their wellbeing, met regularly with them to discuss their work and had a clear plan to develop their skills and experience. When asked about preferences for a new graduate support programme, a requirement for those employing new veterinarians to hold regular meetings between employee and supervisor or introducing a non-compulsory programme where new graduates could meet with experienced veterinarians were ranked as the most helpful.

Based on this research, the VCNZ reached the following conclusions:

- New graduates would benefit from preparing a plan at the start of their employment (or earlier) as a veterinarian, with the help of a mentor or supervisor, to identify their learning needs.
- The five clinical domains of learning and skills framework (described previously) would help guide this planning process.
- Regular meetings with a mentor or supervisor to review progress against the plan and check on general wellbeing would greatly benefit new graduates.
- There should be flexibility around who can be a mentor or supervisor to allow for different situations.
- Training should be available for mentors (some suggested that training should be mandatory).
- There is an apparent disconnect between the level of support that new graduates perceive they have received and the level of support that employers believe they have provided.



Continuing Professional Development (CPD)

Based on these conclusions, the Council implemented an enhanced version of CPD for new graduates in 2021. In addition to the expectations in the recent general CPD scheme created, new graduates also had to:

- Conduct a planning session with a senior colleague (mentor) when they start work. This session would incorporate the CPD planning process and is more detailed and specific than experienced vets' plans.
- Meet regularly with their mentor to review progress against the plan and check on their wellbeing. This should be monthly for the first three months and bimonthly after that until the end of their first year (or more frequently if required for the individual).

The VCNZ recognised that new graduates needed good mentors. They put in place training for those wanting to mentor. They also allow flexibility in who can be a mentor, so new graduates can request and be assigned to an independent mentor via a dedicated third-party system (Mentorloop).

The VCNZ's general CPD and new graduate CPD programmes have been created with ease of implementation and flexibility in mind. The VCNZ worked with employers during the initial roll-out to ensure the program tied in well with existing processes and employers could ensure that current systems met the new VCNZ standards.

No issues have been reported, but the programme will be reviewed regularly and adapted to move where the evidence leads. VCNZ embraces the idea of a future where peer input and support are the default for all veterinarians in practice.



CPD Workshop

How could our industry improve the development of non-technical skills at all stages of our careers?

Allowing veterinarians to evolve their knowledge of how NTS help to create high-performing teams may lead to a cultural evolution applicable in any veterinary team (clinical or non-clinical), resulting in improved team performance and better engagement with work. In healthcare, it is known that teaching NTS improves performance in operating theatres, ICUs, obstetrics, and hospitals. Mistakes, errors and near-misses are also reduced in teams with better NTS awareness.

Non-technical skills include situational awareness, leadership, task management, decision-making and teamwork. Matching NTS to the career stage will be vital in getting the most out of this cultural evolution. The current CPD landscape is heavily focused on didactic and technical activities and needs to catch up with technological change. A rethink of the current CPD is required, shifting away from delivery based on points or hours allocated to predominantly technical activities. There needs to be a focus on other clinical domains like Professional Identity, Personal Wellbeing and Critical Reasoning. Refocussing CPD through a broader lens is likely to help our profession become more resilient and fit for the current workforce.

Is there a role for mentoring or coaching, or life-long supervision?

There was overwhelmingly positive support for this proposition, with several participants noting that similar schemes are required in many medical professions, particularly those encompassing mental health. The ability to reflect on one's career (whatever stage) with someone else was considered beneficial in the plan and growth cycle. The discussion reflected that supervision or coaching a mid-career or experienced veterinarian need not involve being told what to do but INSTEAD COULD PROVIDE a positive opportunity to reflect on one's performance, perhaps with guidance. Others commented that successful people across all industries frequently cite the influence of a mentor on their career, and that the mentor may change at different career stages.

How could this occur with minimal financial burden but maximal engagement impact?

The Vet Council of New Zealand has developed a simple model encompassing 5 Clinical domains (Technical Skills, Clinical Knowledge, Personal Wellbeing, Professional Identity and Critical Reasoning) to support the whole person within the profession. Using a template to record professional activity against these domains helps veterinarians plan to address their deficiencies and look after all of their needs. Creating a framework that maps career stages to professional needs need not be complicated. If adopted by state and territory practitioner boards, it could provide an excellent roadmap for cultural improvement in our profession.

How is success measured?

Measure through: external audits (surveys), media analysis

Outcomes include:

- Reduction in numbers/change in the type of complaints to veterinary boards (i.e., less related to communication errors)
- Improved industry mental wellness
- Improved client compliance & satisfaction
- Improved animal welfare outcomes
- Better community understanding and awareness about the profession
- Increased professional satisfaction & engagement
- NTS are so embedded in all levels of the industry that we no longer talk about them

Early Career

VSAAC Day 1 competencies and transition to practice

Prof Rosanne Taylor & Prof Jennie Hodgson

Prof Taylor presented in person, while Prof Hodgson co-presented seamlessly from Virginia in the USA via Zoom.

Prof Hodgson summarised AVBC's Day One Competencies (D1Cs) Review, highlighting how the emphasis in veterinary education has shifted from inputs (what we teach) to outputs (what graduates can do). The objective of AVBC's D1Cs Review was to define what every Day One Australasian veterinary graduate *should* be able to do. The Review involved an initial research phase, where current AVBC Attributes of New Graduates were examined in addition to Day One Competencies from international veterinary accreditation and education bodies (RCVS, AAVMC, WOA, EAEVE). The draft competencies then underwent two rounds of stakeholder consultation. The results of these consultations guided the creation of the final draft.

The new AVBC D1Cs consist of 40 competencies across nine domains.¹ These domains cover the technical and non-technical skills expected of a modern veterinary graduate. Prof Hodgson emphasised that this is an iterative process, and D1Cs will continue to be adapted based on ongoing feedback and emerging trends.

Prof Taylor reported on AVBC's ongoing Accreditation Standards Review. AVBC's Accreditation Standards were last revised in 2012. This Review began in early 2022. The new RCVS Accreditation Standards² were used as a starting point, and two consultation phases with stakeholders were now complete. Themes that emerged from the consultations included:

- Student wellbeing
- Professional resilience
- Common clinical conditions
- EMS quality
- Diversity, equity, inclusivity

To reflect these themes, new standards have been developed to address diversity equity and inclusivity, safety & QA for EMS, and safety for practice with clients' animals. New processes have also been developed, including a new "living" repository of evidence for veterinary schools to maintain, as well as a shift towards outcomes-focussed and risk-based accreditation.

¹ [AVBC Day One Competencies, effective Jan 2024.](#)

² [RCVS Standards and Guidance for the Accreditation of Veterinary Degree Programmes 2023](#)

Early Career Workshop

How can curriculum and assessment design focused on DICs reduce the pressures on veterinary education and graduates?

What is the veterinary profession's role in supporting student learning and graduate transition to practice (particularly in extramural practices)?

How can implementation of the new accreditation standards and processes improve the preparation for and transition of graduates to practice?

Issues Identified:

- As accreditation standards shift focus to common conditions, we must be careful not to build a feedback loop that reduces non-clinical and research opportunities.
- Universities must recognise that Day One Competencies are just a subset of a much larger set of essential learning outcomes.
- The government needs to support our profession better compared to medicine, engineering, or other professions. In the last financial year, there was \$2 billion in support for healthcare training to get medics and healthcare professionals trained and supported into practice. None of that money lands in the veterinary sector.
- There is a lack of shared standards or requirements for EMS assessment across the universities, making it difficult for practitioners to evaluate students' performance and understand their role in the process.
- There is a lack of partnership between universities and private practice – it is seen as a handover rather than a partnership
- Student expectations of clinical practice may need to align with reality – many students may only be exposed to clinical practice after they start their extramural experience.
- NZVA data shows that veterinarians are willing to teach students, however, they are concerned about having the proper skills and ability to teach/assess, the impacts on their workload and the time and costs of training and supervision.
- We have the new Day One Competencies, which set a benchmark for "Day One", but no advice on implementing and building upon these in practice.



Early Career Workshop (Continued)

Suggested Solutions:

- Practices providing EMS need to get a good return on investment – be it financial or otherwise:
Dr Kate Hill introduced fellow attendees to the Maori concept of “Ako” as a benefit of providing EMS. Ako presents a non-hierarchical way of learning where the learner is the teacher, and the teacher is the learner. Having a growth mindset makes it exciting to have a student or new graduate in practice – experienced team members learn from the student/ new graduate, and the student/recent graduate learns from the experienced team members.

From a financial perspective, could a model be developed to subsidise the cost of EMS training for practices?
- True partnerships need to be developed between veterinary organisations providing EMS and the universities.
- Formal training/professional development and better support for supervising veterinarians and practices could be provided
- Having common, simplified EMS requirements for all universities with consistent recommendations on assessing students.
- Consideration of provisional registration for final year students to get more practical experience and develop consistent, stronger relationships with their extramural practice practices.
- Consideration of a compulsory general practice internship or rural placement in the first year post-graduation.
- Improved simulation training in undergraduate education, for technical skills as well as NTS (including communication and situational awareness etc., before exposure to and assessment in real-world situations.
- Improved selection process including criteria focusing on aspects such as diversity etc.



Keynote

The Future of Veterinary Medical Education

Dr Andy Maccabe

Day Two of the Forum began with a stimulating presentation from Dr Andy Maccabe from the AAVMC in Washington, D.C., joining us via Zoom.

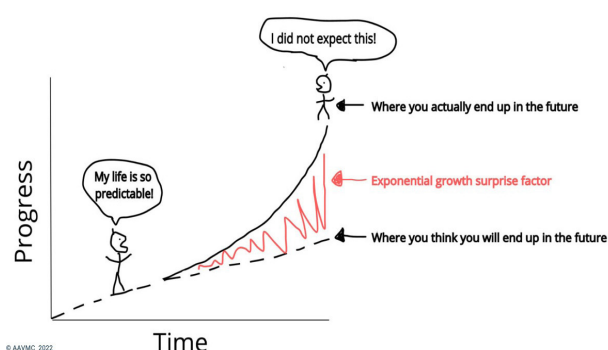
Dr Maccabe's session started by introducing the audience to the "Law of Accelerating Returns", where the exponential increase in technologies like computers, genetics, nanotechnology, robotics, and artificial intelligence will lead to a technological singularity in the year 2045 – a point where progress is so rapid it outstrips humans' ability to comprehend it.

So what does the future of healthcare and food production look like in an advanced technological society? In healthcare, we will see increased telehealth utilisation, AI applications, robotics, and 3-D printed custom implants in fields such as surgery and dentistry. Aquaponics and in-vitro meat production will increase food production, and insects will be used as an efficient protein source. For veterinary medicine, the significance of animal companionship will rise as society battles the issue of loneliness.

So how do we prepare today's and tomorrow's veterinary students for an exponential future? When knowledge is becoming increasingly democratised, technology will be the key to transforming the work of human experts. Emerging skills and competencies for graduates will involve mastery of data, design thinking and systems engineering. To compete with machines, future professionals must be human-literate, demonstrate cultural agility, and be technology- and data-literate.

The future of veterinary medical education will be competency-based, time-variable ("Open Loop"), and personalised and individualised. Learning is unique, and the future of learning will be customised, self-paced and adaptive, with instant feedback. The future of teaching will rely on technologies such as simulation and artificial reality.

The wonderful thing about all of this is that we can look forward to experiencing our own "Exponential Growth Surprise" when we end up somewhere we didn't imagine at the start of our veterinary careers.



From: Dr A. Maccabe, AAVMC

Mid-Career

Transitioning your career - veterinary skills beyond the clinical role

Dr Valerie Ragan

In her session, Dr Ragan noted that finding a good career fit is a wellness issue. To date, the focus on the profession has been on entry and retention in clinical practice. Educating veterinarians about non-clinical opportunities may encourage those wishing to change careers to shift from clinical to non-clinical roles rather than losing them from the profession altogether.

Dr Ragan explored the increasing recognition of the broader role of the veterinarian in society and introduced us to the term "veterinary public practice". This new veterinary practice emphasis encompasses public health, epidemiology, food safety, infectious diseases, zoonotic diseases, basic sciences, laboratory animal practice, veterinary college faculty, and roles supporting human health.

In a Center for Public and Corporate Veterinary Medicine survey, 71.2% of respondents said, "I don't know how my clinical skills and education can be translated to another career". Dr Ragan advised how veterinarians evaluate their transferable skills by starting with a personal assessment - identifying personality type, personal preferences and values, and essential career elements.

**" At the center of
your being, you
have the answer;
you know who
you are, and you
know what you
want."
- Lao Tzu**

Mid Career Workshop

Are you currently working in the area of veterinary medicine you envisioned you would be in when you first contemplated starting veterinary school?

What do you consider the biggest barriers to veterinarians who wish to make a career change?

What resources do you know of are available to assist veterinarians who wish to make a career change?

- Most attendees said "no" when asked if they worked in the area they envisioned at veterinary school. While some attendees worked partially in the area, others worked in entirely different fields.
- Vets tend to think about their qualifications rather than holistically about what they do. When objectively mapping out skills (and not thinking about jobs or qualifications), most veterinarians are well-placed problem solvers with significantly broader skill sets than they initially appreciated.
- Barriers to career change identified include:
 - Mindset (fixed)
 - Perception of starting at the bottom again).
 - Imposter syndrome.
 - Fear of others' opinions (FOPO) and fear of change.
 - Financial reasons
- Attendees identified many valuable resources already available, including the AVA's Return to Work program, veterinary career coaches, and online personality assessments. Many resources focus on clinical transition/development. One suggested improvement was additional resources for veterinarians transitioning from clinical practice.

Veterinary Specialists

Where to from here?

Prof Jon Hill

In his presentation, Prof Hill asked whether we have sufficient specialists in 2022 and whether we will have sufficient numbers in 5 or 10 years.

The latest statistics from Australia and New Zealand show that (unsurprisingly) most registered specialists are based in metropolitan areas. The disciplines with the most registered specialists include Small Animal Surgery, Small Animal Medicine & Equine Surgery. There are already potential shortages in the numbers of specialists in food-animal & public health disciplines, as well as in growing areas such as veterinary behaviour and dentistry. We know from the US that the demand for veterinary specialists is growing faster than for general practitioners. The deficit is impacting the specialty practices that cannot find additional specialists to work, the primary practice veterinarians who need support, and most importantly, the patients who need specialised care.

The shortage of specialists in academia makes it increasingly more challenging for veterinary schools to support the education of DVMs and post-DVM specialty and graduate research training. The location of specialist training is already shifting from University Veterinary Hospitals to private specialist practices, and we need to investigate the advantages and disadvantages of this shift. Part of the solution is greater collaboration between universities and private practices. In the US, Thrive Pet Healthcare, which has around 350 hospitals, went from sponsoring four residents at two universities in 2021 to supporting 20 at nine universities in 2022.

"There are strengths associated with private practice residencies and strengths associated with academic residencies. There's great opportunity for us to work collaboratively to try to harness the best out of both settings."¹

Prof Hill also explored the role of telehealth and telemedicine – including what role specialists could play in providing remote patient care and providing real-time virtual continuing education to veterinarians. There could also be better utilisation of online learning in residency training programs, but under what circumstances or in which specialist disciplines would remote supervision of training be acceptable?



¹ <https://news.vin.com/default.aspx?pid=210&id=10904281&f5=1>

Veterinary Specialists

Finally, Prof Hill considered the question of how practices achieve a balance between referring cases to a specialist with the business/professional desire to personally service clients, and build & retain breadth/depth in medical and surgical skills. Should the Australasian veterinary Boards & Councils formally recognise a “middle tier” like the RCVS’ Advanced Practitioner level?

‘Rather than cling to what we cannot keep, Let us pursue what we cannot lose’.

Donald Smith, JVME (2013)

Specialist Workshop

Do we have sufficient specialists in 2022? Will we have sufficient in 5 or 10 years?

The Universities are under increasing pressure and are now responsible for less specialist training than at any time in recent history. In Australia and NZ, most specialist training has moved into private practice. Reasons include significant wage disparity between University and private practice and difficulties in navigating complex university bureaucracy leading to burnout. This loss of specialists from universities inherently places more string on universities as they attempt to train veterinary students.

The demand for specialists in all disciplines is high, with vacancies well-exceeding applicants. It is undoubtedly an employee’s market. This shift is amplified in the USA, where there is a massive shortage of specialists and specialist training programs. It seems highly likely that in future years, the demand will worsen.

The effects of a specialist shortage are significant. Much pressure is being placed on general practices that cannot access specialist support for their challenging cases and patients. There are substantial flow-on effects of decreased research (particularly from veterinary schools), putting the profession and society behind.

Will there be sufficient specialists in veterinary schools with currency in clinical practice to adequately teach veterinary students.

It seems highly unlikely. All ANZ universities have multiple vacant specialist positions, and several have had these vacancies for many years. The current model of training vet students may need a reset, and the shift to focusing veterinary training on Day 1 Competencies may provide this. Still, there may be a specialist gap for several years.

The location of specialist training has shifted from University Veterinary Hospitals to private specialist practices. How do academic practice and private practice work collaboratively in this space?

Improved collaboration between universities and the corporate sector would open support avenues for residents. This may be through more indirect supervision via telehealth, where the resident can call on a remote specialist for support or learn from a remote specialist with different skill sets to current supervisors. Improved

collaboration would also increase case variety and exposure.

How do practices achieve a balance between referring clients on to a specialist and the business/professional desire to personally service clients, build & retain breadth/depth in medical and surgical skills

First-opinion practice veterinarians could formally consult more frequently with specialists utilising telehealth (with fees passed on to the client).

- Mutually beneficial financially.
- Better utilisation of general practitioners' capabilities
- Educational opportunities for both parties
- Collaborative treatment plans
- Help determine the true need for referral
- Supports regional practice
- Primary care remains with the GP vet while reducing the burden on specialist practice
- More flexibility for specialists



Keynote

Pursuing Cultural Change in a Healthcare Setting

Dr Rick Read

In his keynote presentation, Dr Read spoke about how implementing a Doctors Wellbeing Program transformed the culture in a healthcare setting. One of the most memorable images from the Forum was Dr Read's "Daisy in the Desert" analogy, in which he spoke of the need to acknowledge the impact of the ecosystem on the individual.

After 25 years as a veterinary specialist in small animal surgery, Dr Read diversified into healthcare in 2015, becoming a chaplain and Wellbeing Officer for a public hospital.

The Wellbeing Officer role was created to meet the demand for an in-house, accessible and trusted person to provide individual, confidential support to junior doctors, free from career repercussions or stigma attached to seeking care. Dr Read launched a Peer Group program in 2017, which has been highly successful.



Intern JMOs rated their clinical rotations in the hospital highly when they felt engaged and valued by the team and had good learning opportunities and positive relationships with senior staff. Interns rated their rotations poorly when they felt disengaged, undervalued, unsupported, had minimal learning opportunities and had a poor team experience. The disengagement feeds back to the "Daisy in the Desert" analogy – if a daisy is watered and fertilised regularly and grows in ideal conditions, it will thrive. Yet if that daisy was moved into the heart of the Australian desert, it wouldn't take long for it to wither and die. We can do everything in our power to enhance the wellbeing of individuals, but if they work in an unhealthy team or environment, any improvements to their wellbeing would be tenuous at best. Cultural change requires education, commitment and time.

The Peer Group program seeks to foster a kinder, more compassionate culture in healthcare built on self-awareness, reflective practice, respect and compassion for self and others, and valuing each person's unique values and contributions. The program has been a great success and has helped create the right environment for these young doctors to thrive. Over 85% of the hospital's interns signed up to participate in Peer Group for 2022, and it has now been rolled out to all staff.

Attendee Pitches

A principal aim of the Sustainable Practice Forum was to prepare the AVBC Council for its 2023–2028 Strategic Planning Exercise, which followed after the Forum. All participants were invited to make a pitch for outcomes, ideas, and projects to be included in AVBC's new Strategic and Operational Plans. These quick vignettes gave us food for thought about challenging and topical issues, including:

Australasian graduate data needs to be collected for outcomes assessment

Prof Hodgson & Prof Taylor

To ensure the preparedness of all graduates for practice, we need to monitor outcomes. Currently, the data could be better – there are low response rates to various surveys. In this pitch, the VSAAC Co-Chairs recommend a compulsory new graduate survey at re-registration AND an employer survey (identified by the recent graduate). AVBC would receive and analyse the data on graduate preparedness and transition to practice, report to Boards, Schools, and be able to benchmark internationally with the RCVS.

Mentoring for employability

Dr Melinda Bell

Murdoch University & VetSet2Go have developed a series of 16 x 1 hr workshops created by psychologists and a vet. Communication and reflective practice are embedded in all sessions, delivered to 3rd and 4th-year students and co-facilitated by a vet and a psychologist. Students write a reflection afterwards. The experiential and contextual workshops encourage students to build personal resources for wellbeing and a fulfilling career. In this pitch, Dr Bell proposes that these workshops are adapted for standard delivery to new graduates and developed into a Continuing Veterinary Education opportunity for all veterinarians.



Climate change and the veterinary profession in Australia

Dr Jeremy Watson

The broader community expects vets to advocate for all animal health issues. As scientists, we can explain and respond to climate science and how it impacts animal health. Members of the profession expect guidance from leadership organisations such as the AVBC. Dr Watson encouraged AVBC to consider what their role is concerning climate change. He suggested that AVBC should lead the profession by determining what should be reported, to whom, by when, and the required response.



Attendee Pitches

The Impacts of Aging and Chronic Illness on the Veterinary Profession

Dr Megan Pickering

Aside from profession-wide concerns around job satisfaction, stress management, work-life balance and remuneration, a critical work-related issue for older workers is physical health and well-being. A failure to address the nuanced needs of mature veterinarians, nurses and support staff (over 45 years) and anyone with chronic health challenges is a potential barrier to participation and productivity in the workplace.

Approved supervisor scheme for employers of new graduates

Prof Jenny Weston

While some employers are putting good new graduate support programmes in place, there is an increasing disparity between the best and worst experiences of new graduate employment. Dr Weston suggested that implementing compulsory accreditation or approval for supervising veterinarians of new graduates should provide an enforceable mechanism to address some workplace issues that impact new graduates.

The Value of Social Work in Veterinary Medicine

Dr Alicia Kennedy

Dr Kennedy provided an overview of her organisation, Cherished Pets, and described their unique Vet Social Work service. She outlined how social workers fit into the veterinary team and help solve some of the challenges in our profession around attrition, employee support, mental health stressors and utilisation of paraprofessionals. She also spoke about the importance of Social Impact measurement and the social value of vets in the community.

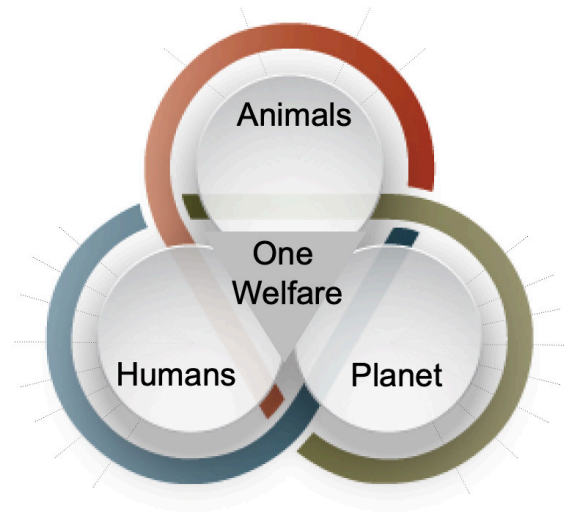


Attendee Pitches

The central relevance of One Welfare for veterinarians

Prof Paul McGreevy

Prof McGreevy introduced us to the concept of One Welfare. It sits alongside its older sibling, One Health, but delivers different outcomes and should not be seen as a competitor. One Welfare ensures the welfare of animals, humans and the planet. Prof McGreevy reminded attendees that good health does not guarantee good welfare, and so the One Welfare framework was created by vets for the veterinary profession – because we care about much more than health alone.



Cristina Luz Wilkins, Horses and People

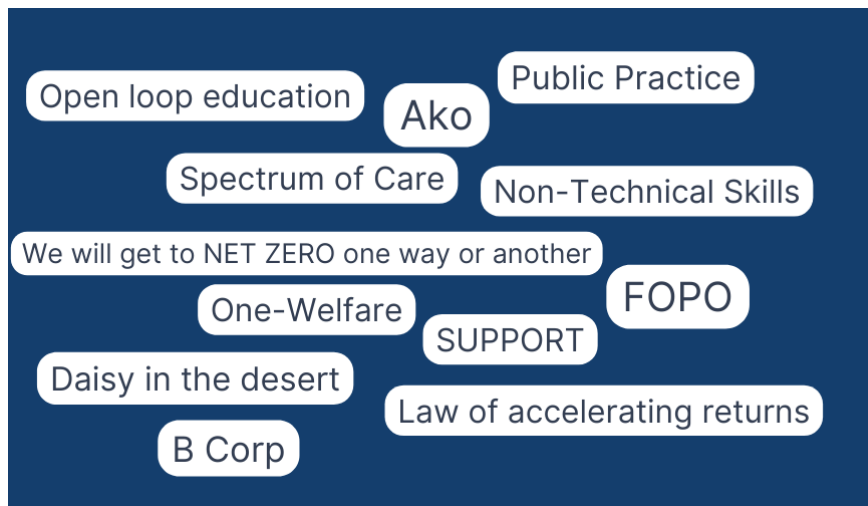
Non-clinical Professional Mastery Training Supports Longer, More Fulfilling Careers

Dr Michael Powell

Dr Powell summarised the results of his Global Veterinary Sustainability Pilot – a study on the effectiveness of non-clinical professional mastery (i.e., non-technical skills) on professional satisfaction and wellbeing in practising veterinarians. The study involved 127 veterinarians in 25 countries, and data was gathered over 2.5 years. This study looked at the impact that targeted non-clinical professional mastery skills training had on wellbeing and professional satisfaction for veterinarians in general practice. The results were very promising. The most significant results during the program had to do with developing strategies to handle challenging situations. Another indicator of career satisfaction which improved over the course of the program was whether veterinarians would choose this career again if given the opportunity.

Summary

Emergent Themes & New Concepts



Summary of key words and concepts that emerged at the Forum

Forum Context

The most important aspect of the Forum was that it had the power to influence AVBC's upcoming 2023–2027 Strategic Plan. AVBC member representatives, registrars and Committee Chairs that attended the Forum re-convened immediately after its conclusion to develop the Strategic Plan. Governance expert Simon Neaverson facilitated this planning session. The plan will be ratified by AVBC Council in late March 2023 and will be made publicly available soon after.

Topic Ranking

Did you know that \$28 from your veterinary registration goes to AVBC?

To illustrate where attendees priorities lay, each attendee was assigned 28 "AVBC Dollars". They could spend their dollars in any way they wished – spending under the main topic or sub-topics of their choosing.

The results helped Council to reflect on the importance of specific topics in the subsequent strategic planning session.

Veterinary Education & CPD	170
Standards of Practice	136
Day One Competencies	120
Sustainable Workforce	108
Evolving mentorship and non-technical skills	90
Regulation of veterinary nurses	88
Vet School Accreditation/AVE	85
One Welfare and social enterprise	85
National database/New grad data	58
Complaints	56
Systemic Cultural Change	51
Accrediting supervisors and mentors	50
Climate Change	47
Career transition and defining career stage	35
Ageing workforce support	35
Veterinary specialists (standards)	26
Registration of Specialists	7

Conclusion

In coming together for the Forum, stakeholders from across the Australasian veterinary professions demonstrated their commitment to ensuring the future sustainability of the workforce. There was a high degree of enthusiasm and engagement with the ideas and solutions presented, particularly around:

- Ensuring that Day One Competencies (D1Cs) set graduates up for success and confidence in managing common entry-level conditions in practice
- Better preparing and educating the profession to support student learning during work-integrated learning placements and in the new graduate transition phase.
- Defining the roles "Mentor", "Coach", and "Supervisor" for the veterinary sector and educating vets on how to develop the skills for these roles.
- Acknowledgment of the importance of Non-Technical Skills (NTS) – embedding topics in veterinary education, D1Cs and Continuing Professional Development (CPD) requirements moving forward.
- Recognition of the issues in veterinary specialisation – how concerns with assessment and low pass rates are being addressed, as well as the need to engage specialists outside academia to train the next generation of experts. The opportunity for collaboration among veterinary schools should improve the quality of the education (undergraduate and specialist level) and the schools' efficiency (and potentially improve financial viability).
- Working towards building high-performing veterinary teams – registration and support for veterinary nurses and technicians and recognition and utilisation of other allied veterinary professionals, such as social workers.

Workshop feedback and input from delegates was insightful and forward-thinking and promises to lead to tangible outcomes for the profession. The impact of the Forum will be evident upon release of AVBC's 2023-2027 Strategic Plan in early to mid-2023.

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