

# The Australian Veterinary Association Limited

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MIN. BIGNELL

14 August 2014

Hon Leon Bignell MP  
Minister for Agriculture Food and Fisheries  
Level 12  
Terrace Towers  
178 North Terrace  
Adelaide 5000

Dear Minister,

## **Veterinary Surgeons Board of South Australia**

In early July the Premier announced that every Government board and committee will be abolished unless it can be demonstrated it has an essential purpose that cannot be fulfilled in an alternative way. It is our understanding that the Veterinary Surgeons Board of South Australia (VSBSA) is being considered as part of this review. The Australian Veterinary Association (AVA) strongly supports the continued existence of this body as it performs critical functions in protecting the rights consumers of veterinary services and protecting the welfare of animals by ensuring high standards of service by veterinary practitioners.

The AVA is the national organisation representing veterinarians in Australia. Our 8000 members come from all fields within the veterinary profession. Clinical practitioners work with companion animals, horses, farm animals, such as cattle and sheep, and wildlife. Government veterinarians work with our animal health, public health and quarantine systems while other members work in industry for pharmaceutical and other commercial enterprises. We have members who work in research and teaching in a range of scientific disciplines. Veterinary students are also members of the Association.

There is much merit in the Premier's consideration of the value of government committees and boards. Modern technology and differences in generational attitudes both necessitate and enable changes in the ways in which governments and organisations engage and consult. As a member-based professional association, the AVA is only too aware that traditional committee structures are not always the best way of engaging with members. The Association uses many alternative consultation methods.

The object of the Board, as detailed in the Act is to protect,

*...animal health, safety and welfare and the public interest by achieving and maintaining high professional standards both of competence and conduct in the provision of veterinary treatment in this State.*

While the functions of the Board do include the ability to provide advice to the Minister, its primary role is as a regulatory body and not a consultative one.



The VSBSA is funded exclusively through veterinarian registration fees. As such there should be no impact on State Government budgets. As the funds are drawn exclusively from registration fees paid by veterinarians, members of the Board are very conscious that the operations of the body need to be as efficient as possible. These annual fees are comparable with other jurisdictions and given the smaller population of veterinarians in this state, means the Board here doesn't have some of the advantages of economies of scale that other states do.

State	Registered veterinarians (primary)	Complaints (written only)	Income
ACT	255	n/a	n/a
NSW	2874	49	\$988,456
NT	123	n/a	n/a
QLD	2476	n/a	n/a
SA	627	35	\$343,312
TAS	244	9	\$97,005
VIC	2573	57	\$936,449
WA	1264	44	\$771,402


Sources: 2013 Veterinary Board Annual Reports

As you can see from the above table, the VSBSA works through a comparable workload to other states, but achieves this with considerably smaller resources. We see this as demonstrating the efficiency of the Board within its current framework.

We do appreciate and think that there are changes that can be made to the operations of the Board to make it more effective. The AVA supports the move to having matters heard by South Australian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (SACAT) and we look forward to working with the government as that legislative change develops. This does not negate the need for the VSBSA, but it will adjust its role slightly.

Complementary to this, the AVA has recently reviewed veterinary practice legislation around Australia and developed a series of principles that the AVA thinks should be included. I have included a copy of this for your information and we would appreciate the opportunity to meet with you to discuss it.

Yours sincerely



Graham Pratt  
Executive Officer  
South Australia and Northern Territory Divisions