



Veterinary Council of New Zealand

A fair and consistent regulator of veterinary standards

Strategic Plan from 1 April 2016 to 31 March 2020

Our statutory purpose

To protect the public interest by ensuring that veterinarians are fit and competent to practise.

Our mission

To be a fair and consistent regulator, trusted by the public and profession to set and uphold veterinary standards.

Our values

Fair and consistent
Independent
Open and Accountable
Effective and efficient
Professional
Collaborative

Our principles

In carrying out our work we will:

- use right touch regulatory principles to ensure the most consistent, cost-effective and proportionate regulation of the profession
- focus on the problem and what works (evidence based regulation)
- keep our regulation simple and user friendly
- work in a constructive and respectful way with all key stakeholders.

Our strategic goals

Goal 1:	Continue to develop policies and processes so the functions of the Veterinarians Act 2005 are fully implemented and based on proven regulatory practice.
Goal 2:	Achieve best practice in governance and management.
Goal 3:	Improve engagement and communications with key stakeholders to foster trust and confidence.

The Council will work to achieve its strategic goals through the following objectives:

Goal 1: Continue to develop Council policies and processes so the functions of the Veterinarians Act 2005 are fully implemented and based on proven regulatory practice

Objectives
Continue to deliver on the statutory requirements of the Act.
Enhance mechanisms to ensure that veterinarians are competent and fit to practise.
Continue to advocate for changes to the Veterinarians Act to align it with best practice occupational regulation.
Continue to review, develop and encourage engagement with veterinary standards to promote safe and effective veterinary practice.

Goal 2: Achieve best practice in governance and management

Objectives
Ensure Council members are focussed on, and have appropriate skills in, governance.
Continue to review relevant overseas and NZ regulators to ensure best regulatory practice.
Ensure the effective and efficient management of the organisation.

Goal 3: Improve engagement and communication with key stakeholders to foster trust and confidence

Objectives
Improve the profession's understanding of Council's role and expectations.
Promote awareness of Council's role to the public including access to methods of redress.
Maintain and enhance working relationships with key stakeholders (MPI, NZVA, IVABS, NZVNA) and international networks to promote greater cooperation or joint approaches to shared issues.

Goal 1: Continue to develop Council policies and processes so the functions of the Veterinarians Act 2005 are fully implemented and based on proven best practice

Objectives	This will be achieved by:	Actions
Continue to deliver on the statutory requirements of the Act	Ensuring registration systems are transparent, operate efficiently and effectively and meet the needs of the sector	<p>Continue to explore electronic systems for verification of registration and APC applicants' good standing status beyond Australasia</p> <p>Ensure that registration application disclosures of fitness and competence to practise issues are managed consistently</p> <p>Continue to maintain accurate and efficient processes in registering veterinarians within agreed timeframes</p> <p>Explore the development of 'advanced' practitioner status</p> <p>Continue to lobby for a consistent scopes of practice statutory framework</p>
	Maintaining a watching brief on the AVBC registration examination system to ensure that it is still fit for VCNZ purposes	Continue to be represented on the AVBC Board of Examiners
	Ensuring that veterinary education meets acceptable national and international standards at all levels	Continue to play an active role in AVBC accreditation processes and in exploring global accreditations initiatives
		Monitor progress with the recognition of EAEVE stage 2 accreditation processes for registration purposes
	Maintaining an up to date register of veterinarians that is used and trusted by the profession and the public	<p>Capture more meaningful information on, and build more alerts into, the database on complaints, notifications, competence and health cases</p> <p>Review Policy on Additional Qualifications</p> <p>Standardise the recording of qualifications</p>
	Ensuring that veterinarians with health conditions are fit to practise safely	Support NZVA's work on health/work life balance and pastoral care
		Continue to lobby for changes to the Veterinarians Act to remove the current unworkably high threshold for intervention
	Ensuring that veterinarians and the public have access to responsive, transparent, safe and timely complaints and discipline systems	<p>Continue to improve processes, transparency and timeliness of the complaint and notification processes so that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • timeliness are achieved and variance reports against this standard are reported at Council meetings • database tracking is improved to keep those involved in complaints

		informed on the status of the matter and when milestones are reached
		Develop a system for gaining feedback from vets and complainants on complaint processes
	Collecting, analysing and disseminating accurate information about the veterinary workforce to facilitate a sustainable profession	Work with others so that the data collected is analysed and used to draw attention to 'workforce sustainability'
		Continue to lobby MPI to assume more responsibility for veterinary workforce issues
	Advising and making recommendations to the Minister on matters relating to veterinarians and veterinary science	Increase awareness of the contributions veterinarians make to New Zealand
		Discuss rationale for and need to update Act
Ensure veterinarians are competent and fit to practise	Ensure the recertification (and CPD) framework is fit for purpose; that veterinarians understand the required standards; and comply	Review the current CPD framework and CPD auditing processes in light of current research on what works
		Reach an understanding with NZ Police on the timely and relevant exchange of information on vets under investigation and/or facing charges
		Manage APC fitness and competence to practise declarations consistently
		Implement minimum practising standards declarations for the issue of a practising certificate
	Develop ways to ensure that Council's regulation is targeted to those at risk	Collect and produce information to identify emerging issues and risk factors
		Develop mechanisms to support new graduates make the transition from university to the NZ practising environment
		Develop guidance for international veterinarians on NZ conditions of practice
		Work with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • large employers to extend CPD equivalency recognition • NZVA BESTPractice to extend its CPD accreditation role
	Develop ways to identify and remediate veterinarians operating below the acceptable standard	Research ways other regulators improve the practice of the underperforming practitioners and put in place remediation strategies; monitor and promote the outcomes
		Work with NZVA and other stakeholders to ensure CPD programmes and activities link to areas with evidence of shortcomings/competency gaps

		Review the preliminary competence inquiry process
Advocate for changes so the provisions of the Act are aligned with best practice occupational regulation	Continuing to advocate so areas of the Act that need to be changed are progressed to enable VCNZ to better regulate the profession	<p>Develop further strategies so that omissions, conflicts and errors in the Act are addressed particularly in relation to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • health thresholds • separating out Council’s regulatory and judicial responsibilities • registration of allied veterinary professionals • maintaining the Register of Veterinarians – provisions for voluntary removal and reinstatement • jurisdiction over practices • lower level penalties (as in Animal Welfare Act) • a consistent scopes of practice approach
Continue to review, develop and encourage engagement with veterinary standards to promote safe and effective practice	<p>Ensuring that Council’s Guidance, Statements and Standards are current; easy to understand and reflect professional and public expectations</p> <p>Emerging issues are identified and proactively addressed</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue the rolling review of the Code of Professional Conduct and associated guidance and statements to ensure currency and relevance • Ensuring all new and revised standards documentation receives a plain language review • Finalising Minimum Practising Standards checklists • Keep up to date with developments in the sector so that veterinarians are provided with the guidance they need at the time they need it

Goal 2: Achieve best practice in governance and management of the Council

Objectives	This will be achieved by:	Actions
Ensure Council members are focussed on, and have appropriate skills in, governance	Ensuring Council members’ time is focused on governance decisions and uses the expertise of members	Develop Council member role description and proposals for individual performance review
		Develop guidance/checklist for Council decision making
		Regular review of agenda structure and decision making
	Continue to address Council and Committee succession	Regular review of all Committee memberships to ensure depth of experience and the right skills
		Appoint a Nominations Committee to review skills, gaps and identify potential candidates before ministerial appointments are made or elections held
		Regular review of training needs for those who may take on key roles – governance training, media training for potential spokespeople, decision making and critical thinking for CAC and Judicial Committee members

	Ensuring Council continues to benefit from the highest possible level of expertise at the governance level	Regular performance review of the Council as a whole, the chair and Council members
		Regular review of governance skills sets and training needs
		Regular review of organisational risks and mitigation strategies
Review relevant overseas and NZ regulators to ensure best regulatory practice	Reviewing best regulatory practice to identify learning for VCNZ	Monitor regulatory changes taking place within other NZ sectors to assess any learning for the Council
		Maintain links with other regulators to share experiences/promote best practice
		Monitor international changes in relation to regulation/registration of veterinarians and allied veterinary paraprofessionals
		Monitor international best practice in occupational regulation
Ensure effective and efficient management	Retaining and upskilling competent and experienced staff	Ensure terms and conditions continue to meet sector benchmarks
		Ensure that two staff are familiar with all office functions to strengthen multi skilling and allow for succession planning
		Maintain up to date HR/HS policies and systems
		Ensure effective induction of new staff and conduct exit interviews with departing staff
		Ensure SOPs/desk manuals and precedent files are up to date
		Investigate document management system
	Enabling staff to identify and access effective professional development	Continue to review opportunities for learning from other regulators (such as such as visiting/working with regulators in other sectors) so that Council benefits from new ways of addressing issues
	Ensure annual personal development plans are in place and adhered to	

Goal 3: Improve engagement and communication with key stakeholders to foster trust and confidence.

Objectives	This will be achieved by	Actions
Improve the profession's understanding of Council's role and expectations	Maintain a planned proactive programme of engagement with a focus on encouraging engagement with standards and the 'value add' Council provides	Develop an annual communication plan with consistent key messages to be conveyed by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> presenting to each regional NZVA branch over five years: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> annual Q&A session with veterinarians in the regions

	Ensure that Council publications and presentations are relevant, timely and accessible	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – participation in combined regional roadshows • a significant presence at NZVA conferences • presenting annually to final year Massey students • issuing monthly <i>VCNZ Updates</i> which include articles on the practical application of the Code and learnings from complaint and notification cases • VCNZ columns in <i>Vetscript</i>. At least 6 annually in addition to opportunities for comment (such as responses to letters to the Editor) • presenting to two major NZVA Special Interest Branches annually <hr/> <p>Update the look and feel of the website, ensuring that content is up to date and information is displayed in a navigable, user friendly way with more use of visual material</p> <hr/> <p>Engage with Massey veterinary students through presentations, workshops and lectures</p> <hr/> <p>Regular audit of the profession’s perceptions of VCNZ communications</p>
Promote awareness of Council’s role to the public including access to methods of redress	Ensuring information provided is relevant and accessible and that the public is aware of what Council can and cannot do	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reviewing website structure and content to ensure it provides information needed by the public in a form they can use eg more use of diagrams and flowcharts such as the enforcement triangle • Developing a system for gaining feedback from vets and complainants on complaint processes
Maintain and enhance working relationships with key secondary stakeholders (MPI, NZVA, IVABS, NZVNA) and international networks to promote greater cooperation or joint approaches to shared issues	Putting more structure around current liaison and communication initiatives at the governance and operational levels and acting on new opportunities as they arise	<p>This will be achieved by developing an annual stakeholder management plan aimed at:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • maintaining existing networks and looking for new opportunities for liaison/influence • maintaining and enhancing presence on AVBC • meeting with NZVA at governance level at least annually • fostering relationships with Federated Farmers and SPCA • fostering relationships with MPI managers • meeting with IVABS staff as required • meeting with the Minister MPI annually • supporting NZVNA’s regulatory aspirations