

NSW Veterinary Workforce Shortage - Opening Statement

Good afternoon,

Chair – I ask that this statement be tabled.

I am Michael Donnelly – President of Animal Care Australia and I am joined today by Karri Nadazdy – the Animal Care Australia Horse & Livestock Representative.

Animal Care Australia represents keepers and breeders of pets and companion animals nationally and our goal is to promote and encourage high standards in all interactions with the animals in our care.

Our members rely on the veterinary industry for everything from checkups on litters of puppies and kittens, to assisting with impactions in reptiles, or colic in horses and the most painful of all helping us to say goodbye to a pet who has over the years become a part of the family.

Their commitment, dedication and empathy is what most of us respect.

In return they endure long hours, poor wages, an ever increasing level of abuse from a changing society and this clearly takes a toll.

Yet this is not unheard of, we know emergency workers and health system workers all experience the same.

During the Covid pandemic those workers rightfully received a lot of praise and recognition. Strangely despite the veterinary industry also being listed as essential workers – that hasn't carried through after the pandemic. Yet they are essential. They help us protect the well-being of our pets and animals.

We need to educate society on how to respect those who help protect us and our loved ones and that includes the vets.

We need to help the industry accelerate the education of new workers.

We need to improve access to veterinary services.

We need to improve the services that the vets rely on – housing, improved wages, and safer, free access to mental health assistance when they need it.

As any other essential worker will tell you – the experiences they have in one day are more than most of us face in our lifetime.

We are here today to support the veterinary industry and to share how vital they are to us - pet owners - and to offer some solutions for this Committee and the government to consider.

We would like to thank the Chair and the Committee for inviting us to appear today and welcome your questions.