



MINUTES

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Tuesday 16 November 2021

7.00 pm

Virtual Meeting

1. Welcome

The President, Dr Steven Ferguson welcomed all members to the 15th AGM of the veterinary profession in NSW. The meeting commenced at 7.00 pm via Zoom virtual technology.

2. Attendance

There were 25 people in attendance.

3. Confirmation of Minutes

The minutes from the previous meeting were confirmed by those present at that meeting.

4. Message from the Minister

The Hon. Adam Marshall, Minister for Agriculture and Western NSW delivered a message to the veterinary profession by video.

5. President's Report

The President spoke to the review of the activities of the Board for the past financial year and the audited financial statements. The President called for questions and comments.

- i. The President proposed that fees payable by veterinary practitioners as outlined in the Report on Remuneration and Fees be increased in accordance with CPI and noted that fees had not increased since 2018.
- ii. The President proposed that Board remuneration be increased in accordance with CPI.
- iii. The President spoke to the audited financial statements and called for questions and comments.

With respect to the proposed increase in fees:

1. One veterinarian present stated that given the difficulties faced by the profession in the last year it may not be appropriate to increase these fees
2. Two veterinarians noted the profit from the 2021 audited financial statements and requested further details such as the budget for next year and reasons for the increase

The President noted that fees had not increased since 2018, the increases were aligned with CPI increases, the profit from 2021 was largely driven by an unusually high return from TCorp, the Board has an ongoing significant investment with development of a new database not reflected in expenses.

With respect to the proposed increase in remuneration:

1. One veterinarian suggested the Board could forego this increase.

The President noted that the proposed increase is based on CPI, members volunteer significant time to meetings and preparation for meetings, and compensation is appreciated but in no way reflects the amount of time devoted to the above.

3. Presentations

- i. The Registrar and Complaints Officer delivered a presentation on complaint investigations for 2021.
- ii. The Registrar delivered a presentation of demographic data for the profession based on data collected during 2021 from annual returns and office activities.

4. General Business

The President called for other questions and comments.

There was some discussion of requirements under National Recognition of Veterinary Registration. Specifically in the example of a veterinarian living in NSW (and therefore registered in NSW) and working in ACT:

- A complaint would most likely be lodged with the ACT Board as this is where the work was performed however it is possible both boards could be approached by the client.
- This veterinarian could approach the ACT Board for advice and similarly veterinarians registered in other states or territories are welcome to approach the NSW Board regarding working in NSW.
- Registration fees are collected by the registration board where the veterinarian holds principal place of residence hence in the above example no fees would be collected by the ACT Board.
- Veterinarians must make themselves aware of the legislation in the state or territory where they work.
- The system of NRVR was agreed to by all boards in Australia and would take the cooperation of all boards to change. Its intention was to improve the mobility of veterinarians in Australia and in particular capacity to respond to an emergency. Principal place of residence is likely to be more easily defined and this system allows locum veterinarians and specialists to readily work in numerous states and territories.

Shortage of veterinarians

The Board is acutely aware of the shortage of veterinarians in NSW, and more generally. Whilst it has limited legislative authority in this area the Board has specifically:

- Worked with the AVBC and the AVA where it can to provide advice on its legislation and to disseminate questionnaires such as the AVA workforce survey.
- Released data to the profession on veterinary demographics to assist with planning.
- Adopted a more flexible approach to the granting of limited registration to applicants who do not have the qualifications for full registration in NSW and a more flexible approach to the granting of specialist registration to applicants who do not have the qualifications for full registration but have recognised specialist qualifications.
- Relaxed requirements for CPD, specifically in that unassessed computer based courses qualify for structured points.
- Clarified the requirements for after hours services and specifically confirming that this requirement is limited to the provision of ongoing care.
- Developed its technology-based patient consultations or telemedicine policy to assist the profession in interpretation of how technology may assist veterinarians during the pandemic and beyond.
- Continued its work with the Doctors' Health Program to provide support for veterinarians, their staff and veterinary students.

- The Board is continuously looking to improve its complaints processes to minimise stress on affected veterinarians, reduce the time involved for investigations, and provided additional training for its Complaints Officer who is now a qualified counsellor.

Veterinary practice ownership requirements

- There was a concern that not all veterinary practices are compliant with legislation requiring a veterinarian or veterinarians to have a controlling interest.
- The President noted that hospital licence holders are required to demonstrate a veterinarian or veterinarians has/have a controlling interest but noted there are some complex structures created in meeting this requirement.

Inducements and the Code (cl 21)

- There was concern expressed that a company providing veterinary consultation services was providing a financial inducement to veterinarians to use their services.
- The President agreed that a payment of a financial inducement by a veterinarian to another veterinarian for referral or recommendation was in breach of the Code.

5. Close

Meeting closed at 8:40 pm.