

# CONSULTATION on CORE SKILLS OCCUPATIONS LIST

Jobs and Skills Australia

Submission by:

Educators for the Allied Veterinary Health Professions in Higher  
Education (Australia)

26 September 2025

This submission has been prepared by the Educators for the Allied Veterinary Health Professions in Higher Education (Australia).

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## About us

### ***Educators for the Allied Veterinary Health Professions in Higher Education (Australia)***

Established in January 2021, *Educators for the Allied Veterinary Health Professions in Higher Education (Australia)* ('The Educators') comprises a group of 11 educators including current and former teaching, research and clinical academics associated with bachelor's degree programs in veterinary technology or veterinary nursing, respectively. They include:

#### **Bachelor of Veterinary Technology, The University of Queensland, Gatton, Queensland**

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[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

#### **Bachelor of Veterinary Technology, Charles Sturt University, Wagga Wagga, New South Wales**

[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

#### **Bachelor of Veterinary Technology, The University of Adelaide, Roseworthy, South Australia**

[REDACTED]  
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#### **Bachelor of Veterinary Nursing, Melbourne Polytechnic and Associate Degree in Veterinary Nursing in partnership with La Trobe University, Melbourne, Victoria**

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#### **Bachelor of Veterinary Technology, Southern Cross University, Lismore, New South Wales**

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## Advocacy Activities

‘The Educators’ are unified by a desire for collaboration and innovation in advancing allied veterinary health disciplines such as veterinary technology and veterinary nursing in higher education. They are also passionate about preparing professional graduates to meet Australia’s animal health and welfare needs and to complement the role of veterinarians in interprofessional veterinary teams in clinical and non-clinical fields. Currently, they are heavily involved in advocacy promoting title protection and the regulation of their graduates and vocational veterinary nurses throughout Australia. This work has included written submissions to:

- The Western Australian and South Australian Governments regarding review of their Veterinary Practice Acts and Regulations (2022-2025).
- The NSW Government Inquiry into the Veterinary Workforce Shortages in NSW in 2023, with several members providing evidence at the Public Hearing (August 2024) resulting in positive recommendations in the final report.
- The Draft Animal Care and Protection Bill consultation in Victoria (March 2024).
- Renewing the Australian Animal Welfare Strategy (June 2024).
- Jobs and Skills Australia: Draft CSOL Targeted for Consultation (June 2024)
- The Australian Bureau of Statistics’ review of the ANZSCO Occupational Codes which resulted in Veterinary Technologist recognised as an occupation classified at Skill Level 1 under the Miscellaneous Health Professionals along with Veterinarians in the Occupation Standard Classification for Australia released (December 2024).
- The Parliament of South Australia, Joint Committee into Veterinarian Mental Health and Wellbeing, May 2025.

## Programs and their Graduates

Four universities currently offer a Bachelor of Veterinary Technology (AQF Level 7):

- The University of Queensland (UQ) (since 2001)
- Charles Sturt University (CSU) (since 2015)
- The University of Adelaide (U of A) (since 2020)
- Southern Cross University (SCU) (East Lismore, NSW) commenced 2025

The Bachelor of Veterinary Nursing (AQF Level 7) has been offered by Melbourne Polytechnic in partnership with La Trobe University since 2018, alongside an Associate Degree in Veterinary Nursing (AQF Level 6) since 2016.

All programs incorporate the Veterinary Nurses Council of Australia Day One Competency Standards and One Day Skills (VNCA, 2025a) required for membership of the VNCA and registration with the Australian Veterinary Nurse and Technician Registration Scheme (AVNAT) (VNCA, 2025b); a voluntary scheme laying the foundation for future mandatory registration. There are approximately 1,288 bachelor-qualified veterinary technologists and nurses, and 111 associate degree graduates (P. Clarke & B. Naughton, personal communications, 2025).

Graduates possess strong scientific knowledge, clinical and problem-solving skills to enhance veterinary practice efficiency and provide high-quality animal care. They are employed across the spectrum of the veterinary and allied animal health sectors, in both clinical and non-clinical fields.

## Introduction

The Educators for the Allied Veterinary Health Professions in Higher Education (Australia) (The Educators), thank Jobs and Skills Australia for the opportunity to provide feedback to inform decision-making around Australia's skilled migration program 2025. Our focus is on the occupational shortages in the veterinary workforce which includes 234711 Veterinarians and 361311 Veterinary Nurses: both included in the Occupation Shortage List (OSL) as experiencing national shortages (Jobs and Skills Australia, 2025). The new occupation of 269532 Veterinary Technologist identified in the first release of the Australian Bureau of Statistics' (ABS, 2025a) Occupation Standard Classification of Australia (OSCA) in 2024 (ABS, 2025b) is also the subject of this submission.

The Educators urge governments to reach beyond supporting employer sponsored skilled migration for veterinarians and veterinary nurses as a solution to the veterinary workforce crisis. A broader, evidence-based view of the drivers and solutions for the current veterinary workforce skills shortages is required. Mass underutilisation of highly knowledgeable and skilled bachelor's degree veterinary technologists and veterinary nurses, and vocational qualified veterinary nurses, is a significant contributor to this workforce crisis. Statutory regulation and title protection for all bachelor's degree veterinary technologists and veterinary nurses, and vocational veterinary nurses, throughout Australia will help ameliorate this crisis by allowing veterinarians' to more confidently delegate: reducing their excessive workloads and stress. In turn, it is predicted attrition rates for veterinary technologists and veterinary nurses will reduce as an increased scope of practice addresses the workplace stressors of underutilisation and lack of professional recognition. Equally important, statutory regulation and title protection are in the best interests of animal health and welfare and in the public interest as outlined below.

## Drivers of veterinarian and veterinary nurse occupational skills shortages

Jobs and Skills Australia (JSA) cite a 'long training gap' as the most likely driver for the shortage of veterinarians (JSA, 2024). Much has been published about other key factors—Covid creating an increase in pet ownership and demand for veterinary services, high levels of veterinarian stress and burnout due to excessive workloads and the complexity of work, and issues with the public image of veterinarians.

Similarly, JSA cite the drivers of the veterinary nurse shortage are 'unknown'. Recent research by Chapman et al. (2024) reveals the stress and burnout experienced by veterinary nurses in practice are comparable if not more severe than that of veterinarians. A VNCA/Royal Canin survey in 2024 and research conducted for the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons, the regulatory body for veterinary nursing in the United Kingdom, describe retention as a major issue for veterinary nurses, with up to 64% considering leaving within the next five years due to working conditions, poor levels of remuneration and lack of career progression (Jeffrey and Taylor, 2022; VNCA/Royal Canin, 2024). Within veterinary practices, the turnover of veterinary nurses [and veterinary technologists] contributes to rising workloads, stress and fatigue for others. A review of the Animal Care and Veterinary Services Award 2010 quickly reveals that veterinary nurses (and veterinary technologists by default as they are currently not in the Award [Fair Work Commission, 2025]) are poorly remunerated for their complex work which involves unique skills and knowledge, and high levels of emotional labour.

## Bachelor's degree graduates: Current status

Our bachelor's degree veterinary technologists and veterinary nurses are an invaluable resource capable and primed to alleviate the veterinarian's workload to provide more accessible, cost-effective veterinary services, and to realise the work satisfaction and professional recognition they deserve. Their capacity to reduce the workforce crisis is clearly evident

- It takes three years to complete a bachelor's degree in veterinary technology or veterinary nursing, unlike the five or six years to complete a veterinary degree.
- In 2024, the ABS classified the Veterinary Technologist as an occupation in the health professions along with veterinarians, dentists, dental hygienists and paramedics based on their significant contribution to the veterinary workforce in clinical and non-clinical fields, including teaching, research and biosecurity, (The Educators' ABS submission 2024 is available on request.)
- The Bachelor of Veterinary Nursing graduates fulfil similar roles.

## Home-grown solutions

- It is well known that rural and regional areas tend to have higher levels of veterinarian shortages with excessive workload burdens for the remaining veterinarians. By fully utilising highly qualified and skilled graduate veterinary technologists and veterinary nurses, and associate degree graduates, in these areas, veterinarian workloads would be dramatically reduced, accessibility to veterinary care increased, and work satisfaction of veterinary technologists and nurses enhanced.
- Developing clinics utilising bachelor's degree graduates in a nurse-centric model (Kerrigan, 2015) like the advanced generalist roles for human nurses in rural and remote Australia (Muirhead & Birks, 2020) would enable veterinarians to focus on higher level tasks.
- There is an urgent need for all state governments and territories to follow the lead of Western Australia which has statutory regulation and title protection for veterinary nurses (and registerable bachelor's degree graduates) including an Advanced Veterinary Nurse role.
  - The benefits of statutory regulation and title protection are well documented in terms of animal health and welfare and the public interest—raised standards of veterinary services, accountability and safeguarding public health (VNCA, 2025b).
  - Contemporary definitions of public interest prioritise “efficiency, value-for-money, quality and safety of health services, and the responsiveness of the regulatory system to the complex and evolving needs of health systems” (Mahat et al 2023, p. 597). Regulation and title protection for veterinary technologists and veterinary nurses with an increased scope of practice would enable veterinary health care services to meet all those criteria.
- The Working Party for the Statutory Regulation of Veterinary Nurses and Technologists in Australia established as a collaboration between the Australasian Veterinary Boards Council and the VNCA in August 2024 is steadfastly advancing the cause through rigorous political advocacy nationally and at state and territory level, and by raising public awareness. The Working party would welcome working with JSA.
- Government-led employment incentives to ameliorate veterinary workforce shortages in rural and regional areas should be extended to include bachelor's degree veterinary technologists and veterinary nurses, as well veterinarians.

- Similarly, government incentives for veterinary students' HECS debt reduction and subsidised placements should include bachelor's degree veterinary technology and veterinary nurse graduates.
- Contemporary veterinary health care is a team effort! The work of the veterinarian alone is no longer enough as modelled in human health (Kogan & Stewart, 2009; Kinnison, May & Guile, 2014). Veterinary technologists and veterinary nurses are integral members of veterinary teams in both clinical and non-clinical fields (ABS submission available on request) and need to be considered contemporaneously with veterinarians.
- Governments need to consider the transferability of the dental professions model where innovative regulatory approaches have made impactful changes to the dental healthcare system (Han et al., 2024). The oral health therapist workforce is widely recognised in Australia for delivery of high-quality and cost-effective dental services within their defined scope of practice (Han et al., 2024). Regulatory approaches recommended in this submission along with well-designed policies by government can similarly help address the growing burden of veterinary health care in Australia today, and importantly, alleviate veterinary workforce shortages.

## Labour market insights

There are currently five higher education institutions in Australia delivering bachelor's degrees in veterinary technology or veterinary nursing, with more likely to come. The University of Queensland's graduating cohorts have more than doubled since 2003. The graduates have high employability and are particularly sought after by specialist veterinary practices, veterinary pharmaceutical and nutrition companies and in biosecurity.

Table 1. Graduate demographics (numbers to be fully confirmed)

Qualification	Graduate Numbers	Gender
Bachelor of Veterinary Technology (2003-2024)	1288	Majority (>90%) of all graduates are female.
Bachelor of Veterinary Nursing (2018-2024)	157	Majority (>90%) of all graduates are female.
Associate degree in Veterinary Nursing (2016-2018)	111	Majority (>90%) of all graduates are female.

Graduate employment destinations include:

- General veterinary clinics and specialist veterinary hospitals
- Government, regulatory and animal welfare agencies
- Veterinary pharmaceutical and nutrition companies
- Animal biosecurity
- Wildlife conservation
- Veterinary diagnostic and animal genetics laboratories
- Veterinary clinical and non-clinical research
- Tertiary education and training (veterinary technology and veterinary nursing).

## Conclusion

These graduates face limited opportunities due to insufficient recognition in state and territory Veterinary Acts and regulations, restricting the national veterinary workforce. Formal recognition of veterinary technologists and veterinary nurses by protecting their title, and providing a regulatory framework, as in Western Australia, will enhance the professional capacity of the veterinary workforce along with the social, emotional and economic benefits that veterinary teams bring to society. Implementing statutory regulation and title protection for veterinary nurses and technologists will enable veterinarians to delegate with more confidence alleviating their workloads. It will also provide veterinary technologists and veterinary nurses with greater work satisfaction through an increased scope of practice.

The Educators urge the JSA to take the lead in reducing veterinary workforce shortages by supporting statutory regulation and title protection for veterinary technologists and veterinary nurses as a means of significantly alleviating shortages of all members of the veterinary team and increasing efficiencies and accessibility of veterinary services—in the best interests of animal health and welfare and the public.

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## Appendix 1: Glossary of Terms

This glossary has been provided to assist with understanding the titles ascribed to bachelor's degree qualified graduates from the Bachelor of Veterinary Technology and Bachelor of Veterinary Nursing in Australia— distinct from Certificate IV and Diploma qualified veterinary nurses trained in the Vocational Education and Training sector.

Table 2. Common terms

Term	Definition
<i>Veterinary nurse</i>	According to the Veterinary Nurses Council of Australia, a 'veterinary nurse' is one who holds a formally recognised veterinary nursing qualification. The current Australian national qualification for Veterinary Nursing is the Certificate IV in Veterinary Nursing. Additional qualifications include a Bachelor of Veterinary Nursing, Associate Degree of Veterinary Nursing, Diploma of Veterinary Nursing (General Practice), Diploma of Veterinary Nursing (Emergency and Critical Care), Diploma of Veterinary Nursing (Surgical) and Diploma of Veterinary Nursing (Dental) (VNCA, 2025).
<i>Veterinary technologist</i>	A formal title for a graduate of the three-year Bachelor of Veterinary Technology in Australia based on titles used by the American Veterinary Medical Association.
<i>Veterinary technician</i>	An alternative informal title for graduates of the Bachelor of Veterinary Technology in Australia.
<i>Allied veterinary health professionals</i>	A group title for all bachelor's degree qualified graduates (Bachelor of Veterinary Technology and Bachelor of Veterinary Nursing) in Australia.
<i>Higher education</i>	In Australia higher education (HE) has traditionally been associated with universities but now more commonly refers to levels of education and training programs rather than programs rather than institutions. It generally refers to education at degree level or above (AQF Level 7) (Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 2018).
<i>Vocational education and training</i>	Vocational Education & Training (VET) sector qualifications are outcome-based and focus on the occupational skills and competencies gained, and are provided by government institutions, called Technical and Further Education (TAFE) institutions, as well as private institutions. The Certificate IV and Diploma of Veterinary Nursing are VET Qualifications.

Appendix 2: Educator Biographies

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