

VETERINARY PRACTICE REVIEW

REPORT ON WHAT WE HEARD

The ACT Government undertook a review of veterinary practice in the ACT to identify areas for improvement. Key stakeholders and the community were invited to provide input to the review from 22 May 2024 to 2 July 2024.

The review included a statutory review of the *Veterinary Practice Act 2018* to ensure the Act is meeting its objectives and to identify possible areas for improvement in veterinary practice in the ACT more broadly.

The *Veterinary Practice Act 2018* regulates veterinary services within the ACT to ensure:

- vet services are focused on the welfare and protection of animals
- vet practitioners provide services professionally and competently
- consumers are well informed about the competencies required of veterinarians
- premises at which vet services are provided are of an acceptable standard
- vet services in the ACT meet community standards as well as national and international requirements
- public health is protected
- veterinary practitioners engage in ongoing professional development, education and training
- equitable access to veterinary care for all Canberrans
- effective processes are in place for handling complaints and disciplining practitioners who fail to meet the required standards.

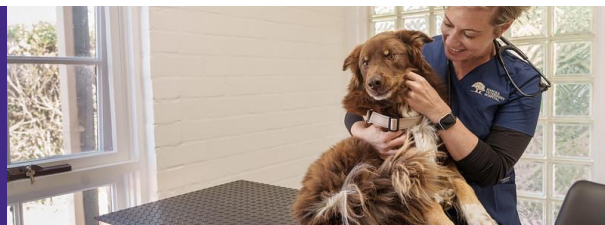
The review consulted on the suitability of the current rules and processes for registering vets and vet premises including how we recognise vets from other jurisdictions. It also sought views on the appropriateness of current complaints handling processes and disciplinary proceedings as well the lists of restricted and unrestricted acts of veterinary science to ensure they align with industry practice, training and codes of practice.

During the review of the *Veterinary Practice Act 2018* Canberrans and key stakeholders were also invited to consider a broad range of issues that impact veterinary practice in the ACT via an online discussion paper.

THE CONVERSATION

From 22 May 2024 to 2 July 2024, key stakeholders the broader Canberra community were invited to provide input into the review via the YourSay website.

We sent an email to 321 registered practitioners and 46 registered premises inviting feedback. The YourSay project page was viewed 430 times during the consultation period, with 365 visits from 205 visitors. The online Discussion Paper was downloaded 150 times and we received 66 submissions in total, with 16 of these providing specific input and feedback on the operation of the Act.



WHO WE ENGAGED

The ACT Government worked closely with key stakeholders including the ACT Veterinary Practitioners Board, Animal Welfare Advisory Committee and the RSPCA ACT to review the *Veterinary Practice Act 2018*.

The majority of the submissions were from veterinarians. There were also submissions from the Australian Veterinary Association, RSPCA ACT, Animal Medicines Australia, Pegasus Riding for the Disabled, Equine Training Australia and the Discrimination, Health Services, Disability and Community Safety Commissioner.

Key insights from stakeholders and the community

Continued support of the Act

1. Submissions highlight there is strong support for the *Veterinary Practice Act 2018* and *Veterinary Practice Regulation 2018* with acknowledgement the legislation is meeting its objectives.

Achievements in the protection of animal welfare and regulation of practitioners and premises

2. Submissions highlighted that many positive outcomes have been achieved in the areas of animal welfare protection, efficient registration of veterinary practitioners and premises, timely investigation and resolution of complaints and flexibility in working with veterinarians and premises to meet professional and community expectations.

Challenges with the operation of the Act and supporting the broader veterinary sector

3. Submissions also highlight challenges faced by users and decision makers around handling complaints, including in the areas of mediation and investigation and Veterinary Practitioners Board processes more broadly.
4. There is also acknowledgement the shortage of veterinarians and nurses is contributing to poor mental health and well-being within the sector.

Areas where the legislation could be improved

5. Greater clarity is needed around the registration process for veterinary practitioners and premises, including the complaints process.
6. Changes to the legislation, particularly restricted and unrestricted acts of veterinary science should be subject to greater scrutiny.

Calls for better support veterinarians, veterinary care and respite services

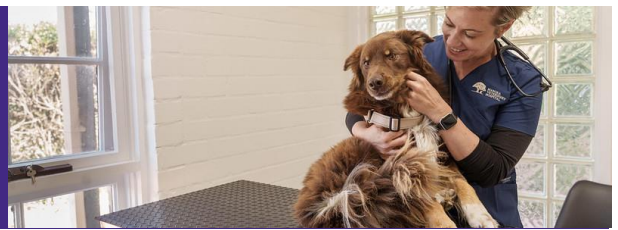
7. Suggestions were offered to address workforce shortages and well-being, including greater support for professional development and veterinarian self-care, and considering regulation of veterinary nurses.
8. Calls for more subsidised or low-cost veterinary services, urgent care and respite services for animals, including assistance schemes for essential veterinary care, emergency relief funds and temporary respite care options for pets owned by vulnerable Canberrans.

WHAT'S NEXT?

Feedback received during the review will help ensure the *Veterinary Practice Act 2018* is meeting its objectives and identify possible areas for improvement in veterinary practice in the ACT more broadly.

Feedback from this engagement has helped us understand next steps and if we need to make amendments. It will also be used to inform how we administer the legislation and better support the practice of veterinary practitioners and the community.

Project updates will continue to be provided via the [Veterinary Practice Review YourSay page](#).



You can also register to receive project updates by emailing communityengagement@act.gov.au

Key Timings

22 May 2024: Consultation opens

2 July 2024: Consultation closes

9 September 2024: What We Heard Report and Report on the Veterinary Practice Review released **[we are here]**

THANK YOU FOR YOUR FEEDBACK

367+

we sent an email to 367
stakeholders inviting
feedback

200+

a total of 205 people visited
the YourSay page during the
consultation period

150

the online Discussion Paper
was downloaded 150 times
in total

66

we received a total of 66
submissions from individuals
and organisations, 16 related
to the review of the Act