



Veterinary
Practitioners
Board

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Legislation

The object of the *Veterinary Practice Act 2003* (NSW) is to regulate the provision of veterinary services for the following purposes:

1. To promote the welfare of animals
2. To ensure that consumers of veterinary services are well informed as to the competencies required of veterinary practitioners
3. To ensure that acceptable standards are required to be met by veterinary practitioners so as to meet the public interest and national and international trade requirements
4. To provide public health protection



Board composition

The Board consists of 8 members appointed by the Governor and selected by the Minister:

1. One veterinarian representing specialist veterinarians
2. One veterinarian representing urban veterinarians
3. One veterinarian representing rural veterinarians
4. One veterinarian representing academics in the field of veterinary science
5. Two veterinary practitioners selected personally by the Minister
6. Two persons who are not veterinarians selected by the Minister to represent consumers of veterinary services



Board functions

The Veterinary Practitioners Board (Board) has a number of functions including:

1. To register veterinary practitioners
2. To license veterinary hospitals
3. To investigate complaints against veterinary practitioners and take disciplinary action against veterinary practitioners



Complaints against veterinary practitioners

- Any person, including the Board, may make a complaint against a veterinary practitioner in respect of the veterinarian's conduct
- The Board does not have the legislative authority to investigate complaints concerning fees or charges and refers such complaints to the Department of Fair Trading
- The Board is not required to investigate a complaint against a veterinarian if the complaint is made more than 3 years after the conduct is alleged to have occurred
- Complaints must be made in writing, must identify the complainant and the Board requires that the complaint and details of the complaint be verified by statutory declaration

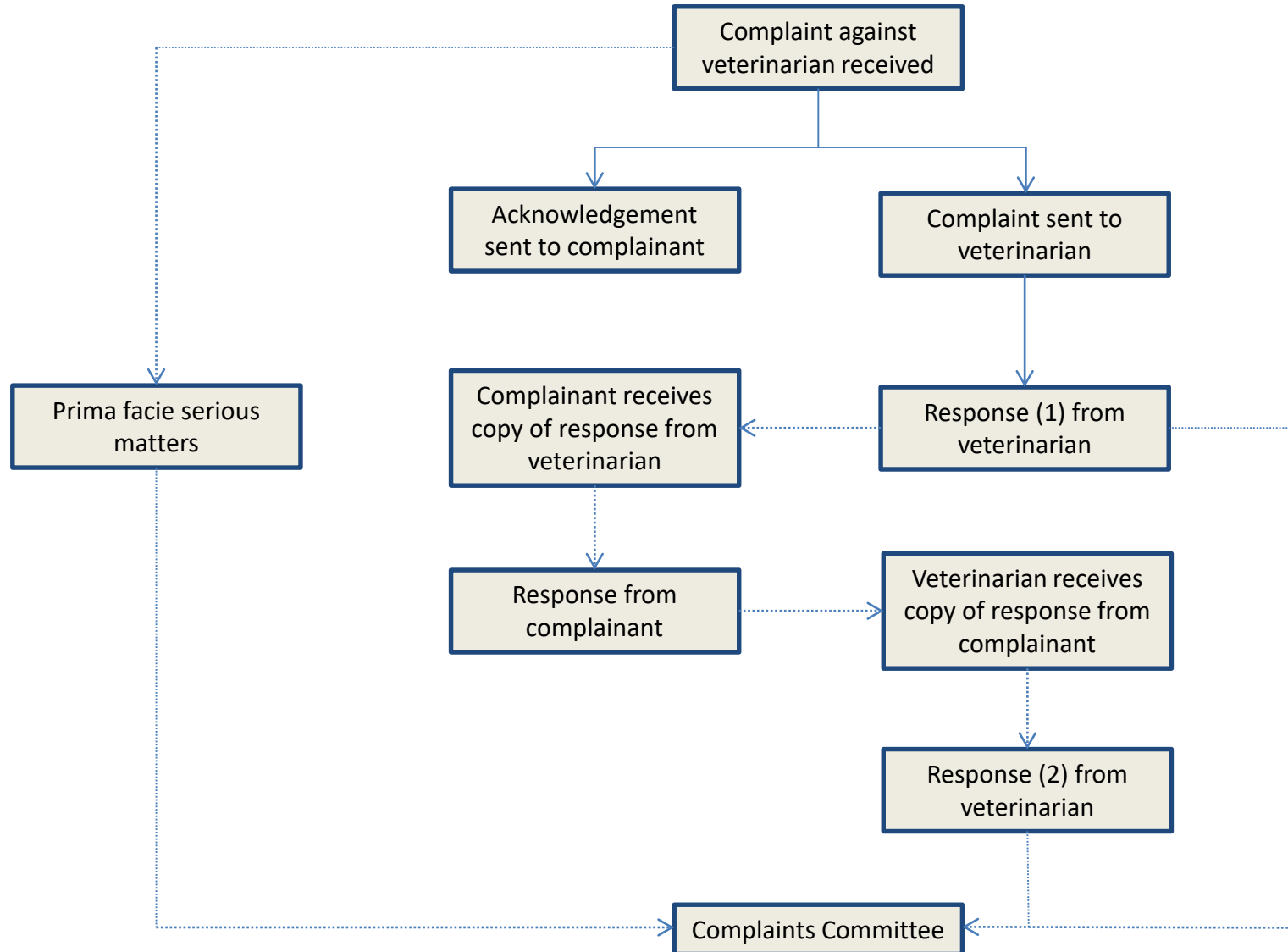


Complaints against veterinary practitioners

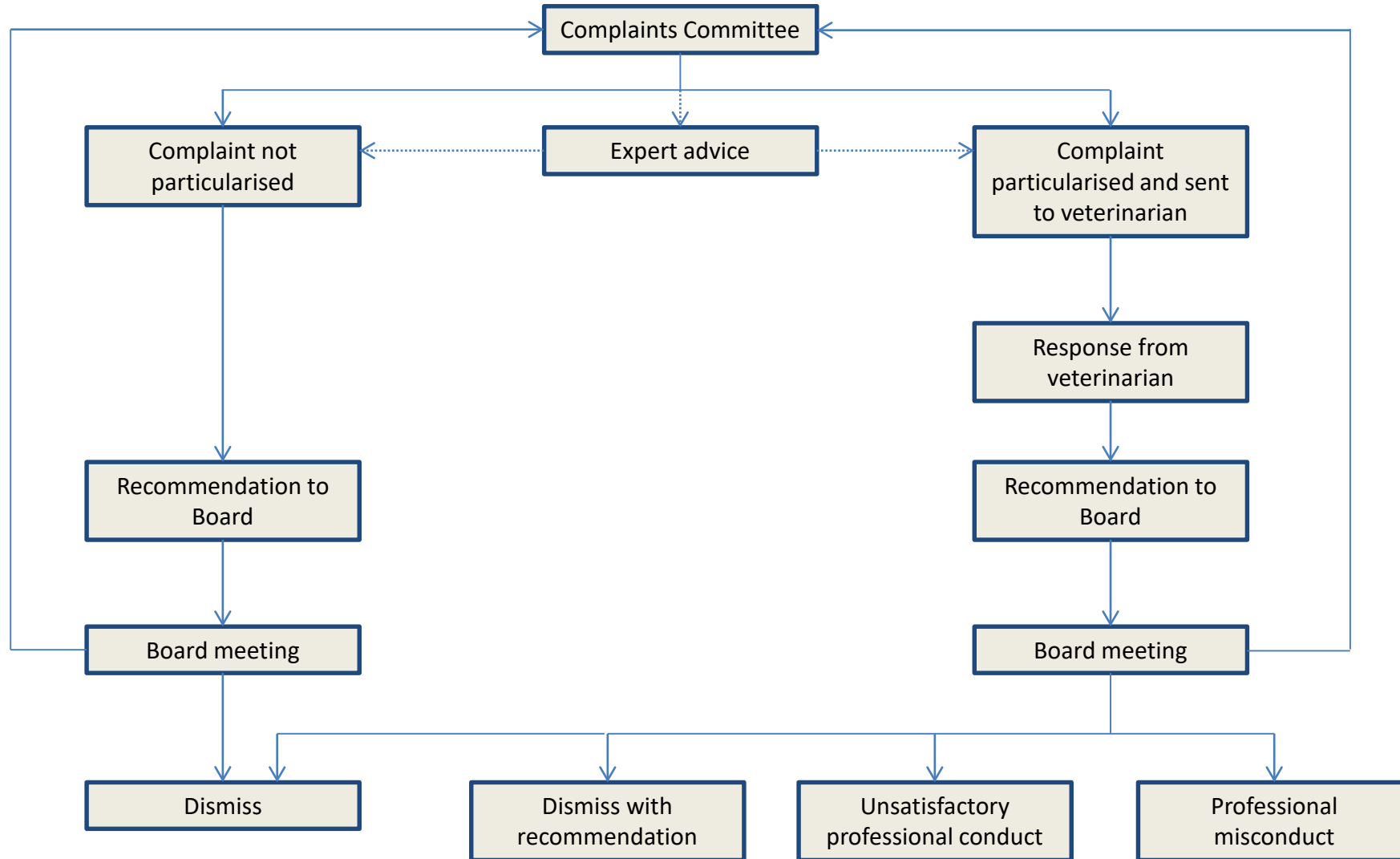
- The Board delegates the function of investigating complaints to a Complaints Committee
 - 2 veterinarian members
 - 1 non-veterinarian member
 - Others as required
- The Complaints Committee collects information from the complainant, the veterinarian and other sources as required
- The Board has the power to summon a person to appear before the Board to give evidence and to produce documents
- The Complaints Committee makes a recommendation to the Board
- The full Board determines the complaint



Investigation of complaints – gathering information



Investigation of complaints – determining the complaint



Decision after investigation of a complaint

If the Board is satisfied the veterinarian is guilty of unsatisfactory professional conduct or professional misconduct the Board may take one or more of the following actions including:

- Reprimand or caution the veterinarian
- Impose a fine on the veterinarian
- Require the veterinarian to pay specified costs
- Impose conditions on the veterinarian's registration
- Require veterinarian to undertake further education

Decision after investigation of a complaint

If the Board is satisfied the veterinarian is guilty of unsatisfactory professional conduct or professional misconduct it may also apply to the NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal (NCAT or Tribunal) for a disciplinary finding including cancellation of registration.

The Board may suspend the veterinarian's registration pending determination by the NCAT.

Review of Board decisions

The NCAT may also be asked by the veterinarian to review of a disciplinary finding made by the Board.

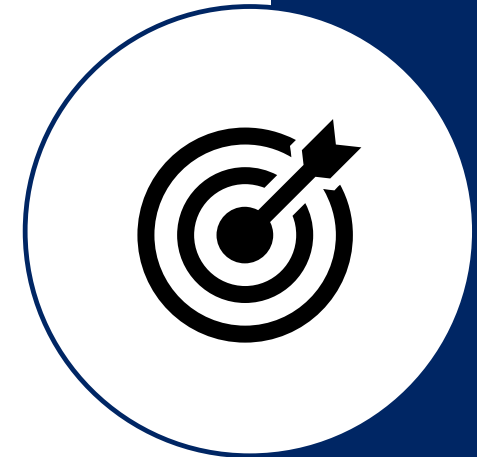
A veterinarian may appeal a decision of the NCAT to the Supreme Court of NSW.



Unsatisfactory professional conduct and professional misconduct

Guilty findings can generally be classified into three main categories:

1. Conduct
2. Performance
3. Health



Health program for veterinarians

In addition to a range of physical conditions, the Board is aware of research regarding the incidence of stress and depression in the veterinary profession and specifically that the incidence of suicide among veterinarians in Australia is likely to be much greater than that of the general population.

The Board has developed a [health program for veterinarians](#) modelled on a program created by the Medical Council of NSW and the goal of this program is to enable veterinarians to work their way through their health issues with the support of suitably qualified professionals and the Board.



Support

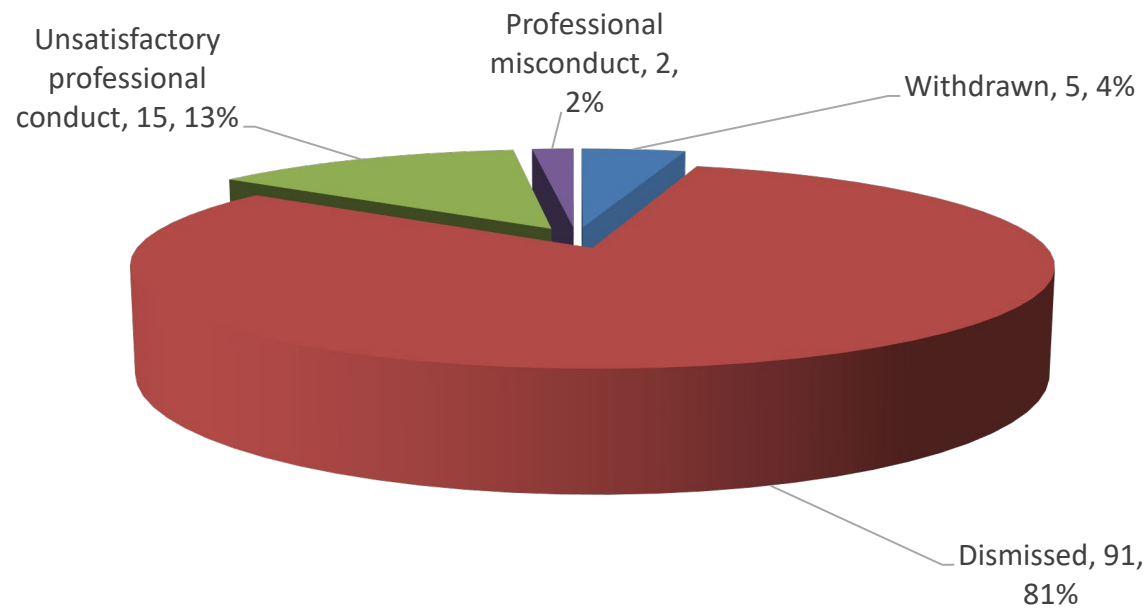
The Board also appreciates that stressors associated with the performance of the professional duties of a veterinarian may be increased during a complaint investigation process.

The Board's Complaint Officer is a trained counsellor and able to assist both veterinarians and members of the public involved in complaint investigations.

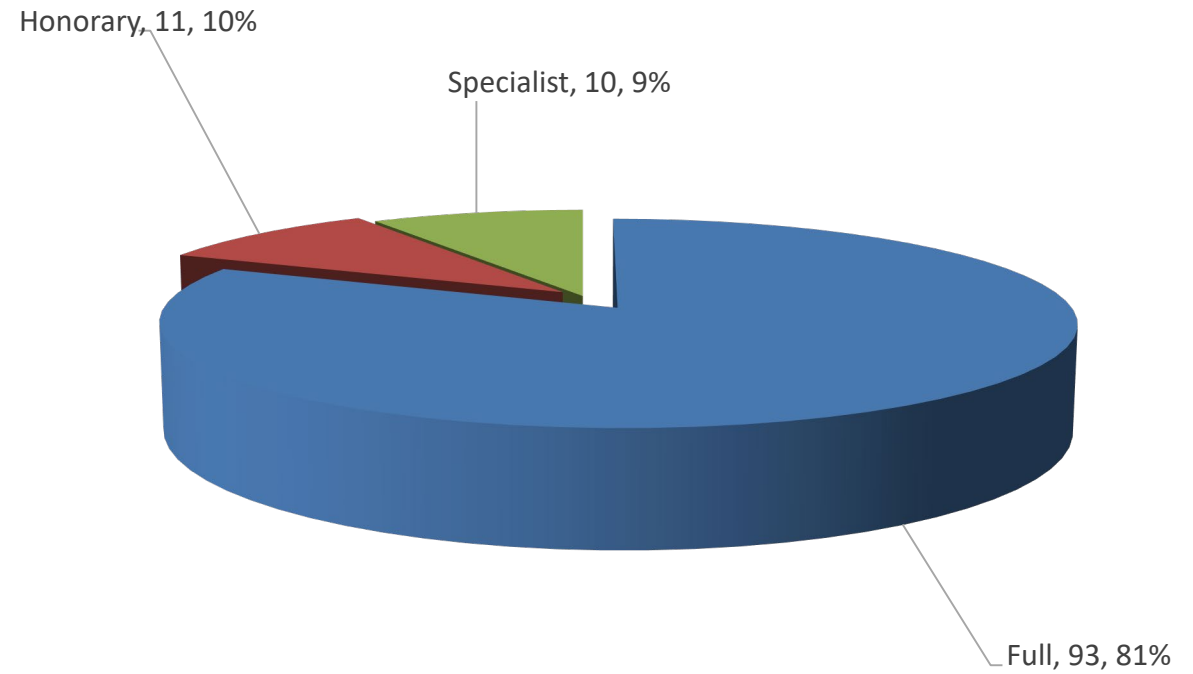
Veterinarians may also receive support from colleagues, the [Australian Veterinary Association](#), the [Doctors' Health Advisory Service](#) and generic support services such as [Lifeline](#) and [Beyond Blue](#).



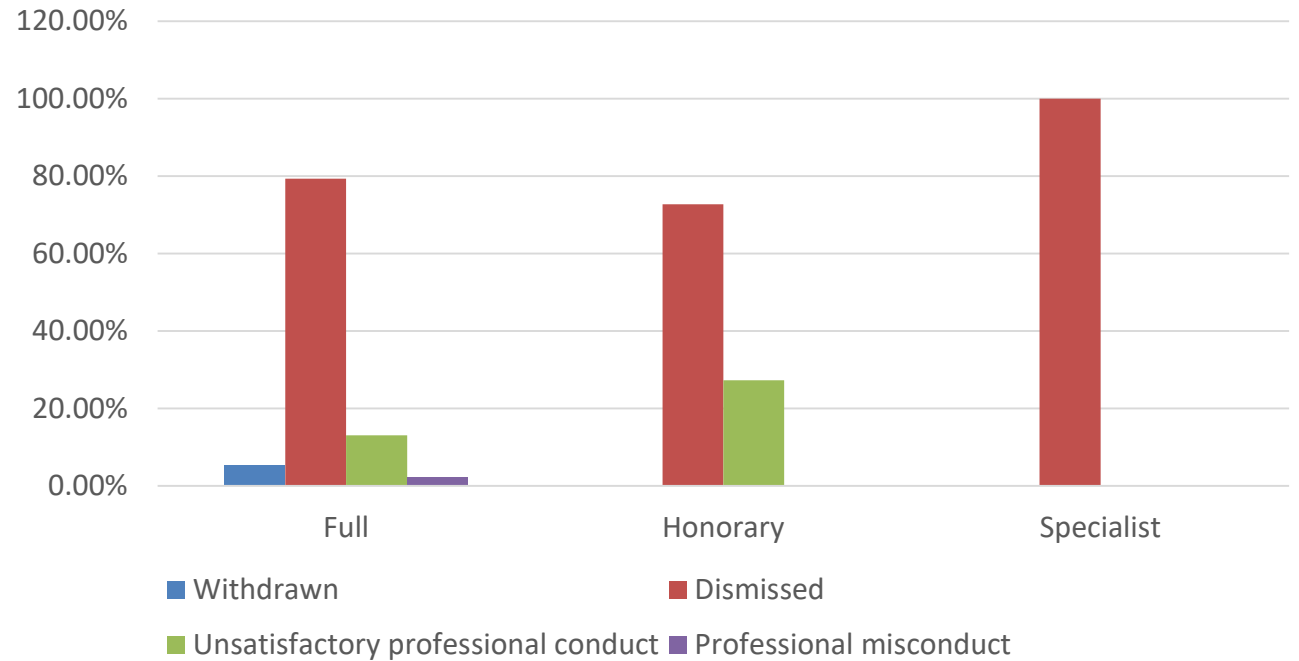
Complaint decisions % 2020



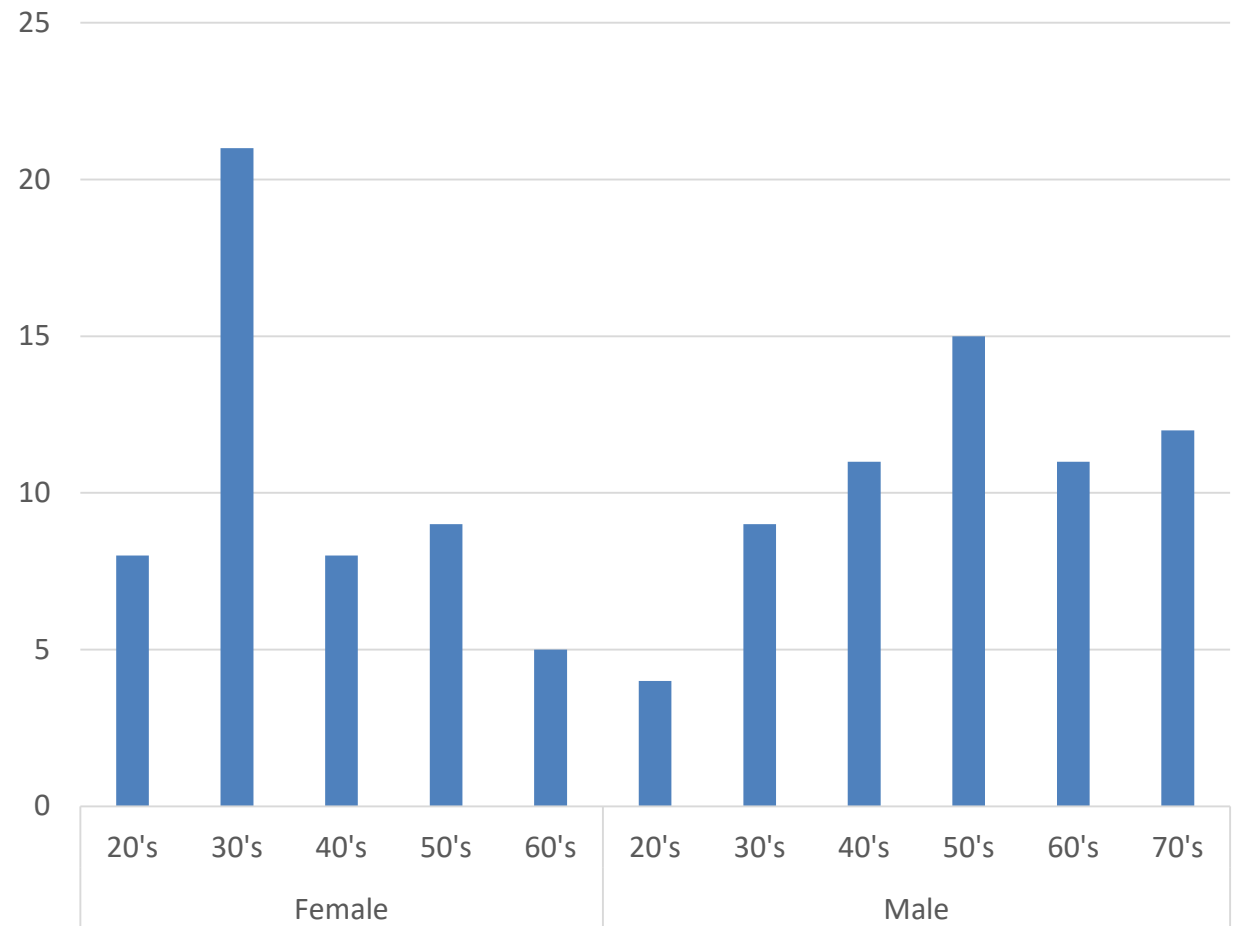
Complaints % registration type 2020



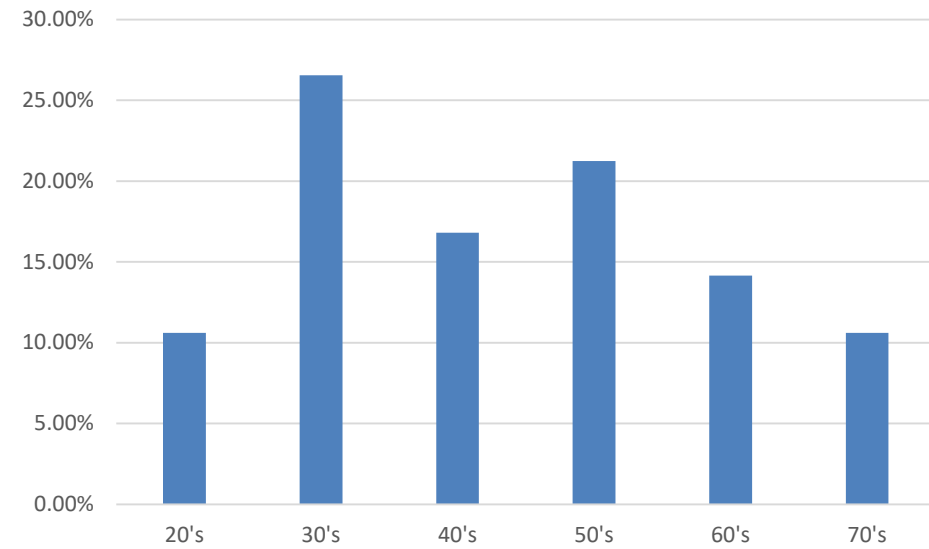
Complaint decisions % registration type 2020



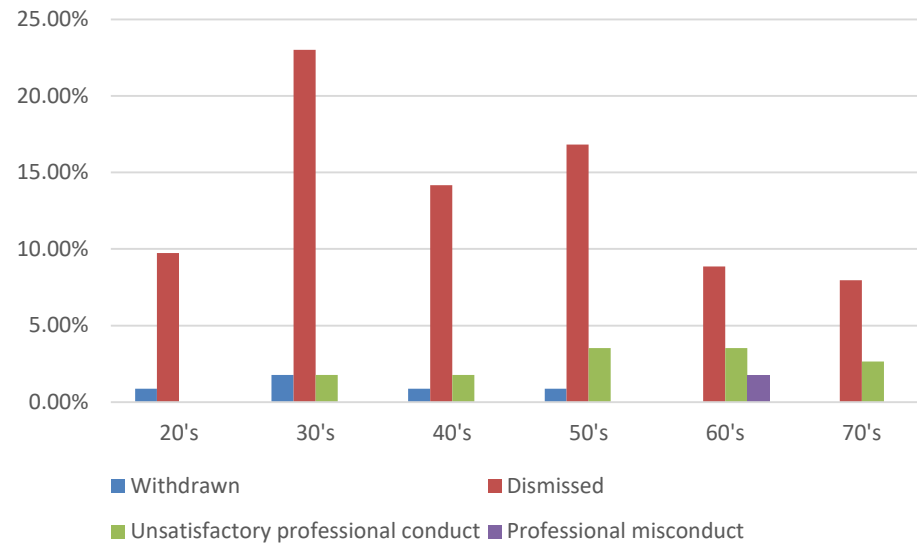
Complaints gender and age 2020



Complaints % age group 2020



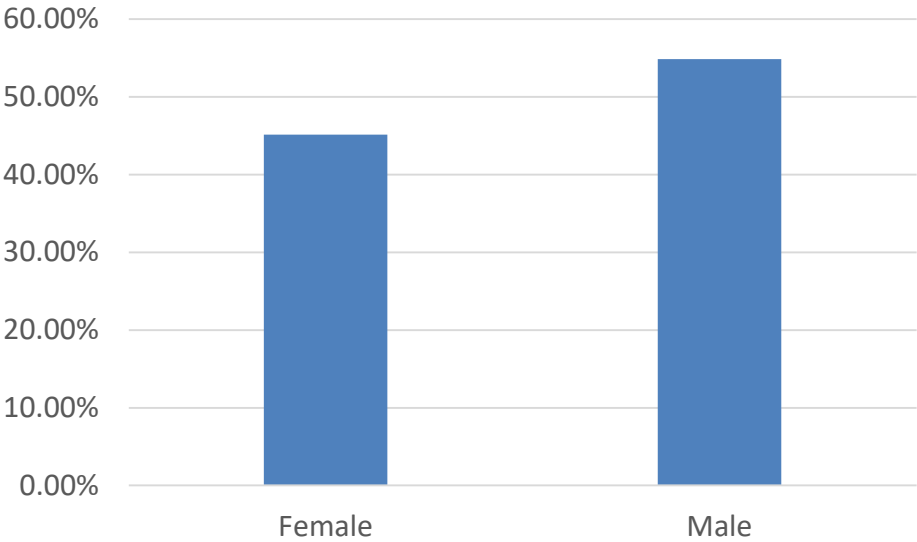
Complaint decisions % age group 2020



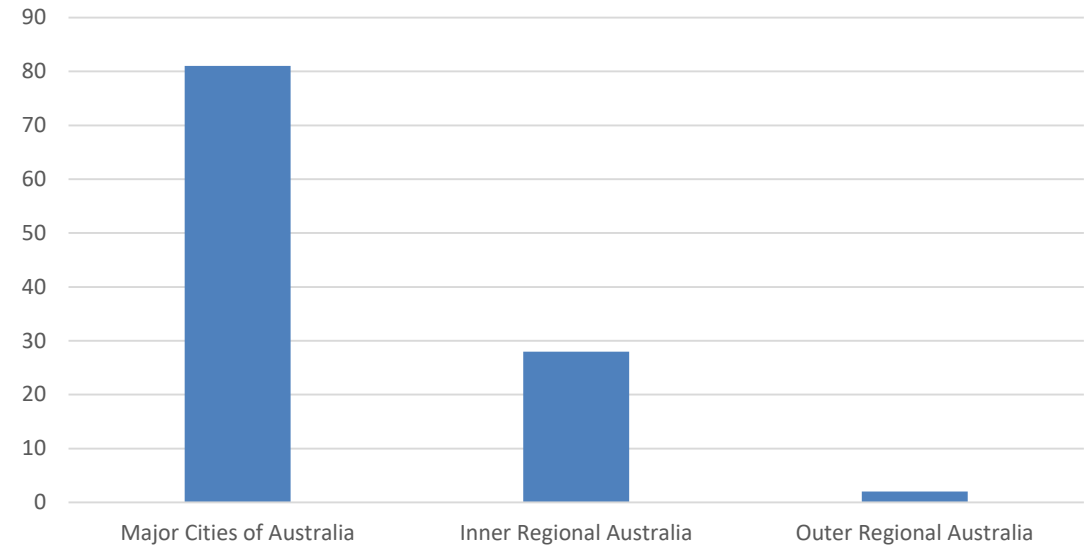
Complaint decisions % gender 2020



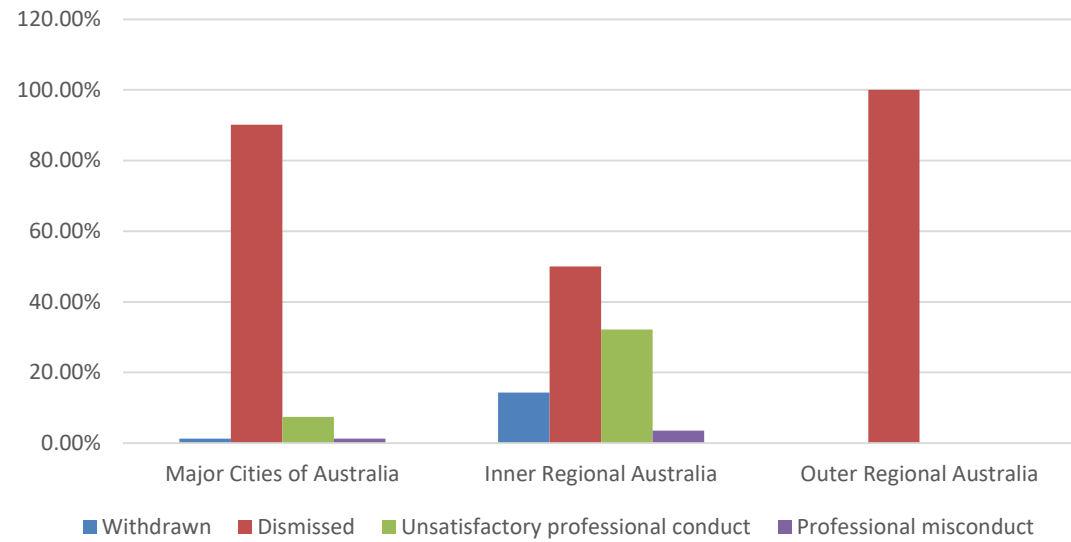
Complaints % gender 2020



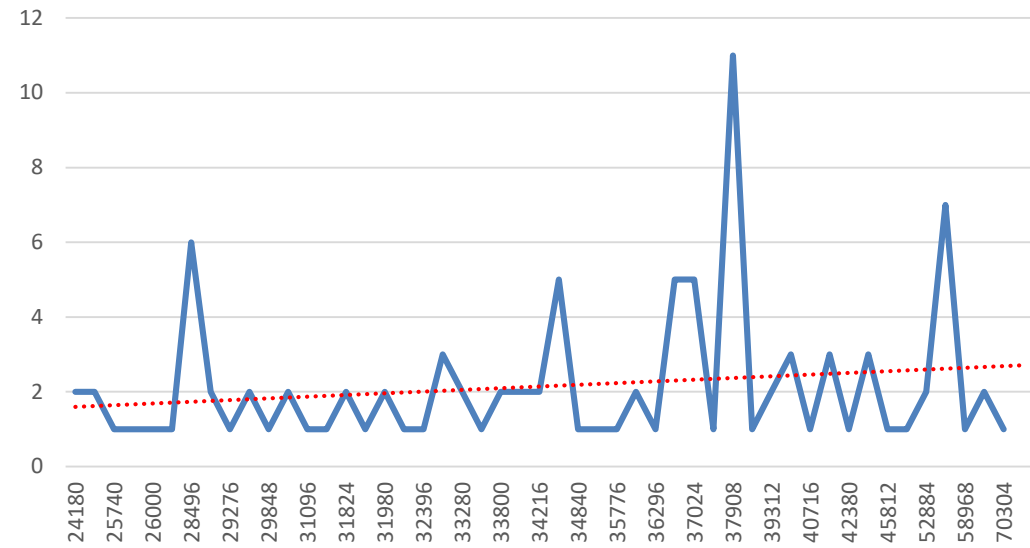
Complaints region 2020



Complaint decisions region% 2020



Complaint decisions income 2020



Summary



The Board must investigate a complaint received in the required form about a veterinarian.

A committee of the Board investigates the complaint and provides a recommendation to the Board.



After the investigation the Board may dismiss the complaint, find the veterinarian guilty of unsatisfactory professional conduct, or find the veterinarian guilty of professional misconduct.



Guilty findings may be classified as conduct, performance or health related.

After a guilty finding the Board may refer the matter to the NCAT and the veterinarian may seek a review of a Board decision at the NCAT.



The Board looks to disciplinary action for conduct breaches, education for performance breaches and support for health problems.

The Health Program has been developed to assist veterinarian with health problems to practice safely.



Data from 2020 shows that approximately 80% of complaints against veterinarians were dismissed.

Veterinarians with honorary and specialist registration may have been over-represented and those with honorary registration over-represented in guilty findings.



Questions

