Debrief Statement

Thank you for taking part in the “Australasian Veterinary Boards Council - Disability and Disclosure” survey which is now closed. This document provides additional information for those who have completed the survey.

Why wasn’t this information provided with the survey? You may have been wondering about the brevity of the survey itself and the information provided about it. This was both a practical consideration (to minimise reading time), but more importantly because we were concerned to avoid providing any information that might impact the responses given by participants. It was for this reason that a number of key terms (e.g. ‘misdemeanor’, ‘misconduct’, ‘disability’) were not defined in the survey. One of the intended survey outcomes is greater insight into the contestability of these terms and the lack of consensus across the veterinary profession and its stakeholders on their definitions.

Were the scenarios real? If so what was the correct outcome? The scenarios provided were fictitious, but based on anonymised examples provided by other academics or veterinary registrars. Although succinct, each scenario was carefully crafted to be intentionally complex and open to interpretation, thereby reflecting real world instances where respondents would likely be required to work with few, if any, formal definitions and would have less than complete information. Legal and ethical implications were not specifically identified, to ensure participants could provide their own perspectives on the nature of those implications. All scenarios were deliberately nuanced and contestable to elicit responses that demonstrated what participants would think about, and how they would respond to, such issues in real world contexts. Responses reviewed to date indicate that participants have rightly brought their own interpretations, experiences, insights, biases, prejudices and ethical concerns to bear in their responses, and that is exactly what the survey was designed to explore.

The researchers were not seeking to advocate a particular stance, perspective or response to issues of registration, disability, disclosure or discrimination, but rather to allow participant responses to broaden the context in which discussions and processes already initiated by veterinary registration bodies in a number of jurisdictions might be advanced. The focus of the survey was disability and misconduct, as these are the two areas where self-disclosure is expected at registration in Australasian jurisdictions. There was no intention to conflate the terms, nor to suggest that disability might share similar negative connotations as misconduct. Indeed, three of the four scenarios provided evidenced a positive outcome (appropriate accommodation of disability) for the ‘individual’ involved.

Will the researches recommend who should or should not be registered? The aim of the survey was to elicit diverse opinion from the profession in order to inform any processes currently undertaken, or being considered, by registration bodies. None of the researchers has the capacity to influence registration processes. All are registered veterinarians and, in common with most veterinarians, each is aware of high rates of mental illness and suicide within the profession, and also aware of the complex legislative environment impacted by registration processes. Each has a desire to ensure that support for their peers is optimised within registration and other processes, whilst continuing to maintain high standards of patient care and client outcomes.

As stated in the information for participants, it is hoped that, by eliciting the broadest possible range of perspectives and experiences from within the profession, both current and future registration processes will be informed by the diversity of opinion that exists within the profession, and can build on existing good practice. If you would like to discuss the research further, and/or receive a summary of our findings, please contact one of the research team through admin@avbc.asn.au.

NOTE: Charles Sturt University’s Human Research Ethics Committee, has approved this project. If you have any complaints or reservations about the ethical conduct of this project, you may contact the Committee on (02) 6933 4213 or ethics@csu.edu.au. Any issues you raise will be treated in confidence, investigated fully, and you will be informed of the outcome.