

**Primary Industries Standing Committee
Primary Industries Ministerial Council**

REGULATION IMPACT STATEMENT

NATIONAL REGISTRATION OF VETERINARIANS

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1 Background

In Australia, each State and Territory has separate legislation covering practise as a veterinarian. Each State or Territory Veterinary Registration Board (VSB) is a statutory authority established under State or Territory legislation to regulate standards of veterinary practise. Evidence is required of an appropriate veterinary qualification and practical experience before registration is granted. All State and Territory VSBs recognise the same qualifications, thus achieving a single, uniform national standard for registration.

In seven out of eight jurisdictions in Australia, the legislation regulating veterinarians falls within the portfolio of primary industry ministers. In the ACT, regulation falls under the health portfolio.

Veterinary Surgeons Acts serve the public interest by protecting users of veterinary services, by protecting consumers of animal products domestically and internationally, by facilitating trade, including meeting international requirement for certification of animals and animal products and by protecting animal welfare.

Currently, a veterinarian wishing to practise in more than one jurisdiction must register separately in each State or Territory of intended practise. Some jurisdictions offer “secondary registration” for a lower fee, on receipt of documentation such as letters of good standing or other bona fides establishing the primary registration of the applicant. Some State and Territories charge a fee for providing letters of good standing, some do not. All conditions of registration apply equally to primary and secondary registrations.

Each State and Territory sets the fee for registration with their VSB. Fees for registration vary considerably round Australia, from \$150 to \$350, with fees for secondary registration varying from \$84 to \$350. Fees for annual renewal of registration also vary. The variation in fees reflects different cost bases in each jurisdiction in a cost recovery environment. Under current arrangements, a veterinarian whose practice requires initial registration in all States and Territories could pay up to \$1770¹, plus fees for documentation such as letters of good standing, in contrast to \$150 for a veterinarian whose practice only requires registration in the State with the lowest fees. Veterinary registration is renewed annually.

During 2005 there were about 8500 veterinarians registered to practise in Australia, including non-practising (eg retired) registrants.

¹ Primary registration in Victoria \$322 with secondary registration in NSW \$350 + Qld \$84 +SA \$205 + WA \$265 + Tas \$136 + ACT \$255 + NT \$150

Why a national veterinary profession?

Separate regulatory systems in each state and territory hinder the mobility of veterinarians within Australia, hinder interstate competitiveness, and inconvenience clients with interstate or national interests as well as those requiring particular veterinary expertise only available outside their own state or territory.

The last decades have seen profound change in Australia. There is now ready movement of Australians and animals from state to state. Public policy has embraced the concepts of open markets, competition policy and mutual recognition by state and territory systems of qualifications and operations by other states and territories.

National registration has assumed increasing importance in the last decade with the growing need to remove obstacles to the delivery of cross-border veterinary services. In addition, one of the objectives of National Competition Policy is to allow greater competition within the veterinary services market. As production animal enterprises consolidate or specialise and performance animals travel to compete nationally, reforms which enable the integrated delivery of veterinary services on an Australia wide basis are vital to the profession meeting existing and future market demand for veterinary services.

A. Issues which give rise to the need for action

A number of issues during the last decade or two have highlighted the desirability of establishment of single-transaction Australia-wide registration for veterinarians. Current arrangements no longer provide the most appropriate and efficient mechanism for regulation of modern veterinary practice, and do not accommodate ongoing technological advances and changes within the profession. Influences that have led to consideration of a national registration model include:

1. The veterinary profession is recognised as increasingly mobile.
2. The public demands improved access to specialist or preferred veterinary services
3. Smaller jurisdictions such as the ACT, Northern Territory, Tasmania and South Australia have difficulty in accessing specialists (some specialities are only represented in some jurisdictions).
4. Current fees and registration procedures are a disincentive for interstate specialist visits, particularly at short notice.
5. There is increased opportunity for remote consultations and provision of services through remote means, particularly referral practice.
6. Veterinarians are burdened by the process and cost of individual State/Territory registration hampering their mobility.

7. The Australian Veterinary Association receives regular complaints from members about the process and cost of individual State/Territory registration. The current system provides an active barrier to the mobility of veterinarians who wish to carry out acts of veterinary science in State and Territories other than those in which they are registered. Practitioners who provide advice or consultation interstate without registration in the jurisdiction have been sued and their indemnity insurance has failed to protect them.
8. Several longitudinal studies by Professor Trevor Heath, past Dean of the University of Qld Veterinary School, have indicated that:
 - In the first 10 years after graduation there was significant movement of veterinarians between career paths and location of practice.
 - Maldistribution of veterinarians is an issue for Australia, leading to both shortages and overcrowding of veterinary services. Maldistribution is evident both within and between States.
 - There has been a recent and relatively rapid change in gender balance within the profession resulting in an increasing number of female practitioners with subsequent influence on work patterns, such as increasing part time work and gender differences in remuneration.
 - Veterinarians consider that the profession is not well remunerated considering factors such as the requirements to qualify and register as a veterinarian and hours of work.

Current registration procedures and fees are iniquitous, with a greater burden imposed on some career paths and practitioner types.
9. Interstate practice is often undertaken by veterinarians to service modern intensive production industries (eg pig, poultry and aquaculture).
10. The following types of veterinary employment require multi-jurisdiction registration:
 - private veterinary practices located near borders;
 - practices with arrangements with interstate facilities.
 - companies with interstate branches
 - racetrack and feed lot veterinarians
 - veterinary consultants
 - national enterprises (including veterinary pathology enterprises)
 - locum practices
 - Commonwealth Government staff, particularly those with AQIS.
11. The need for mobility of veterinarians (particularly those employed by state and territory governments) in response to animal disease incidents (eg Hendra virus, Avian Influenza).

12. The formation of the Australian Veterinary Reserve requires selected practitioners around Australia to respond immediately to emergency disease incidents in any state or territory to support government veterinarians.
13. Access to emergency veterinary locums, for example for personal emergencies, practice emergencies, natural disasters,
14. Routine access to veterinary locums providing short term assistance such as covering holidays or study by practitioners
15. The Review of Rural Veterinary Services Report (Frawley Review) recommended that veterinary jurisdictions remove the statutory barriers to veterinary practice consolidation and efficiency, including the requirement for separate registration in each jurisdiction and the limited availability of cross-jurisdictional registration

A single transaction that provides for national registration of veterinarians will provide assistance in addressing these issues and remove the statutory barriers to veterinary practice consolidation and efficiency.

2 The Objective

A. Objectives

The objectives of the model are to:

- Ensure that veterinarians, registrable in Australia, can be registered to practise nationally on the basis of a single application and single fee, while retaining current arrangements as far as possible.
- Provide for simple and effective implementation within current VSB structure, easily applicable in all jurisdictions.
- Progress nationally uniform categories of registration eg general and specialist registrants.
- Be achievable with minimal legislative amendment.
- Have minimal cost implications for the general public and be easy to administer.

B. Options and Assessment

A number of options to allow Australian veterinarians to practise nationally have been discussed and investigated during the last several years. However to date none have progressed to finalisation. The following are the most recent options that have been considered and some issues that have arisen during discussion of each.

Option 1:

No change to the current arrangements.

Each veterinarian must register separately with each State or Territory where he or she undertakes practise. The VSBs in some States require the payment of a full registration fee by a veterinarian who is registered and lives in another State and wishes to practise for only a short time within the State of that VSB. This may serve as a regulatory and financial barrier to trade and the free movement of veterinarians from one State to another.

Other State and Territories permit supplementary registration for a reduced fee where the applicant is currently registered in another State or Territory.

In this option there are variable fees and differing administrative processes must be completed in each jurisdiction. National registration is only achieved through individual veterinarians undertaking applications for registration and paying additional fees in each jurisdiction, and this inhibits easy professional servicing of the public.

Option 2:

A single national registration with a national registration agency; one payment to the national agency entitling the registrant to practise nationally.

In this option individual State registration agencies would no longer be required and a national registration body would be established. This model would require Commonwealth legislation to replace the existing State *Acts*. This option would require significant legislative and administrative change, may prove to be costly and create logistic problems with investigations and hearings. There would be equity issues with a single disciplinary body located in Canberra.

Option 3:

A single State registration, with an overarching national registration agency; one payment to the State, covering both the State and national registration components or two payments, one to the individual State registration agency and the second to the national agency. The national registration payment forwarded to the national agency.

In this option additional administrative arrangements would be required, with associated additional costs. Additionally, uniform fees may be required Australia wide, and the role and operation of the central agency would require considerable definition. In addition, the same logistic problems would apply as in Option 1.

State veterinary registrars noted that, for this option, funds may be collected and held by a central agency with no legislative authority, or that additional State/Territory and Commonwealth legislation would likely be needed.

Option 4:

A separate uniform “national registration”, offered to all vets by every VSB. A separate application form requesting all information required by all VSBs, including a declaration that the applicant will become familiar with the legislation and administration of a State where they intend to practise, and a differential fee. The primary VSB (that is in the primary State of residence) processes the application, collects the fee and advises all other VSBs, acting as their agent. There would be a reconciliation of fees from time to time and net fees forwarded to other VSBs as required.

In this option significant additional administrative arrangements would be required and the benefits of national registration are limited to only those veterinarians paying additional fees and consequently their clients. This option may serve as a regulatory and financial barrier to trade and the free movement of veterinarians from one State to another. To effect this option, legislative amendment in all jurisdictions is required to allow the ‘primary’ Board to act an ‘agent’ for the others. This is in effect what Option 5 sets out but without the added complexity of fee transfers, reconciliations etc.

Option 5:

Full national recognition of interstate registration, whereby registration with any one state entitles the registrant to practise in all States and Territories, with a single payment to one registration body. Registration with one State/Territory Board would be legally recognised by all State/Territory Boards.

This option provides for continuation of the State and Territory based veterinary registration and the VSB structure in its current format. Legislative amendment would be minor, as would any additional administrative and financial burden to veterinarians or the general public. Under this option all registered veterinarians potentially benefit from the change and they would bear the minor cost to maintain a neutral revenue situation for VSBs as a result of implementation. Over time, this cost component would become undifferentiated and integrated into each VSBs cost base.

Option 5 is preferred by the AVA, the majority of the VSBs and by AHC, as it meets all of the objectives of the legislative change. This model has been endorsed by the AVBC.

C. Conclusion and recommended option

Under Option 5, following successful application to the VSB in one's State or territory of primary residence (jurisdiction of primary registration), a veterinarian would:

1. be deemed to be registered in all States and Territories, and legally entitled to practise within the provisions of the legislation of each jurisdiction;
2. where deregistered in any one jurisdiction of primary registration, be therefore deregistered in all other States and Territories;
3. where registration has lapsed in the jurisdiction of primary registration, be no longer registered in any State or Territory.

In each State and Territory, the relevant legislation would require amendment to give effect to the three requirements above. Generic drafting instructions to give effect to this are at Part 5C.

The model proposes that the categories of registration to be recognised nationally are:

1. General Registration

- With or without conditions, limitations or restrictions.

2. Veterinary Specialist registration

- With or without conditions, limitations or restrictions, as above.

The State or Territory of primary practise of the applicant, considered with the residential address, would determine the jurisdiction of primary registration. That is, where application must be made and the fee must be paid. For example a veterinarian living and practising in NSW must have the primary registration in NSW. A veterinarian with practice addresses in the QLD, NT and NSW and living in Qld must hold primary registration in Qld. In the rare case where a veterinarian has a primary practice address in one State and residential address in another, she or he must provide defensible documented reasons for their application for primary registration to one or the other and this can be considered on a case by case basis, in consultation with the other jurisdiction if necessary.

- At present in most jurisdictions, application for registration as a veterinarian requires furnishing of a residential, proof of qualifications and recent work history; hence a requirement for reasonable proof of place of residence will not necessarily represent any further burden.
- Overseas applicants must establish a residential address in Australia for registration in the general category, although other arrangements could be agreed between the VSBs for non-practising veterinarian living overseas who wish to retain Australian registration.
- Where a veterinarian moves interstate to practise, they must advise the VSB with which they hold primary registration, and lodge an application for registration in the new jurisdiction, before the due date for their renewal. Lodgement of the new primary application must be in accordance with requirements of the jurisdiction to which they are applying. This requirement may have to be captured in legislation with application of appropriate agreed penalties.

Under the proposed arrangements, action regarding investigation of complaints and disciplinary actions will occur in the State where the alleged incident occurred.

- This remains unchanged from current arrangements. At present any complaint or investigation, involving a veterinarian registered and practising in more than one jurisdiction, is undertaken in the jurisdiction where the alleged incident occurred.

- There is no reason that the number or cost of complaints or investigations would rise under national registration arrangements; for example, in Victoria in 2004, 2005 and 2006 since the introduction of secondary registration in 2003 no veterinarians holding secondary registration have been investigated for unprofessional conduct.

The legal responsibility will remain that of the registered veterinarian to ensure compliance with applicable legislation in each State and Territory where he or she practises as a veterinarian.

- This remains unchanged from current arrangements.
- Retention of the current VSB structure ensures that veterinarians will continue to be able to seek advice and guidance on applicable legislation from familiar, experienced and well informed sources.

VSBs are generally required to hold a public register of veterinarians. Under the new arrangements a national register, being the sum total of all individual State and Territory registers, would be developed. The format and process for a national register is a current project with the Australasian Veterinary Boards Council Inc (AVBC). Veterinarians would continue to be required to notify their VSB of any change of address.

3 Assessment of the impacts of the preferred option

A. Impact Group identification

The proposal impacts on three primary groups – registered veterinarians, the public/users of veterinary services, and statutory VSBs.

The current arrangements for the protection of **public/users of veterinary services** will remain unchanged, as the current VSB arrangements and State legislation remain in place with minor amendment. However it is expected that the public/users of veterinary services will have improved access to choice of service deliverer, access to referral services, specialist services etc.

Registered veterinarians will bear the greatest impact from implementation of Option 5. Currently individual veterinarians bear their own registration costs and this will remain unchanged. Option 5 will provide the benefits of national registration, that is, the freedom to work legally in all parts of Australia, with a single transaction procedure within the current registration framework. However this group will bear any increased costs associated with implementation of arrangements and any additional paperwork and compliance costs. Any additional cost and administrative burden is expected to be minor.

Veterinary Surgeons Boards may be impacted by any costs associated with changed administrative requirements for implementation; however this is expected to be very minor. Costs will be primarily in the form of lost income, as fees will only apply in the State/territory of primary registration. The new arrangements may provide for efficiencies. For example, there will no longer be a need to maintain a process and records for secondary registration – such duplication will no longer be necessary.

State and Territory governments will bear the cost of implementation of minor amendments to veterinary surgeons legislation to give affect to national registration. This is a core role of government, unchanged from the current arrangements whereby *Veterinary Surgeons Acts* are amended from time to time as required.

B. Assessment of costs

It is estimated that about 13%² of veterinarians are registered to practise in more than one jurisdiction, up from a 2002 estimate of 8%³. It is hard to quantify the number of veterinarians practising in more than one jurisdiction under current arrangements. Some jurisdictions do not keep counts of

² Based on secondary registrations in those jurisdictions that have secondary registration and on the number of registrants with addresses outside of the state of registration for other jurisdictions

³ AVBC Working Party Report “A study into the Development of a Model for National Registration of Australian Veterinarians” January 2002

secondary registrants, some jurisdictions do not offer a category of secondary registration – all registrants are considered primary registrants. It is also difficult to effectively quantify the added financial burden being carried by those veterinarians registered to practise in more than one jurisdiction.

As previously noted, under current arrangements, a veterinarian whose practice requires initial registration in all States and Territories could pay up to \$1770⁴, plus fees for documentation such as letters of good standing

Some VSBs have suggested that the arrangements may lead to an increase in fees paid to them associated with increased miscellaneous sales of handbook guidelines etc and the registration of veterinarians employed within governments, who have not previously been registered with a VSB.

There is also a cost to the economy that is difficult to estimate, associated with the current disincentive for veterinarians to practise, or offer professional services, across State borders or in multiple jurisdictions.

Examination of current (July 2005) records for those jurisdictions that hold appropriate records show the following:

Jurisdiction	No. of Primary registrants	No. of Secondary registrants	Total Registered
Victoria	1958	181	2139
South Australia	467	92	559
Tasmania	186	70	256
New South Wales	2104	500*	2604
Queensland	1993	250	2243
West. Australia	918	59	977

* addresses outside of NSW

** addresses outside of WA

Calculation of estimates for an increase in fees for all veterinarians registered within a jurisdiction, to ensure that the VSBs maintain current revenue, are as follows, assuming that all current secondary registrants renew their registration.

⁴ Primary registration in Victoria \$322 with secondary registration in NSW \$350 + Qld \$84 +SA \$205 + WA \$265 + Tas \$136 + ACT \$255 + NT \$150

Estimated Fee Increases for Registered Veterinarians
(based on registrar supplied data, April 2006)

Jurisdiction	Loss of revenue from secondary registrants (A)	Loss of revenue from LOPS/ LOGS (B)	Total A + B	Additional fees per primary registrant (number) for revenue neutral
Victoria	\$ 21 177	\$ 2 040	\$ 23 217	(1958) \$12
South Australia	\$13 230	\$ 1 000	\$ 14 230	(474) \$32
Tasmania	\$ 6 370	\$ 150	\$ 6 520	(186) \$35
Queensland	\$14 837		\$ 14 837	(2057) \$7.21
Western Australia	\$ 9 735		\$ 9 735	(918) \$11
NSW				No fee change
ACT				Not able to estimate

As identified above, VSBs may be impacted by any costs (in the form of reduced revenue) associated with changed administrative requirements for implementation. A revenue neutral outcome for VSBs is entirely achievable, with a minor increase in the fees imposed by VSBs to provide for national registration for all Australian veterinarians. Further, several VSBs would no longer have the administrative burden of secondary registration of interstate applicants. However there may be some administrative changes required to manage the individual jurisdictional Veterinary Surgeons Registers in the interim, until the finalisation of a streamlined and effective mechanism for a national Veterinary Surgeons Register.

Other issues that have been discussed during the development of this proposal are:

- *The beneficiary should pay.* In the preferred option, all public users of veterinary services benefit from the improved access resulting from national registration. All veterinarians potentially benefit from the capacity to practise in all States and Territories. In option 5, all veterinarians would bear the additional minor cost for this benefit.
- *Only a very small percentage of veterinarians seek to practise interstate.* This may be the case now and in the past. However the veterinary profession is increasingly mobile and electronic means of consultation and diagnosis is increasing. Registration arrangements should accommodate this progress. The proposal is forward looking and facilitates future changes in the mobility and scope of veterinary services provided by individuals and practices.
- *Legislative change should not be major and costly.* In the preferred option the legislative change is not extensive, and can be facilitated by national regulatory impact assessments and uniform drafting instructions.
- *There would be no requirements for veterinarians proposing to work in a particular jurisdiction to meet with the Registrar.* Very few States currently require this. The new arrangements would not interfere with the continuation of this if it is considered appropriate by an individual jurisdiction.

- *The VSBs would not know who was operating as a veterinarian in their State.* Concerns have been expressed that this could prevent the VSB from fulfilling its obligations such as those in relation to control of drug use or animal welfare. All registered veterinarians are required to meet all requirements of any State in which they practise. The responsibility for this remains with the veterinarian.
- *Presence or absence on an individual State register is the basis for disciplinary actions.* In the preferred option, all registered veterinarians in Australia will be deemed to be registered in each individual State and Territory. As now, disciplinary action will take place in the jurisdiction where the alleged offence occurred. In the interim until a national register is developed, an individual jurisdiction may need to liaise with other VSBs to locate a specific veterinarian. The majority of VSBs hold electronic versions of the public register, the remaining require direct contact with the Registrar to locate an individual registrant, so this is a minor administrative burden in the case of where any complaints are about interstate veterinarians
- *VSBs need to be sure that complaint resolution can take place at reasonable cost.* Under new arrangements complaint resolutions procedures will be unchanged and there is no basis to suggest that the number of complaints will increase. At present there is no basis to suggest that registrants from out-of-state (secondary registrants) are subject to a greater rate of complaints than primary registrants.
- *VSBs need to be assured that all veterinarians practising in their jurisdictions are aware of the legislative and administrative requirements of the jurisdictions.* Legislation and policy requirements are currently disseminated to registrants at time of registration. Under the new arrangements, it will remain the responsibility of registered veterinarians to act within the regulations of the jurisdictions in which they practise. VSBs do not, at present, seek assurance from registrants that they are aware of legislative and administrative arrangements within the jurisdictions. This will remain unchanged. Under the new arrangements, VSBs will continue to offer advice and support, specific to their jurisdictions and available to all veterinarians.
- *If it was deemed necessary, the costs of a centralised national veterinary register could be in the order of \$80,000.* The AVA reports significant savings when their membership was moved from individual State based registers to a national register. Currently there are about 8500 veterinarians registered in Australia and individual VSBs hold more than 10 pieces of data on each register. A 10 000–entry x 10 - 20–field spreadsheet or database program, with hidden fields and searchable, is easily manageable by almost all commercially available programs.

In the interim, individual State Veterinary Surgeons Registers additively provide a national register and, in most States and Territories, public access is available through VSB websites and their links. A single access point to currently available on-line registration data from the AVBC website could be developed for less than \$5,000.

Due care is required during the drafting of amendments to *Veterinary Surgeons Acts* to ensure that other legislative instruments are not inadvertently altered. For example veterinarians are referenced in disease control legislation, *Livestock Acts* and similar instruments in all jurisdictions. However as the new arrangement in no way alters the meaning of the term 'registered veterinary surgeon' but simply provides for all registered veterinarians to legally practise in all jurisdictions, with the concomitant responsibility to conform to pertinent legislation. This is in no way a barrier to implementation.

C. Assessment of benefits

This model benefits all registered Australian veterinarians by providing the capacity to practise legally in all States and Territories with a single transaction and minor fee increase. At the same time the model removes the regulatory and financial burden imposed on the estimated 600 – 800 veterinarians who currently must register in more than one jurisdiction in order to undertake professional practise. A national system of registration also provides additional flexibility to facilitate those veterinarians whose professional work routinely requires that they provide veterinary advice and practise veterinary science in some or all jurisdictions in Australia, such as national company veterinarians and those employed by the Commonwealth.

National registration facilitates provision of veterinary services including specialist services by removing an active regulatory barrier to the mobility of veterinarians. This model provides for increasing mobility within the profession, facilitates provision of locum services and veterinary specialist or referral services, particularly in smaller jurisdictions where the size of the client base does not provide sufficient financial incentive for establishment of specialist practices.

National registration also adds rigour to the management of professional misconduct. Under current arrangements, theoretically a veterinarian deregistered in one jurisdiction may be able to register and practise in another, although VSBs co-operate and the system of letters of good standing assists to ensure that inappropriate registration of veterinarians does not occur. However, under the new arrangements legislative amendment will provide a legal mechanism that ensures that a veterinarian whose registration is suspended or cancelled in one jurisdiction will not be able to register or remain registered in other jurisdictions.

It is expected that requirements for application for registration would remain almost unchanged, although some VSBs may review the administrative process to ensure efficiency. Introduction of the new arrangement also provides an excellent opportunity for VSBs work towards introducing uniform registration administrative processes throughout Australia including uniformity of accompanying documentation requirements. A review such as this may also deliver cost savings to VSBs.

Option 5 (the preferred option) also facilitates modern methods of professional practise such as the increasing use of electronic diagnostic methods providing for interstate specialists to legally provide advice across jurisdictional boundaries such as through video diagnosis, electronic transmission of pathological slides etc..

National registration also ensures that there can be an immediate and efficient interstate response to emergency animal disease incidents, such as mobilisation of the Australian Veterinary Reserve, and the interstate movement of other private practitioners and government veterinarians to resource rapid responses.

These benefits provide increased flexibility to the Australian veterinary profession with the result that national registration of veterinarians facilitates more choice for consumers of veterinary services. There will be no loss of protection for those consumers, or any loss or protection for consumers of animal products domestically and internationally; no loss of trade facilitation, including international requirement for certification of animals and animal products and no loss of protection of animal welfare.

4 Consultation

Animal Health Committee, the technical and policy subcommittee for animal health and diseases of the Primary Industries Ministerial Council, has assisted with development of the model for national registration of veterinarians in consultation the Australasian Veterinary Boards Council Incorporated (AVBC) and the Australian Veterinary Association (AVA).

Consultation was undertaken with Australian veterinarians and the public through VSBs and by the AVBC and the AVA through publication on the websites of those bodies and on the websites of the Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries and Animal Health Australia. Chief Veterinary Officers in each jurisdiction also consulted with VSBs and veterinarians within their jurisdiction.

The AVA and the AVBC are fully supportive of national registration and supportive of the preferred option to implement national registration for Australian veterinarians, as is Animal Health Committee. Qld has yet to agree to Option 5.

Comments and concerns expressed by stakeholders during consultation will be addressed during further development of the details of the proposal.

5 Strategy for implementation and review

A. Methodologies by which Implementation of Option 4 or 5 (or variant of these) may be achieved.

Current AVBC member position on Options 4 and 5: National Registration

	Option 4	Option 5
Qld	x	
NSW		x
Vic		x
Tas		x
SA		x
NT		x
WA	x	
ACT		x

Comparison of Option 4 and Option 5

Option 4	Option 5
"National Registration" Form offered separately requiring all information required by all Boards	No separate form
Declaration required that applicant shall become familiar with legislation and administration of state(s) in which intend to practise	Declaration required that applicant shall become familiar with legislation and administration of state(s) in which intend to practise
Higher differential fee for user registrants	Lower differential fee for all registrants
Home state is agent for nominated states	Home state: no additional administration
Reconciliation between states required and net fees forwarded to other Boards as required	No reconciliation required
Benefits to those paying additional fees and providing additional paperwork	Benefits to all registrants
Less legislative amendment	More legislative amendment
Additional administrative burden	No administrative burden

Under Option 5, following successful application to the registration board in one's state or territory of primary residence (jurisdiction of primary registration), a veterinarian would:

4. be deemed to be registered in all States and Territories, and legally entitled to practice within the provisions of the legislation of each jurisdiction;
5. where deregistered in any one jurisdiction of primary registration, be therefore deregistered in all other States and Territories;
6. where registration has lapsed in the jurisdiction of primary registration, be no longer registered in any State or Territory.

The committee also gave consideration to several issues that will need to be addressed in the implementation RIS such as:

B. Legislative Change required

	Legislative Change required (from 2002 survey)
Qld	Amendment would be required to reflect that the definition of a veterinary surgeon includes those registered nationally who have no individual registration in Qld . Also the Registers are referred to as the Queensland registers and that would no longer be the case. Qld also have no provision for equivalence of penalty for a person registered in multiple states i.e. if a person is suspended in WA our Act does not provide that the person is automatically suspended in Queensland. Changes would be required in the fee schedule and regulations governing standards of practice would have to be revised for equivalence with all other authorities.
NSW	The complaint handling is more difficult and again it depends upon the detail of what is agreed. If true uniformity is to be achieved then there should be common standards and procedures that ensure that a person is treated the same way and has the same rights wherever in Australia the conduct occurs.
SA	Amendment to Regulations
WA	Amendment to Act
Vic	Very minor
NT	Very minor

C. Model Drafting Instructions

National registration of veterinarians

[The following shall apply in each Australian state and territory]

- 1) *There shall be a provision in the relevant Act that regulates the conduct of veterinary surgeons/practitioners, to the effect that a person shall be deemed to be registered under that Act in that state or territory if that person is registered as a veterinary surgeon/practitioner under an equivalent Act in another state or territory.*
- 2) *This provision shall only apply in the case of persons holding general and/or specialist registration.*
- 3) *This deemed registration shall be subject to the same conditions, restrictions or limitations (if any) that apply to the (primary) registration in the first state or territory.*
- 4) *This registration shall be deemed to be suspended or cancelled if it is suspended or cancelled in the first state or territory.*
- 5) *All legal rights and obligations applying normally to registered veterinary practitioners under the relevant Act in the state or territory shall apply equally to persons deemed to be registered in accordance with 1 above.*

- 6) *A person must apply for primary registration in the state or territory of their primary business. If a registered veterinary practitioner moves his/her primary place of business to another state or territory they shall advise the Board in that new state or territory within one month of such a move.*

D. Implementation Issues.

(i) Information for new registrants

Most Boards send a letter of introductory material explaining some of the related legislative requirements in their jurisdiction when issuing a new registration certificate. This process will not occur with nationally portable registration. However, it is far more practical today to have this information available on the Board's web site so that it is available to all veterinarians all the time (and can be updated as required).

Matters such as the need for a radiation licence to operate an x-ray machine, certain stock food and medicine dispensing restrictions particular to a jurisdiction, certain animal welfare issues and poisons act issues can all be made available and linked between Board websites. This is a superior way of ensuring veterinarians have access to vital information when they require it.

(ii) Date of Renewal

This does not appear to be an issue. Registrars discussed this and agreed that as long as the veterinarian is currently registered in his/her primary jurisdiction he/she would be covered by the deeming clause. Most jurisdictions require notification of change of address within 7-14 days.

(iii) Other Legislation.

When there are changes, such as those created during the national competition policy reviews, all the Acts that refer to veterinary surgeons within a jurisdiction are modified via consequential amendments.

The question as to how compliance officers for the Department of Health may investigate abnormal purchasing patterns from wholesalers with warehouses in different states may be no different to that which exists currently when a veterinarian has registration in more than one jurisdiction. The abnormal ordering patterns are reported to Canberra and then the state or territory health department responsible in the jurisdiction of primary registration of the veterinarian is informed.

(iv) Refusal to Register and Removal from Register.

As an example of possible legislation, the new NSW veterinary legislation contains the following:

On refusal to register: Clause 18 (c)

(c) the applicant has been refused registration, licensing or other authorisation as a veterinary practitioner in another State or Territory or has had his or her authority to practise veterinary science suspended or cancelled in another State or Territory,

On removal from register: Cause 27 (2) c

(ii) any other offence under a law of this State or of the Commonwealth, or another State or Territory, that imposes a requirement on a veterinary practitioner in his or her capacity as a veterinary practitioner,

(iii) any offence under a law of the Commonwealth, or another State or Territory, or of a jurisdiction outside Australia, that in the opinion of the Board is equivalent to an offence referred to in subparagraph (i) or (ii), or

(d) the veterinary practitioner has had his or her authority to practise veterinary science suspended or cancelled in another State or Territory.

(v) Deeming verses Model Legislation

While not ruling out a Model Bill and Model Regulations, the introduction of nationally portable registration via changes to legislation that enable veterinarians who have registered in one state or territory to be deemed to be registered in all other jurisdictions, similar to that agreed to for the medical profession, will allow removal of barriers to competition in veterinary services, improve mobility of Australian veterinarians and reduce inconvenience to clients with interstate or national interests.

(vi) Timing of Implementation

Once agreed by Ministerial Council, it is proposed that implementation be completed Australia wide, by 31 December 2008.

Appendix A

Detailed costing estimates to ensure that VSBs maintain current revenue

Victoria: *(Estimated from figures provided)*

Victorian figures do not include 92 vets who hold Non-practising registration.

Loss of revenue from secondary renewals	$\$117 \times 181 =$	\$21 177
Loss of revenue from LOPS (61% of total)	$\$40 \times 51 =$	\$ 2 040
Total		\$23 217

Additional fees per primary registrant (1958) for revenue neutral = \$12

South Australia *(Estimated from figures provided)*

Loss of revenue from secondary renewals: $\$135 \times 98 = \$13\ 230$
Loss of revenue from LOGS (Letters of Good Standing): \$50 per LOGS
estimated loss of \$1 000
Loss of revenue from reinstatement to Register for secondary registrants: \$98
per reinstatement x 10 per year = \$980

Additional fees per primary registrant (474) for revenue neutral = \$32

Tasmania *(Estimated from figures provided)*

Loss of revenue from secondary renewals: $\$86 \times 45 = \$3\ 870$
Loss of revenue from LOGS (Letters of Good Standing): \$ 150
Loss of revenue from estimated 25 new secondary registrants annually
 $\$100 \times 25 = \$2\ 500$

Additional fees per primary registrant (186) for revenue neutral = \$35

Queensland *(Estimated from figures provided)*

Loss of revenue from secondary renewals: $\$59.35 \times 250 = \$14\ 837$
Additional fees per primary registrant (2057) for revenue neutral = \$7.21

Western Australia *(Estimated)*

Loss of revenue from secondary renewals: $\$165 \times 59 = \$9\ 735$
Additional fees per primary registrant (918) for revenue neutral = \$11

NSW

At this time NSW does not expect that it will be necessary to amend fees when national registration arrangements are implemented.

ACT

The ACT recognises that there will be cost implications but these are unable to be estimated at this stage.