



## Guidelines for completion of the Annual Return including Continuing Professional Development (CPD)

### Background

The Veterinary Practice Act 2003 (VPA) and Regulations 2006 came into effect in September 2006. Section 33 requires practitioners to submit an 'Annual Return' in order to maintain registration. These guidelines have been developed by the Board to assist practitioners in completing and submitting the annual return.

In the 'Preliminary to the Act', Part 3 states:

#### 3. Object of the Act

*The Object of this Act is to regulate the provision of veterinary services for the following purposes:*

- (a) *to promote the welfare of animals,*
- (b) *to ensure that consumers of veterinary services are well informed as to the competencies required of veterinary practitioners,*
- (c) *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,*
- (d) *to provide public health protection.*

#### Annual Return to be submitted Section 33 of the Act

- (1) *A veterinary practitioner must, on or before the return date each year, furnish in writing to the Board in a form approved by the Board a return for the period specifying the following information...*

### Questions

The *following information* (asked in the legislation) is a series of questions which are those stated in the annual return (refer to annual return). Many of the questions relate to convictions or suspensions relating to matters arising from the practice of veterinary science either within Australia or overseas.

#### Significant injury or illness (physical or mental)

The legislation asks at 33 (b) *'Have you had any significant injury or illness (physical or mental) from which you have suffered at any time during the return period and that may reasonably be thought likely to detrimentally affect your physical or mental capacity to practise veterinary science'?*

The Board understands that this question may be confusing to some members of the profession but it is a way that allows the Board to fulfil the objectives of the Act as stated above.

The NSW Medical Board legislation also provides for the submission of an annual return and this *significant injury or illness* information is required under their legislation as well. **The Board believes that the practitioner must ask themselves the question with an emphasis on the underlined words above.** The Board believes that where a practitioner suffers from such a significant injury or illness, but has the injury or illness managed by a treating professional or the practitioner is working within their capabilities and competencies, this injury or illness need not be reported in the annual return. All information reported under this section is held in strict confidence by the Board.

#### Continuing Professional Development (CPD)

Section 10 of the Regulations states that *'a veterinary practitioner must furnish further information in the annual return in relation to the following:'*

#### Specialist

- (a) *in relation to a veterinary practitioner who holds specialist registration, details of the extent to which the veterinary practitioner practised in the branch of veterinary science in which he or she holds that registration.* In the annual return, specialists are asked to supply the **average hours per week** that they practised as a specialist in the return period. 'Practised' means, in the broad general sense, any work conducted in the capacity of a specialist, including any consultations, procedures, treatments, tests, preparing papers, lectures, providing diagnosis, etc.

#### Veterinary Practitioner and Specialist

For the purpose of *'details'* below, this means both the structured and unstructured points accumulated over the return period, not any other details.

- (b) *details of any continuing professional development undertaken by the veterinary practitioner, but not limited to, the following:*
  - (i) *details of any university continuing professional development course relating to the practice of veterinary science undertaken,*
  - (ii) *details of any post graduate course relating to the practice of veterinary science undertaken,*



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- (iii) *details of any conference or seminar relating to the practice of veterinary science attended,*
- (iv) *details of any papers presented at any conference or seminar relating to the practice of veterinary science,*
- (v) *details of any other presentation relating to the practice of veterinary science attended,*
- (vi) *details of any correspondence course relating to the practice of veterinary science completed,*
- (vii) *details of any written assessment test relating to the practice of veterinary science completed,*
- (viii) *details of any paper published in any journals relating to the practice of veterinary science,*
- (ix) *details of any journals relating to the practice of veterinary science read,*
- (x) *details of any observation of the carrying out of veterinary surgery,*
- (xi) *details of any act of veterinary science done with other veterinary practitioners for the purpose of expanding the veterinary practitioner's knowledge of, or competence in, veterinary science.*

### Details = points

The Australasian Veterinary Boards Council Inc and the Australian Veterinary Association (AVA) have agreed on the model for points scoring of CPD across the country.

The model is based on a minimum of 60 points over a consecutive three year period, of which at least 15 points must be structured points - the remaining points can be more structured points or unstructured points.

A comprehensive table of activities, points and validation of points are included in the CPD diary distributed by the Board each year (refer to the CPD diary or the Board's website).

A veterinary practitioner may elect to continue with the AVA's professional service of recording the points for them, or they may elect to record the points by some other method. The Board distributed CPD diary is a tool to assist the veterinary practitioner's record keeping. Any recording method is acceptable so long as the activity, designated points and validation are recorded and available for the preceding three years.

A question in the annual return is 'would you like another CPD diary posted to you next year?' It is entirely up to the practitioner how the activity, points and validation is recorded, however the CPD diary is available to all NSW registered practitioners if requested. A downloadable Excel CPD diary is also available on the website.

### What is Compulsory

While all veterinarians in Australia are expected to participate in CPD, for those NSW registered practitioners, it is compulsory to submit the annual return which must include the CPD structured and unstructured points.

If a veterinary practitioner fails to submit an annual return or fails to provide the minimum points over a three year period, the Board will ask the veterinary practitioner for the reasons, especially if a complaint has been made. The Board will conduct random audits of CPD recording and validation.

Section 27 of the Act states that '*The Board may remove a veterinary practitioner's name from the Register if: (h) the veterinary practitioner has failed to lodge a return as required by section 33.*'

There may be various, valid reasons why a practitioner failed to reach the minimum CPD points and each response will be considered independently. However, if the reason provided is not acceptable, the Board has the responsibility / authority under Section 19 of the Act to place conditions on the practitioner's registration.

For example, a retired practitioner with honorary registration may not achieve the required CPD points but requires registration to treat his farm animals with purchased scheduled drugs. In this case the Board may place conditions on this practitioner's registration that he / she is still registered but 'not to provide veterinary services to the public'.

The Board intends taking a common sense approach to administering the legislation in regard to the Annual Return and CPD and is seeking co operation with the profession to achieve the objectives of the Act.

This document is available on the Board's website at [www.vpb.nsw.gov.au](http://www.vpb.nsw.gov.au) under 'Payments / Annual Return / CPD'. If you have any questions regarding these guidelines, please contact the Board's office.