

Veterinary Nursing Skills Review Report

June 2025



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Executive summary

Skills Insight has completed a series of consultation activities with the veterinary sector to understand their workforce challenges and identify how nationally endorsed training package products (qualifications, skill sets and units of competency) for veterinary nursing skills may be adapted.

This Skills Review was undertaken using a mixed-method approach (described in Appendix 1), which enabled high stakeholder engagement and participation from a diverse range of stakeholders across sectors and locations. With this approach, the Skills Review provided a breadth and depth of analysis of the role of veterinary nursing. This exercise was a critical step to lay the foundation for exploring new opportunities for training package product review and design under the new approach to qualification design (qualification reform) and the new [Training Package Organising Framework](#) (TPOF), which becomes effective from 1 July 2025.

The Skills Review is set out in three documents, reflecting stakeholder input:

- The Veterinary Nursing Skills Review Report (this document)
- The Consultation Log – summarising engagement activities
- The Supplementary Tables – listing essential skills and knowledge for veterinary nursing, selected comments, enrolment data and registered training organisations (RTOs) elective selections.

The generous input of stakeholders, who have provided the Skills Review with a range and depth of information regarding veterinary nursing is reflected in these documents. We greatly appreciate the time and energy volunteered by all involved.

Key findings and analysis

A key theme in the findings of the Skills Review is that ‘veterinary nursing’ is a widely used term that encompasses a broad diversity of roles and responsibilities. One area of consistency is that a significant proportion of veterinary nursing is required to be performed under the supervision of a registered veterinarian, although applications of supervision may also vary. Beyond this point of consistency, the application of veterinary nursing varies widely across a range of contexts – from clinics and shelters to farms, wildlife facilities, racecourses and via telehealth – and across jurisdictions (and their distinct legislative frameworks) and workplaces.

Interrelated to the breadth of diversity is a range of macro-level (experienced at an industry-level or clinic-level) and micro-level challenges (experienced by individual veterinary nurses) that both result from and contribute to inconsistencies in the function of veterinary nursing.

At the macro-level, retention of veterinary nurses who are struggling in a role that may not meet their expectations or needs is a burden on industry and clinics. Constant turnover and the need to train or upskill a workforce is costly, resource intensive, inefficient and non-sustainable. In the face of growing awareness of the impacts of psychosocial hazards and burnout, ensuring the suitability of an individual for the industry, and the industry for an individual, is a key challenge.

At the micro-level, individuals' job satisfaction is negatively impacted by lack of recognition – for example in terms of pay or other forms of recognition such as title, utilisation of skills and knowledge, and recognition in the *Animal Care and Veterinary Services Award 2020 [MA000118]* (subsequently The Award) or other classifications – as well as a perceived lack of career progression. At an individual level, psychosocial hazards are creating significant negative impacts.

Through analysis of the skills and knowledge being applied across the broad range of veterinary nursing contexts reviewed, and in the face of identified workforce challenges, the Skills Review identified that two main levels of application of skills and knowledge have been identified as present in industry, which for the purposes of this report are termed 'general veterinary nurse' and 'advanced veterinary nurse'. Reviewing the training package products by taking a qualification-first approach to the review and developing the structure of qualifications to align with these levels is a first step towards more fit-for-purpose training products.

Unsurprisingly, in the context of such diverse contexts and variable roles, as well as emerging procedures and advances in veterinary services and treatments, the Skills Review found the current training products contain gaps or room for improvement. Additionally, the Skills Review identified that working closely with RTOs with a focus to increasing clarity and providing guidance to interpretation in products will assist with achieving greater consistency of training outcomes.

It must be acknowledged however, that limitations created by training products are just one part of the picture. To fully realise and experience the benefits of the training product review and updates, active input and collaboration across the entire ecosystem will be essential. The work of Skills Insight and the Veterinary Nursing Review is complemented by the activities of a range of individuals, organisations and associations that have already been working towards a positive change in veterinary workforce and will continue to inform and guide the work of Skills Insight.

Recommendations

The 13 recommendations listed below are intended to address the findings of the Skills Review. These recommendations include those that can be implemented under the guidance of the Technical Committee in the training package product review phase of the Veterinary Nursing Review, as well as recommendations for Skills Insight's future activities.

Recommendations to be applied in the training package product review (TPPR) phase of the Veterinary Nursing Review

Recommendation No 1: The Technical Committee confirm the purposes identified by the Skills Review for the Certificate IV and the Diploma

Identifying the qualification purpose is a **requirement** under the TPOF, 2025. In the TPPR phase of this project, this includes:

- drawing on relevant expertise from the Technical Committee to answer the four questions set out in section 1.1 *Commencing development* of the TPOF to confirm or adjust the purposes proposed in this report as sitting between the 1st and 2nd purpose outlined in the TPOF.

Recommendation No 2: Review and redesign the Certificate IV in Veterinary Nursing and Diploma of Veterinary Nursing

In the TPPR phase of this project, this includes:

- using information from the Skills Review Supplementary Tables to seek advice from the Technical Committee initially, followed by broad consultation to structure the two qualifications in a way that is more fit-for-purpose according to industry need and learner aspirations.

Recommendation No 3: Explore incorporation of a broader range of species into veterinary nursing qualifications, including through re-design and flexibility of training products.

In the TPPR phase of this project, this includes:

- drawing on relevant expertise from the Technical Committee initially, followed by broad consultation to review the flexibility of the qualifications and incorporate access to a broader range of species
- engaging with RTOs to identify potential barriers relating to broader ranges of species.

Recommendation No 4: Improve clarity in training package products and provide support with additional guidance in non-endorsed products.

In the TPPR phase of this project, this includes:

- drawing on relevant expertise from the Technical Committee and broader vocational training expertise in the development of training package products
- working closely with RTOs to design units which meet industry needs as well as RTO delivery capabilities
- exploring Qualification Reform alternative templates and TPOF holistic assessment opportunities to improve training package products

- using clear and direct language in training package products to reduce ambiguity
- providing additional guidance in non-endorsed products to allow for clarity of interpretation without being overly prescriptive in the training products themselves.

Recommendation No 5: Review the national training register to identify suitable units to address gaps or areas for improvement identified in the Skills Review

The Skills Review Supplementary Tables document lists essential skills and knowledge for veterinary nursing (as identified through stakeholder consultation activities). This document also identifies where content within units in the [ACM40418 Certificate IV in Veterinary Nursing](#) * or [ACM50219 Diploma of Veterinary Nursing](#) currently align to the essential skills and knowledge, and where there is room for improvement or gaps in the units' coverage of the identified skills and knowledge.

In the TPPR phase of this project, this recommendation includes:

- reviewing where other units from outside of the Certificate IV, Diploma and the [ACM Animal Care and Management Training Package](#) may be suitable for meeting gaps and room for improvement
- drawing on relevant expertise from the Technical Committee initially, followed by broad consultation to review the suitability of identified units to be included in the Certificate IV and/or Diploma.

*including units commonly imported for delivery in the Certificate IV in Veterinary Nursing.

Recommendation No 6: Explore requirements identified in training products to ensure learner suitability for entering the qualification while maintaining training product compliance

In the TPPR phase of this project, this includes:

- drawing on relevant expertise from the Technical Committee initially, followed by broad consultation to review entry requirements for the qualifications, ensuring that they are updated in compliance with the TPOF
- exploring whether opportunities exist to assist RTOs in clarifying whether a training product is right for learners, under Outcome Standard 2.2 of the [revised Standards for RTOs](#).

Recommendation No 7: Explore opportunities for workplace-based skill development and assessment of competency

In the TPPR phase of this project, this includes:

- drawing on relevant expertise from the Technical Committee initially, followed by broad consultation to review mandatory workplace requirements and, if they are included in products, use clear and direct language to reduce ambiguity and varied interpretations
- explore opportunities to assist with individuals' development of competence in the workplace (could include opportunities in training products, non-endorsed products or future activities outside of the scope of the Veterinary Nursing Review).

Recommendation No 8: Investigate potential benefits arising from increasing learners' exposure to a range of workplaces and opportunities to enable increased exposure, where relevant

In the TPRR phase of this project, this includes:

- drawing on broad stakeholder input to identify opportunities that increase learners' exposure to a range of workplaces and types of veterinary nursing contexts (could include opportunities in training products, non-endorsed products or future activities outside of the scope of the Veterinary Nursing Review).

Recommendation No 9: Improve content addressing mental health and wellbeing needs of industries.

In the TPRR phase of this project, this includes:

- drawing on relevant expertise from the Technical Committee initially, followed by broad consultation to identify opportunities to increase learners' skills and knowledge in mental health and resilience for working in the veterinary services industry (could include opportunities in training products, non-endorsed products or future activities outside of the scope of the Veterinary Nursing Review)
- consideration of the unit *ACMGEN304 Promote positive wellbeing in self and others in animal care workplaces* for inclusion in the veterinary nursing qualifications as well as reviewing other training products for inclusion in the veterinary nursing qualifications with the aim to increase skills and knowledge around emotional intelligence and resilience, and employers' obligations to manage risk of psychosocial hazards under WHS legislation.

Recommendation No 10: Review existing unit feedback to ensure unit updates address feedback that has been received prior to this review

This requires reviewing feedback that has been provided to Skills Insight and ensuring that the feedback is addressed in the TPRR phase of this project. This includes addressing stakeholder feedback received and documented prior to the Veterinary Nursing Review for:

- [ACMVET401 Coordinate veterinary reception duties](#)
- [ACMVET405 Coordinate and perform surgical nursing](#)
- [ACMVET416 Assist with the preparation of veterinary drugs and poisons](#)
- [ACMVET507 Provide nursing support for critical care surgery](#)
- [ACMGEN304 Promote positive wellbeing in self and others in animal care workplaces](#)

Recommendations for future Skills Insight activities

Recommendation No 11: Investigate viable pathways or barriers to pathways from veterinary nursing to higher education

In light of the well-documented shortage in veterinarians and high attrition of veterinary nurses, it is recommended Skills Insight further investigate stakeholder feedback identifying nursing in human health as a predominant occupational outflow in recent years. Additionally, the TPPR phase of this project will include:

- investigating reports that the pathway from veterinary nursing to veterinary science has become less accessible for veterinary nurses
- investigating qualification design options to increase opportunities for learning pathways and articulation into higher education qualifications related to veterinary nursing
- work with Jobs and Skills Australia to identify sources of post-covid (2022-present) data regarding occupational outflows from veterinary nursing
- in the event that stakeholder feedback regarding outflows is confirmed, complete investigations to identify the cause/s of the shift in occupational outflows and opportunities to increase accessibility of pathways from vocational to higher education in the veterinary sector.

Recommendation No 12: Explore opportunities to better reflect occupations in the Occupation Standard Classification for Australia (OSCA)*, the Australian and New Zealand Standard Industrial Classification (ANZSIC) and other relevant classifications or data sources

Findings from the Skills Review indicate that skills and knowledge of veterinary nurses are not well reflected in the OSCA, and particularly in the categorisation of the occupation [341231 Veterinary Nurse](#) under Technicians and Trade Workers. The Skills Review recommends Skills Insight:

- advocate changes to the OSCA to better categorise the occupation of veterinary nurse as a health professional
- further investigates opportunities to clarify the occupations of 'animal technician' and 'veterinary technician' in the OSCA
- further investigates whether 'animal technology' as an industry is reflected accurately in the ANZSIC
- additionally, in line with findings and recommendation 41 of the Jobs and Skills Australia (JSA) report *An Essential Ingredient: The Food Supply Chain Workforce* (2025, p. 206), ensure the inclusion of veterinary nursing and associated occupations in potential activities undertaken by the Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics and Sciences

*Previously the Australian and New Zealand Standard Classification of Occupations (ANZSCO)

Recommendation No 13: Provide feedback from the Veterinary Nursing Review to Jobs and Skills Councils investigating and addressing mental health and wellbeing needs of other industries.

In the TPPR phase of this project, this includes:

- providing feedback from the Veterinary Nursing Review to other Jobs and Skills Councils to recommend opportunities for future activities to address cross-sector, cross-industry mental health and wellbeing needs.

Part A - Background

Purpose of the Skills Review

This report is the result of the Skills Review, which was conducted as Part 1 of the [Veterinary Nursing Review](#). The Skills Review utilised a semi-structured mixed-methods consultation approach, as described in Appendix 1, to gather qualitative input from a broad range of relevant stakeholders (veterinary nurses, veterinarians, employers, unions, associations, registered training organisations and other stakeholders) to help analyse veterinary nursing functions and responsibilities across a broad range of contexts (including veterinary practices, regional, rural and remote applications, specialist and emergency centres, exhibited animal, wildlife and shelter facilities and on-farm).

The Veterinary Nursing Review will use the Skills Review as a basis to understand workforce challenges and then identify how nationally endorsed training package products for veterinary nursing skills may be adapted.

This report publishes the key findings of the Skills Review consultation and a series of recommendations for future work to address the identified issues.

Part 2 of the Veterinary Nursing Review is the Training Package Product Review phase (TPPR phase) and aims to:

- improve how veterinary nursing skills requirements are reflected in training package products
- ensure qualifications, units and skill sets are compliant to the new policies such as the [Training Package Organising Framework \(TPOF\), 2025](#) (Commonwealth of Australia, 2024) and new qualification design approach (Qualification Reform) and accurately describe current workplace requirements.
- improve implementation guidance for trainers and assessors on strategies for delivery and assessment of the training package products
- reduce duplication, remove obsolete training package products and consolidate units where shared skills can be suitably merged.

These aims will be pursued under a new approach to developing and reviewing training products.

A new approach to Vocational Education and Training (VET) qualifications

The Veterinary Nursing Review is occurring alongside a program of Qualification Reform, with a new approach to qualification design and with a new TPOF taking effect in July 2025. These reforms occur concurrently with the revised Standards for Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) taking effect in July 2025 (Australian Government 2025).

In this context of change, a Skills Review was required to match emerging opportunities in qualification design and training delivery to industry challenges and needs that may benefit from new opportunities under the revised approach.

These opportunities are outlined later in the report under the heading: [Implications for training product content](#).

Structure of the Skills Review

This report summarises key findings and analysis from consultation activities in the Skills Review. It also presents a series of recommendations for future work.

Complementing the report are a number of other documents that present more detailed information compiled through consultation:

- A consultation log (Excel), summarising the consultation engagement and listing organisations informed or engaged in the Skills Review.
- Supplementary tables (Excel), providing:
 - essential skills and knowledge for veterinary nursing identified through consultation activities with mapping to existing training package products
 - skills or areas of knowledge that may become more critical in veterinary nursing within the next 5 years
 - selected comments – representing common themes – that have been received through survey responses and consultation
 - a breakdown of RTOs' use of elective units
 - enrolment data.

Key findings and recommendations

In the course of the Skills Review there was overwhelming agreement from stakeholders that veterinary nursing, and in turn the veterinary nurses and veterinary technicians who provide veterinary support services to registered veterinarian professionals, perform invaluable roles in the animal care industry.

From the analysis of the volume of information collected in the review, four key findings were identified, noting that all are interrelated:

- the broad diversity of veterinary nursing roles and responsibilities
- macro-level workforce challenges
- impacts of micro-level workforce issues on individuals
- a need to improve the design and content of training package products.

A summary of each finding is provided below, with additional information and detail provided in Part B of this report.

Finding 1 – Diversity of veterinary nursing roles and responsibilities

The broad diversity of veterinary nursing roles and responsibilities can be in part attributed to multiple factors including the type and size of the veterinary practice and the services offered, the range or specialisation of species treated, the location of the practice and the practice's business structures. However, the overarching contributor to variability is legislation, which varies across jurisdictions, and is, with the exception of Western Australia (WA) ([Veterinary Practice Amendment Regulations 2025](#)), focused solely on the acts of veterinary science or medicine that must only be performed by registered veterinarians. Legislation does not acknowledge any status of veterinary nurses, or other veterinary support roles. While some legislation allows for exceptions which can be performed by non-veterinarians under specific circumstances or restrictions (such as by persons with specific qualifications or with a specific licence), the legislation ultimately holds the registered veterinarian accountable. Hence the roles, responsibilities and levels of autonomy of veterinary nurses was found to be highly dependent on and at the discretion of individual veterinarians, even more so than the veterinary practices' work practises. Even some registered veterinarians were unclear as to what veterinary nurses could do or applied their own interpretations of the legislative instruments.

As such, the Skills Review found there to be no 'one-size-fits-all' definition of veterinary nursing or the responsibilities of a veterinary nurse, with veterinary nursing functions and tasks ranging considerably from simply holding, positioning and restraining

animals for veterinarian examination and procedures; cleaning and general reception duties; to assisting veterinarians during surgical procedures, administering treatments or medication prescribed by the veterinarian, and undertaking minor procedures at the instruction (not necessarily physical 'eyes-on' supervision) of the veterinarian.

It was a finding of the review that different 'levels' or tiers of clinical veterinary nursing (distinct from veterinary nurse to practice manager) based on roles, responsibilities and levels of autonomy have emerged, including a 'general veterinary nurse' focused on foundational patient care, and a more experienced and more highly skilled 'senior' or advanced clinical nurse. Current frameworks do not adequately recognise this distinction. At this time, only a singular category of 'veterinary nurse' (at Level 4), with a practice manager (at Level 5) is reflected in The Award.

As a result of potential changes to qualifications (the work that will be completed as part of the TPPR phase of the Veterinary Nursing Review) and associated industry practices, there may need to be consideration regarding future implications for the Award. As a Jobs and Skills Council, Skills Insight does not have a direct role in industrial relations.

While Skills Insight cannot change legislation, recommendations 1 (Confirming the purposes of the qualifications), 2 (Revising and re-designing the Certificate IV and Diploma qualifications) and 3 (Exploring a broader range of species) are intended to address issues relating to the variability of veterinary nursing roles, responsibilities and levels of experience and autonomy from a skilling perspective.

Finding 2 - Workforce challenges

The Skills Review found that the veterinary nursing industry as a whole is impacted by a wide variety of macro-level workforce issues, including (but not limited to) attraction of new entrants to the industry, the suitability of applicants for the industry and retention and turnover within the industry due to job demands, low remuneration or unsafe workplace conditions, both real and perceived.

The Review found that the industry has a high degree of neurodiversity and trauma among both clients and employees. Quite the opposite from what some prospective veterinary nurses expect, it is not a career with minimal human interaction – it requires high levels of interaction, including team work, communication and advocacy, with clients, colleagues and veterinarians. It is a highly emotive career, regularly involving animal pain; euthanasia and death of patients from age, illness or injury; and management of emotional states (the employee's own, as well as clients' and colleagues').

From a training package product design perspective, recommendations 2 (Revising and re-designing the Certificate IV and Diploma qualifications), 6 (Exploring requirements for learner suitability) and 9 (Improving content addressing mental health and well being) are intended to contribute towards assisting with workforce

challenges such as better skilling veterinary nurses to manage their personal wellbeing and understand and apply emotional intelligence strategies. These recommendations are intended to better prepare learners for the realities of the industry, while empowering them to recognise and act responsibly and appropriately.

Finding 3 – Impacts of workforce issues on individuals

Closely related to the macro and broader workforce challenges above, the Skills Review found that workforce issues such as personal job expectations and related job satisfaction; recognition (from veterinarians, clients and colleagues) for the various roles of veterinary nursing, whether formally qualified or registered; utilisation in 'meaningful' veterinarian nursing tasks and responsibilities; and having clearly visible opportunities for career and learning progression were of critical importance to veterinary nurses.

The Review found that veterinary nurses are intensely passionate about the support capabilities they are willing and able to provide to veterinarians, but often frustrated by the constraints of workplace practices, generally a result of legislative restrictions.

While legislation and industrial awards do not currently distinguish different levels of clinical veterinary nurses (based on experience, expertise or higher level qualifications) or between veterinary nurses and veterinary technicians, it was found there was limited incentive to undertake higher level qualifications for career advancement. Professional development opportunities were considered an expense that provided little return on investment in financial terms.

Recommendations 1 (Confirming purposes of qualifications) and 2 (Revising and re-designing the qualifications) are intended to consider the redesign of both the Certificate IV and the Diploma of Veterinary Nursing to provide a more recognisable learning pathway, which it is hoped will translate into greater recognition in the workplace and industry as a whole.

Finding 4 – Improving the training package products

The Skills Review found that the existing Certificate IV in Veterinary Nursing and Diploma of Veterinary Nursing qualifications do not fully equip learners with the depth or breadth of skills or knowledge required in contemporary veterinary nursing or provide a learning pathway from general nursing to more advanced nursing. The Review found that the design of the Diploma of Veterinary Nursing in particular was not regarded as fit for purpose by stakeholders, either for the outcome of a practice manager or a senior, advanced clinical nurse.

Similarly, the Review found that the design of the Certificate IV in Veterinary Nursing did not provide sufficient flexibility for the diversity of roles and contexts, and that mandatory skills relating to billing or general reception did not enable flexibility for emerging industry trends such as employing non-veterinary nurse receptionists.

It is imperative to strike a balance between ensuring sufficient prescription in the training product design, content and support materials to increase stakeholder confidence in the consistency of training product delivery and allowing flexibility to meet the varying needs of different practice types, veterinary nursing roles and responsibilities or specialisations such as species.

An analysis of stakeholder-identified essential skills and knowledge against what is in the current training products, revealed potential gaps, and areas where there is room for improvement.

Recommendations 1 (Reviewing and re-designing qualifications), 4 (Improving clarity in training package products), 5 (Identifying suitable units from the national training register) and 10 (reviewing existing unit feedback) are intended to address issues identified in training products.

Recommendations

The Skills Review primarily serves as the basis for decisions about the structure and content of vocational qualifications for veterinary nursing and the corresponding training package products.

However, the 13 recommendations listed in the Executive Summary of this report are not limited to the scope of this project. Recommendations in this report include:

- recommendations to be applied in the TPPR phase of the Veterinary Nursing Review
- recommendations for Skills Insight to take into considerations as future activities.

Recommendations that are intended for the TPPR phase require input from the project's Technical Committee; the Skills Review alone cannot be the basis for decisions that apply to the development of training package products in the Veterinary Nursing Review. All stages of the TPPR phase, including establishment of the Technical Committee, will occur under the new TPOF and take place following July 1, 2025.

Part B - Research and analysis

The following findings are compiled from consultation activities (outlined under the methodology in Appendix 1) and reflect stakeholder perspectives on significant challenges with veterinary nursing and opportunities that will inform training package product review. These findings present what stakeholders reported.

1. Defining veterinary nursing

In stakeholders' eyes, veterinary nursing is the profession, discipline or field of practice associated with the care of animals whose health and wellbeing is the responsibility of a registered veterinarian. Veterinary nursing encompasses the range of tasks, responsibilities, skills, and knowledge required to support animal health and welfare, including providing surgical assistance, following care plans to treat animal injury or illness, patient monitoring, administering medication, client education and more.

Veterinary nursing is typically required to occur under the supervision, direction, or delegation of a veterinarian, especially when it involves regulated acts such as administering medications or making clinical judgments.

A key concern of the Skills Review was to identify a comprehensive range of veterinary nursing contexts. The Skills Review identified that veterinary nursing is not confined to veterinary clinics or animal hospitals/specialist centres. Veterinary nursing is also practiced on-farm/stud/property, in rural, regional, remote or community settings, in-home or via telehealth platforms, in animal shelters, rescue organisations and in emergency events, in animal sport such as racing and in wildlife sanctuaries and exhibited animal facilities.

What data says about veterinary nursing

[Skills Insight's Workforce Plans](#) (Skills Insight, 2024) provide a comprehensive overview of workforce challenges across the animal care and management sector. The following graphic highlights key data specifically relevant to the Veterinary Nursing Review.



Veterinary nurses comprise approximately 42% of veterinary services workforce (AVBC 2021)



Approx 20,000 veterinary nurses (2022 ABS) with >50% in the workforce for <5 years



48% have Certificate III or Certificate IV qualification; 17% have no post-secondary qualifications; 26% have higher than Certificate IV (ABS 2021)



Across 50 job advertisements for veterinary nurse, 53% required a qualification (most CIV) while 48% indicated preferred or desirable but not essential. Most jobs required minimum years of veterinary nursing experience (2 years commonly)



Veterinary nursing award Level 4 specifies 'A Level 4 employee will possess competencies of AQF 4 or other equivalent qualifications'. Level 5 is Practice Manager - 'relevant post secondary qualifications may be appropriate but are not essential'

Source: Various sources compiled for the [Skills Insight 2024 Workforce Plan](#)

The selected statistics above illustrate that while veterinary nurses comprise a significant proportion of the veterinary services workforce, a high number have been in the role for less than five years. Stakeholder feedback identified that clinics are relying on a workforce that experiences both high turnover and attrition from veterinary nursing and the veterinary industry, leading to staffing challenges and challenging conditions for the remaining workforce. This is explored further in this report under the headings '[Pathways](#)' and '[Workforce issues](#)'.

Another indication from the graphic above, which was reinforced through stakeholder feedback was that the highest proportion of the veterinary workforce hold a

Certificate IV, although the data does not indicate qualifications held (and therefore, their relevance to the occupations).

The Skills Review was challenged by data limitations

A challenge faced during the Skills Review was limitations around available data. Limitations include:

- lacking data more recent than 2021 regarding occupational outflows (this challenge is discussed further under the heading 'Pathways')
- lacking information about the proportion of veterinary nursing being performed in different workplaces contexts, such as in general practice compared to hospitals or emergency clinics
- lacking data on the proportion of veterinary nurses who hold a specific qualification, such as a Certificate IV in Veterinary Nursing (as opposed to alternative Certificate IV qualifications), or equine-specific qualifications
- reported lack of reliability in the available data, based on stakeholder input.

Data limitations and the challenges they pose for effective workforce planning are identified elsewhere, including in Skills Insight workforce plan (Skills Insight 2025) and in a report on Veterinary workforce shortage in NSW (Parliament NSW Legislative Council 2024). It is beyond the scope of the Skills Review to investigate this challenge in detail. However, one of the practical outcomes was that the Skills Review was heavily reliant on stakeholder consultation activities, both broad and targeted. Stakeholder feedback has formed the basis of much of the findings outlined throughout this report and in some cases appears to be misaligned with national data collections.

The Skills Review recommends that Skills Insight monitors data to triangulate industry feedback with future data releases to support the evidence base for decision-making.

[**Note:** Connects to recommendations 1 (Confirming the purposes of qualifications), 11 (Pathways to higher education) and 12 (Explore opportunities to better reflect occupations in relevant classifications and data sources)].

Veterinary nurses

'In general terms, a "veterinary nurse" or "veterinary technician" can be used in a loose manner to describe any person who works alongside a registered veterinarian in providing care, support or technical services for animals.' (Corns 2025, p. 41)

The Skills Review heard that the roles and responsibilities (and consequently the required skills and knowledge) of veterinary nurses vary significantly depending on:

- the type and location of the practice

- the veterinary services provided
- variations in jurisdictional legislation
- individual veterinarian discretion
- how veterinary nurses are utilised within the practice (e.g. some veterinary nurses may not undertake administration or reception work, while for some, reception work is a key responsibility).

The Skills Review frequently heard that veterinary nursing responsibilities and duties range considerably – from ‘holding animals and cleaning’ to assisting veterinarians and veterinary surgeons with advanced procedures or providing nursing care with varying levels of autonomy.

Veterinary Nurses Council of Australia (VNCA) Position Statement – *Utilisation of Veterinary Nurses and Technicians in Veterinary Practice* (VNCA 2021):

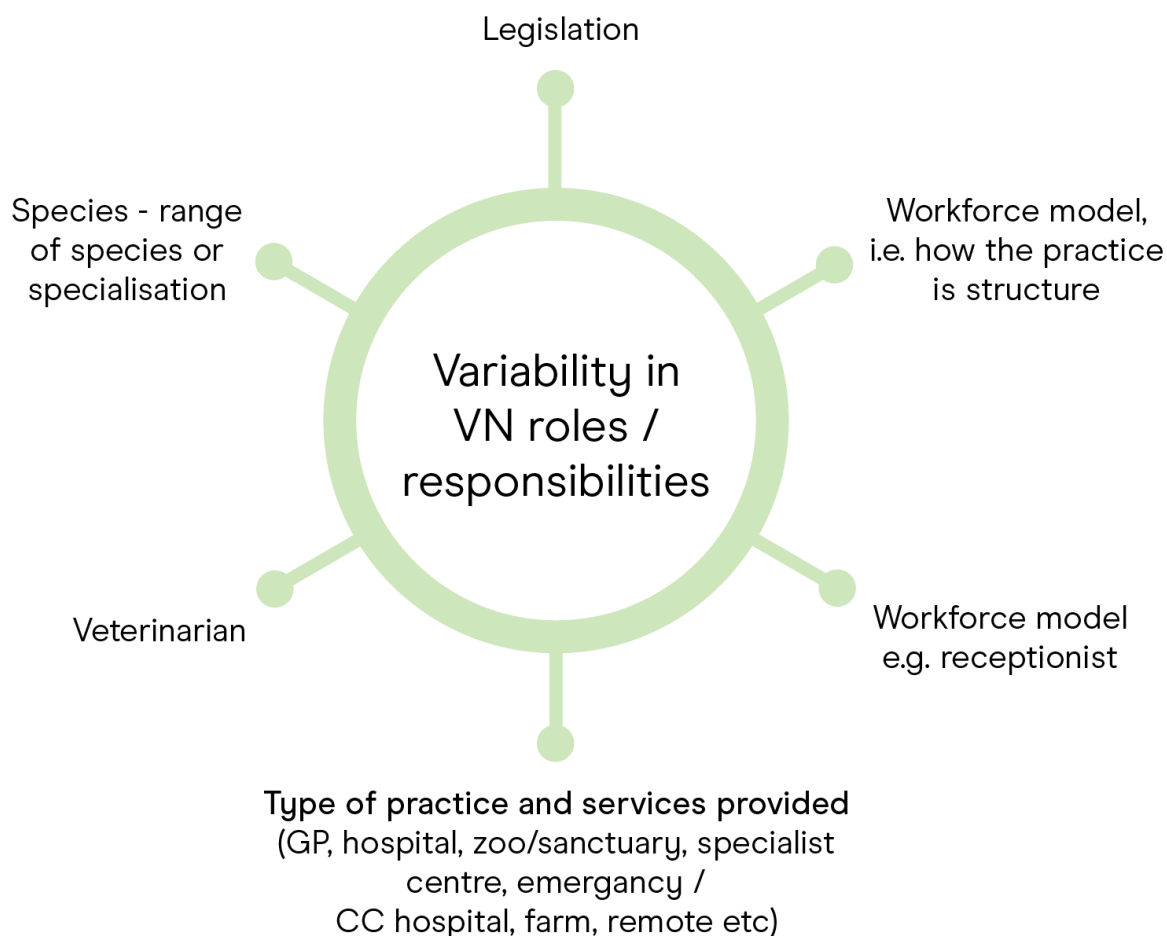
‘Tasks such as catheter placement, monitoring anaesthetics, blood collection and radiographic positioning are tasks commonly undertaken by veterinary nurses.

On the other hand, endotracheal intubation, dental prophylaxis and nurse consults are not commonly performed by veterinary nurses’.

Factors influencing the variability of the veterinary nursing role as identified in the Skills Review consultation activities are identified in the image below. While these factors all contribute to inconsistencies in defining the formal application of veterinary nursing, legislation was identified as the most significant.

The Skills Review intentionally explored regionality and the extent to which it is a factor impacting on the variability of the veterinary nursing role. That is, how veterinary nursing is applied in urban areas compared to regional and remote areas. The Skills Review considered whether the application of veterinary nursing in remote regions was a unique occupation/job role. However, investigation of the skills and knowledge showed that while the remoteness of the job did create differences in how the skills and knowledge were applied, at the core, the skills and knowledge utilised are common across the urban, regional and remote areas. This was a similar finding for other applications of veterinary nursing when applied to a specific range of species (e.g. equine vs. companion animals vs wildlife) or type of practice (e.g. zoo, general practice, emergency hospital).

Figure 1: Factors that influence the variability of veterinary nursing.



Legislation and veterinary nursing

‘While the training of a veterinary nurse may equip the nurse to competently perform [surgical procedures, administration of drugs, dental procedures, post-surgical care of animals and advising clients (in respect to care of animals)], the law is typically unclear as to which tasks a veterinary nurse can lawfully perform.’ (Corns 2025, p. 42)

Legislative variation across jurisdictions represents a significant barrier to consistency of the veterinary nursing function and inconsistency within state and territory legislation and impacts on the portability and transferability of skills.

Across eight state and territory jurisdictions, legislation (which is focused exclusively on veterinarians and veterinary practices) is a significant determinant of what veterinary nurses can and cannot do in practice. This is despite, or perhaps due to, the term ‘veterinary nurse’ not being defined in legislation, apart from in Western Australia (Veterinary Practice Amendment Regulations 2025), and in [Queensland’s Medicines and Poisons \(Medicines\) Regulation 202](#) where a veterinary nurse is defined as ‘a person who is employed to practise veterinary nursing and who holds a

qualification that makes the person eligible for full membership of the Veterinary Nurses Council of Australia Inc' (Government of Queensland 2021).

Veterinary legislation in some jurisdictions (in the form of regulations or exclusions) enable certain acts of veterinary science/medicine to be classified as 'non-restricted acts', allowing them to be performed by non-registered veterinarians and/or specified persons, although still not using the term 'veterinary nurse'.

For example, in the ACT a 'prescribed circumstance' in the [Veterinary Practice Act 2018](#) allows tooth cleaning on an animal other than a horse, if the cleaning is done by a person who holds a Certificate IV in Veterinary Nursing and if the animal is anaesthetised during the cleaning (ACT Government 2018). In the Northern Territory the scaling and polishing of teeth is not a veterinary service, while in South Australia, the [Veterinary Services Act 2023](#) (Government of South Australia 2023) specifies 'the performance of a dental procedure on an animal' to be a veterinary service only performed by veterinarians. [Note: A consultation process to inform the development of regulations under the Veterinary Service Act 2023 is currently considering 'scaling and polishing the teeth of an animal under direct supervision of veterinarian' to be allowed to be performed by a 'person in the course of their employment at a veterinary clinic, hospital or other premise where veterinary services are provided'].

With the exception of WA's legislation ([Veterinary Practice Amendment Regulations 2025](#)) which proposes three levels of supervision (personal, direct and general), legislation also fails to clearly define supervision in relation to veterinary nursing procedures. Consultation during the Skills Review revealed that practices and individual veterinarians establish their own supervision models, ranging from:

- 'off-site' but able to be contacted by phone (especially on weekends)
- 'in the building' but not necessarily in surgery
- 'in the room' but not necessarily with the patient
- providing verbal or written instructions
- being physically present with the patient and the nurse.

Determination of legal responsibility and its impact on veterinary nursing

Veterinary legislation and the resulting legal responsibility and liability applies to individual registered veterinarians, not to employers or the veterinary practices. The Skills Review heard that individual veterinarian interpretations of the legislation, lack of clarity within the legislation and the associated risks for professional accountability and liability resulted in individual veterinarians (even within the same practice) self-determining what veterinary nurses they work with can or cannot do and the level of supervision or autonomy allowed in the provision of veterinary services. This increases the complexity of defining veterinary nursing or a specific veterinary nurse role across

clinics and, as the Skills Review heard repeatedly, also within clinics, based on the supervising veterinarian.

Due to legislative restrictions and the potential for veterinarians to be held vicariously liable for the health, wellbeing and treatment of animals under their care, most medical or surgical procedures, treatments, administration of medications, and advice provided by veterinary nurses must be performed under a veterinarian's supervision, follow a veterinarian's direction, and/or be reviewed by a veterinarian.

Mandatory registration of veterinary nurses (currently a requirement for veterinary nurses in WA), which is outside the scope of this Skills Review, was raised by multiple stakeholders as a way to:

- protect the title of veterinary nurse (to persons with a formal qualification and committed to meeting certain standards such as a Code of Conduct)
- potentially increase veterinarian 'trust' in nurses' capabilities
- increase the utilisation of veterinary nurses.

In 2019, the Australian Veterinarian Nurse and Technician (AVNAT) registration scheme was established by the Veterinary Nurses Council of Australia (VNCA). However as noted in *Veterinary Law and Practice in Australia* 'the VNCA registration system is not mandatory and is not statutory' (Corns 2025, p. 43).

The Legislative Council report on Veterinary workforce shortage in New South Wales identified that 'regulation and better utilisation of veterinary nurses and technicians within the context of clinical practice is likely to assist in reducing the workload on the veterinarian'; however, it also expressed that 'Leading on from the above, the committee is not wholly convinced that increased professional accountability for nurses and technicians will ease the burden on veterinarians if there are no changes to the legal requirements for responsibility for acts of veterinary science' (Parliament NSW Legislative Council 2024, Finding 16).

Multiple veterinarians expressed during the Skills Review that while trained veterinary nurses are able to do more, because they legally can't or the veterinarian is required to be physically present to closely supervise, the veterinarian 'might as well just continue to do the procedures'.

For the purpose of the Veterinary Nursing Review, jurisdictional variation is going to be an issue requiring careful consideration in the TPPR phase. Consultation with relevant authorities and design of qualifications will need to cater to the legislative variation. The TPPR phase will need to consider both current and future skills needs. As there appears to be a trend towards veterinary nurses undertaking a broader scope of practice to support veterinarians both in practice and in regulation, there may be inclusions of skills which cannot at this time be undertaken by veterinary nurses in every state and territory. This will raise issues relating to training delivery,

which will need to be balanced with considerations for future skills needs and portability of skills.

Veterinary nurse classifications

Two relevant classifications for the occupation are the Occupation Standard Classification for Australia (OSCA) and The Award that applies to most but not all veterinary nurses and practices.

The OSCA (released in December 2024) classifies a Veterinary Nurse, as a 'Skilled Animal, Agriculture and Horticultural Worker' under the occupational category of Technical and Trade Workers at Skill Level 3, where the skill level is described as an AQF Certificate III including at least two years of on-the-job training, AQF Certificate IV, or at least three years of relevant experience (ABS 2024).

341231 Veterinary Nurse

Cares for animals under treatment or in temporary residence at veterinary facilities, and assists Veterinarians to perform procedures and operations.

Specialisations

- Critical Care and Emergency Veterinary Nurse
- Equine Veterinary Nurse

Skill level: 3

Main tasks

- Provides care and support to animals under treatment or in temporary residence at veterinary facilities
- Assists Veterinarians in performing procedures and operations on animals
- Prepares animals for surgery, including administering anaesthesia and monitoring vital signs
- Administers medications and treatments to animals as directed by Veterinarians
- Assists with diagnostic procedures such as taking X-rays or collecting samples for laboratory testing
- Provides post-operative care to animals, including monitoring their recovery and administering medications
- Ensures hygiene processes are maintained, including cleaning and sterilising equipment and facilities
- Provides basic grooming and hygiene care to animals, such as bathing and grooming
- Educates pet owners on proper animal care, and provides advice on nutrition, exercise and preventive health care
- Assists with euthanasia procedures and provides emotional support to pet owners

In contrast, OSCA classifies Veterinary Technologists/Technicians as 'Health Professionals' with a Skill Level 1 (ABS 2024), which is the same Skill Level as Veterinarians. However, stakeholders expressed during the Skills Review that veterinary technologists/technicians are employed predominately as veterinary nurses. Multiple stakeholders (including a number who advocate for better differentiation of roles between veterinary nurses and veterinary technicians/technologists) identified that currently there is little to no distinction in industry between veterinary nurses and veterinary technicians/technologists.

This lack of distinction is reflected in The Award and veterinary legislation, which classifies veterinary nurses as employees ‘other than veterinary surgeons’¹ (along with practice managers, receptionists, animal attendants and assistants).

Level 4 of The Award indicates employees ‘*will possess competencies of AQF 4 or other equivalent qualifications*’ (The Fair Work Ombudsman, 2024).

The Award classification for a Level 5 ‘other than veterinary surgeon’ employee refers specifically to a practice manager who has: ‘overall responsibility of managing the day-to-day operations of a veterinary practice. The possession of relevant post-secondary qualifications may be appropriate but are not essential’.

As a result of the Skills Review it is recommended that Skills Insight further investigates opportunities with the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) to recognise ‘veterinary nurse’ as a health professional in the OSCA to better align recognition of the skills and knowledge required to competently undertake workplace tasks with similar occupations (which may support workforce transferability between occupations, types of practice and industries).

[**Note:** Connects to recommendation 12 (Opportunities to better reflect occupational outcomes)]

Job titles associated with career advancement in veterinary nursing

While The Award does not account for veterinary nurse progression above level 4 unless in the form of a practice manager, the Skills Review was advised by stakeholders that within individual veterinary practices, a range of job titles are used to designate veterinary nursing roles based on qualification levels, in-house or corporate development programs and/or experience. A number of employers identified in-house systems that align to job titles, completion of in-house training and remuneration levels.

A sample of titles include as reported by stakeholders:

Veterinary nurse, Head nurse, Senior nurse, Nursing manager, Practice manager, Registered veterinary nurse, Equine nurse, Theatre nurse, Veterinary technician.

Published on 11 June 2025, WA’s *Veterinary Practice Amendment Regulations 2025* includes a registration model for a General veterinary nurse and the introduction of an Advanced veterinary nurse. The amended Regulation defines a ‘general veterinary nurse’ as a ‘veterinary nurse who is not an advanced veterinary nurse’ and in turn, an ‘advanced veterinary nurse’ as a ‘veterinary nurse who is recognised by the Board

¹ Animal Care and Veterinary Services Award [MA000118] Part 1 (2. Definitions): ‘other than veterinary surgeons refers to employees within the classification structures prescribed in clauses A.1 and A.2.’

under Part 2 Division 3 Subdivision 2 as an advanced veterinary nurse' and lists the specific procedures that each classification of nurse can perform under specified levels of supervision by the veterinarian².

While not currently recognised in the occupation classifications or The Award, the Skills Review identified broad support for a 'base' level or general veterinary nurse and an opportunity for nurses to progress their careers towards more advanced clinical nursing responsibilities. Suggestions included 'add-ons' such as for a wider range of species (exotics, equines) and for nurses 'looking to better themselves'.

A 2022 survey of 2,358 respondents conducted by the Australian Veterinary Boards Council (AVBC) in relation to Options for Registration of Veterinary Nurses reported that 'Veterinarians, veterinary nurses, practice managers, and practice owners generally favoured a Certificate IV as the minimum qualification to define a veterinary nurse' (AVBC 2022).

The Skills Review received feedback that the current Diploma of Veterinary Nursing, which is offered by only two providers and has enrolments of 50 -110 annually in 2020-2023 (NCVER 2024), does not meet industry needs to provide either a specific practice manager outcome, or a desirable advanced veterinary nurse clinical outcome.

Feedback from survey respondents included:

'The current structure of the Diploma of Veterinary Nursing places significant emphasis on leadership and management, with only limited clinical elective options. While this is valuable for those pursuing supervisory or administrative roles, there is a clear need for an alternative diploma pathway that is dedicated solely to advanced clinical practice. Creating a program with a strong clinical focus would better support veterinary nurses who wish to deepen their hands-on skills, specialise in areas such as anaesthesia, emergency and critical care, or surgical nursing, and grow their careers in a purely clinical direction' (Practice Manager, Specialist emergency hospital).

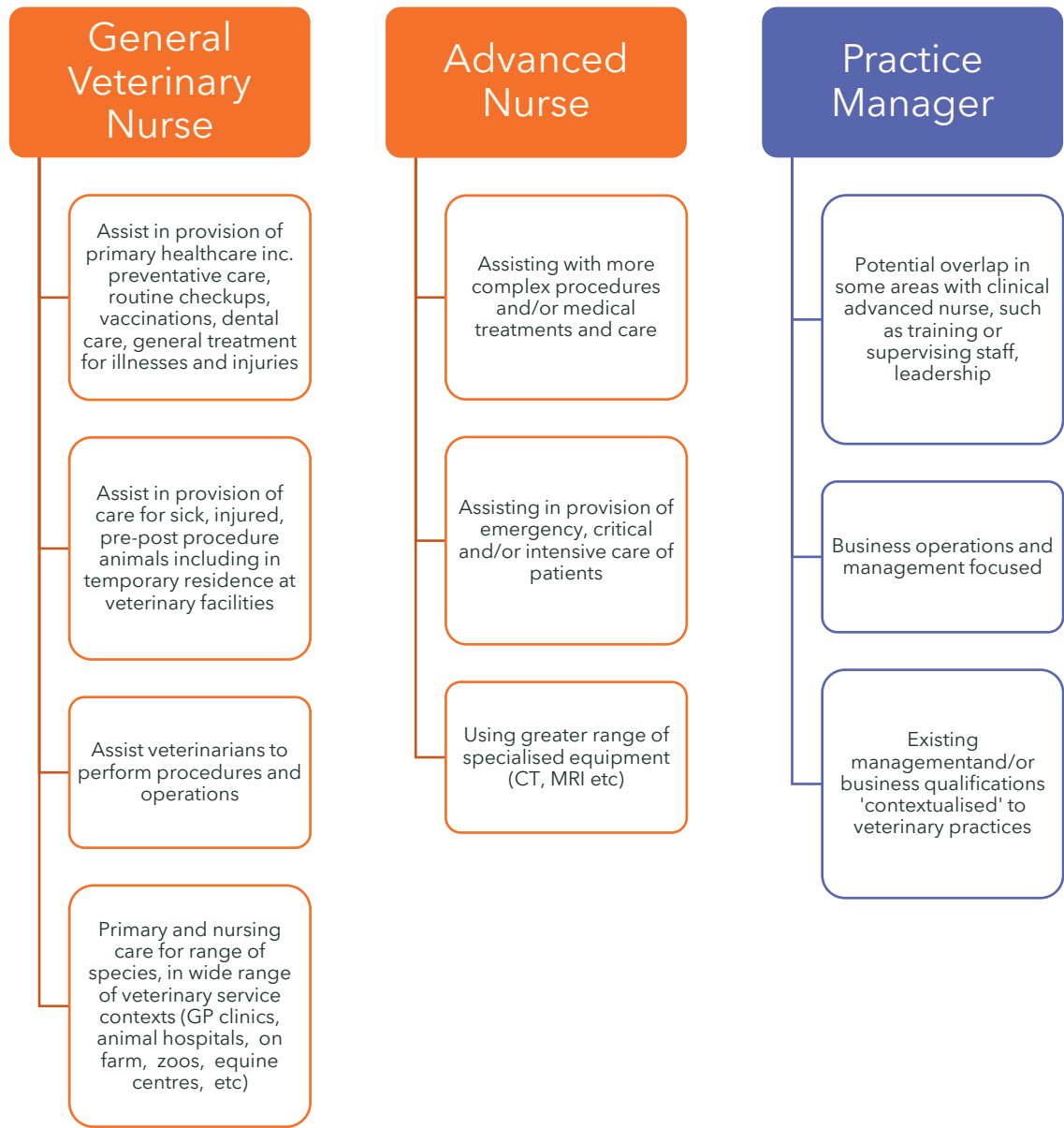
Synthesising all information gathered to define veterinary nursing in general, and the role of a veterinary nurse specifically, the Skills Review concludes that among the variability and inconsistencies faced by industry and individuals, two main levels of application of skills and knowledge are evident. For the purposes of this report, these are referred to as 'general veterinary nurse' and 'advanced veterinary nurse', though these titles are not formally recognised by industry. The job role of 'practice manager' is a distinct role, benefited by but not requiring a veterinary nursing background.

² Veterinary Practice Amendment Regulations 2025 (WA)

As a result of the Skills Review it is recommended that Skills Insight further investigates opportunities with the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) to recognise distinct ‘veterinary nurse’ occupations or specialisations, as appropriate, in the OSCA.

[**Note:** See recommendation 12 (Explore opportunities to better reflect occupational outcomes)].

Veterinary nursing conceptual diagram:



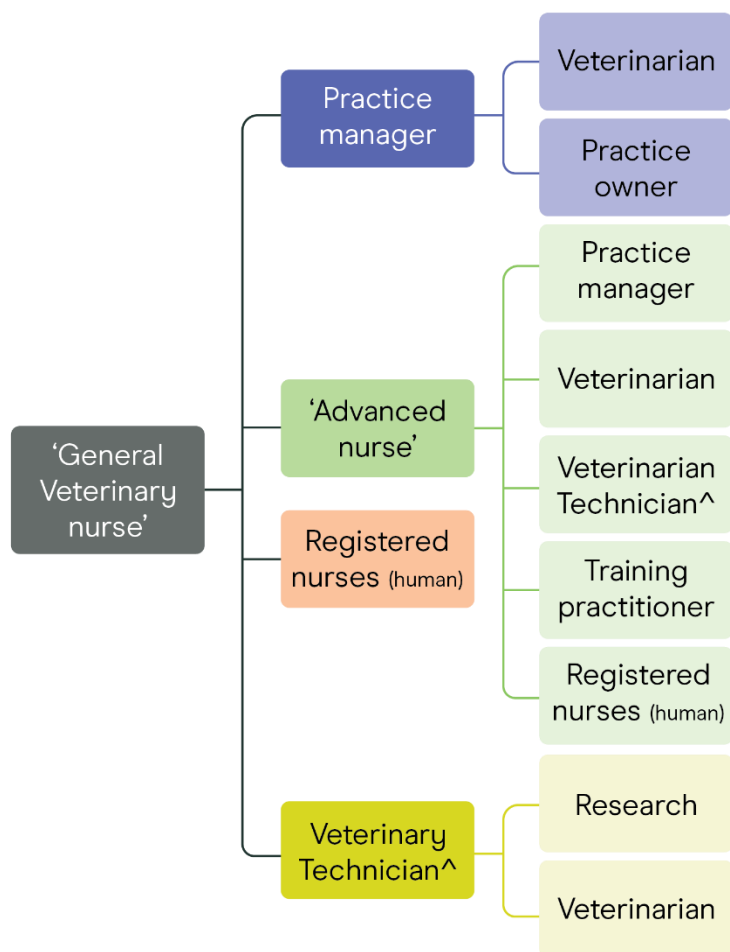
Pathways in veterinary nursing

As reported in Skills Insight’s Workforce Plan 2024, ‘enrolments in the Certificate IV in Veterinary Nursing are growing yearly, with almost 5,100 enrolments and 1,250 completions in 2022. While this might suggest a supply of potential workers to alleviate pressure on businesses, skills shortages persist’ (Skills Insight 2024, p. 44).

This is reflected in the feedback received for the Skills Review indicating that attraction to the Certificate IV and the industry is seen to be healthy, but turnover and attrition from the industry are of concern.

Veterinary nurses leave their job role for a range of reasons investigated further in the next section of this report. A number of occupation pathways have been identified through consultation activities during the Skills Review.

Figure 2: Predominant occupation pathways identified through consultation



Nursing (human health) as a predominant occupational outflow

Stakeholder feedback consistently identified registered nursing (human health) as the predominant career exit pathway, contrasting sharply with available occupation mobility data showing veterinarian as the primary outflow.

Occupation outflows are presented in Jobs and Skills Australia (JSA) report *An Essential Ingredient: The Food Supply Chain Workforce* (2025, p.89).

Figure 3: Showing occupational outflows identified in the Essential Ingredient report

Focus occupation	Occupation outflows	Number of transitions
Veterinary Nurse	Veterinarian	1,045
	Practice Managers nec	510
	General Clerk	480
	Sales Assistant (General)	360
	Animal Attendants and Trainers nec	250
	Office Manager	225
	Receptionist (General)	200
	Registered Nurses nec	175
	Waiter	140
	Medical Receptionist	125

Source: JSA, *Data on Occupation Mobility*

This JSA data indicates that the largest occupation outflow from veterinary nursing (2011-2021) was to Veterinarian, while the top human health-related occupation outflows were to Registered Nurses nec (8th) and Medical Receptionist (10th). The Skills Review rarely heard that veterinary nurses exit their job to become veterinarians.

Stakeholder feedback consistently identified registered nursing (human health) as the most common occupation outflow, with other human health occupations also identified, though to lesser extent, including phlebotomist, radiologist and dental nurse. One employer identified that three nurses in a single clinic had communicated that they were studying to become registered nurses in human health. Another large employer of veterinary nurses and veterinarians identified that ‘many graduates of the Certificate IV [in Veterinary Nursing] quickly move on to human nursing [sic] or something else’. This identification of registered nursing (human health) as the predominant outflow was typical in Skills Insight engagement on attrition and pathways.

JSA’s Data on Occupation Mobility is derived from administrative data on individuals’ Income Tax Returns from the Australian Taxation Office (JSA, 2024) and represents the most accurate and comprehensive publicly available data of its kind. While the dataset covers the ten-year period from 2011-12 to 2020-21, and this Skills Review was conducted in 2025, Skills Insight did not receive stakeholder feedback that could reconcile the apparent discrepancy between the administrative data and the extensive anecdotal evidence gathered. However, one employer informed us that data identifying a veterinarian as an occupational outflow may be valid but outdated.

This stakeholder mentioned that a pathway to studying veterinary science for veterinary nurses was previously more common but has become inaccessible, although the Skills Review was unable to verify this feedback.

The well-documented shortage in veterinary professionals was highlighted in the Australian Universities Accord Final Report, where it was noted 'To ensure that Australian communities can enjoy the benefits of proper animal health and welfare, it is essential to increase the skilled rural workforce in the veterinary profession' (Australian Government 2023, p. 81). High attrition of veterinary nurses to registered nursing in human health is not just an issue in terms of the loss of veterinary nurses from industry, but additionally as a potential loss of veterinarians.

In response to stakeholder feedback regarding occupational outflows, it is recommended that Skills Insight:

- investigate reports that the pathway from veterinary nursing to veterinary science has become less accessible for veterinary nurses
- investigate qualification design requirements to increase opportunities for learning pathways and articulation into higher education qualifications related to veterinary nursing
- work with Jobs and Skills Australia to identify sources of post-covid (2022-present) data regarding occupational outflows from veterinary nursing.

[**Note:** See Recommendation No 11 [Investigate pathways from veterinary nursing to higher education in veterinary science]]

What is not included in veterinary nursing - Animal Technicians as a distinct role

The Skills Review considered the relationship of the animal technology industry and the role of animal technicians³ with veterinary nursing.

Under past training package reviews, Skills Insight has approached the Animal Technology industry as separate to the Veterinary Services industry⁴ and has identified separate qualification pathways and occupation outcomes of those qualification pathways in previous versions of the ACM companion volume implementation guides part 1 and part 2.

³ Note that 'animal technician' and 'veterinary technician' are treated as having distinct meanings in this report and are not used interchangeably. The role of a veterinary technician is explored in further sections of this report.

⁴ The Australian and New Zealand Standard Industrial Classification (ANZSIC) recognises Veterinary Services but not Animal Technology, complicating distinctions between these industries.

Figure 4: Progression between qualifications – Animal Technology and Veterinary Nursing are identified as distinct and separate pathways (Skills Impact, 2022)

Animal Care and Management



The Skills Review interrogated this differentiation through consultation activities and determined that while there is some similarity in skills between animal technicians and veterinary nurses, the context in which animal technicians operate (particularly the specific legislation in place and its application in animal technology facilities), models of care and tasks performed are sufficiently different as to be two distinctively different job roles and industries.

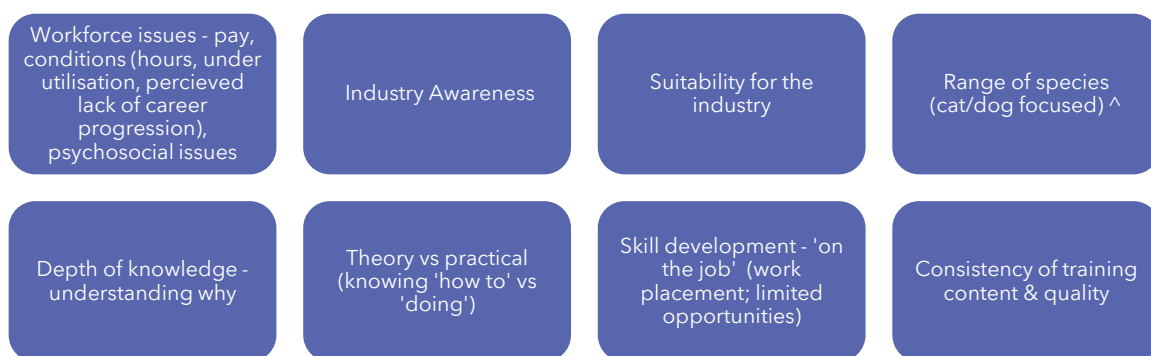
The Skills Review notes that under the Occupation Standard Classification for Australia (OSCA), animal technicians are treated as an alternative title to occupation [269532 Veterinary Technologist](#) (ABS 2024). While the Skills Review identified ‘animal technician’ as a role that falls outside of veterinary nursing for the purpose of this project, there may be value further investigating opportunities to clarify the occupations of ‘animal technician’, ‘veterinary nurse’ and ‘veterinary technician’ in the OSCA.

[**Note:** See recommendation 12 (Explore opportunities to better reflect occupations in relevant classifications and data sources).]

2. Key messages about veterinary nursing industry

Throughout the consultation process, stakeholders raised a range of consistent challenges they experienced within the veterinary industry. While varied in nature, these issues were often interrelated. Key issues are pictured below. In this section, key messages are explored with consideration for their implications for the TPR phase of the Veterinary Nursing Review.

Figure 5: Key issues identified in the course of the Skills Review



^VNCA Day One Competency Standards specify application of skills (such as handling and restraint, recognition of clinical signs of zoonotic diseases) to a range of species including 'dog, cat, rabbit, exotics, bird, cattle, sheep, horse'. This in itself is challenging when, for example, keeping rabbits in Queensland is prohibited and few veterinary practices especially in urban areas, and consequently nurses, have opportunities to work with cattle, sheep or horses.

Workforce issues

Veterinary nurses and associated stakeholders consistently discussed issues that have been well-documented elsewhere, as in the Legislative Council report on Veterinary workforce shortages in New South Wales:

'Stakeholders identified that challenges for veterinary nurses and technicians fell into two broad categories:

- a lack of recognition and utilisation of their skills and abilities by their employers which leads to dissatisfaction in the workplace**
- challenging workplace conditions, including workload, low salaries and poor customer behaviour.'**
(Parliament NSW Legislative Council 2024, p. 78)

The Skills Review heard this presented in the voices of veterinary nurses most starkly at the 31st annual VNCA conference in 2025 in an interactive session where the audience members answered why they would want to leave the profession.

Excerpt from responses from attendees provided in the interactive session *How yesterday shapes tomorrow* and read aloud to the audience:

'... work life balance; toxic; poor pay; no union; lack of work balance; management; money; money; money; lack of job satisfaction; understaffed; management; want to advance; pay; pay; growth limited; culture; poor patient care; stress; poor pay, long hours; underutilised; change; money; understaffed; poor management; pay; money; pay; getting too old; respect from clients; burnout; sad days; management issues; lack of support; poor management; burnout; burnout; management; pay; not wanting to change; compassion fatigue; no progression; management; discrimination; constant overtime; money; management; 24/7 roster; under supported and underappreciated; society acknowledgement; flexibility; underutilised; long hours; underutilised; boredom; social media abuse; lack of teamwork; lack of profession; no transparency from management; allergic to cats; sad cases; favourite boss leaving; hungry...'

Many of these issues are not within the scope of Skills Insight to resolve within the Veterinary Nursing Review. However, the Skills Review has identified considerations for the TPPR phase of the Veterinary Nursing Review under the following headings.

Pay and career progression

Low pay and demanding work conditions are frequently-raised challenges in this industry. Multiple employers and veterinary nurses identified that their staff and colleagues exit the industry to become nurses (in human health) for the pay, as mentioned under 'pathways'.

Related to the issue of pay is the perceived lack of opportunities for progression within veterinary nursing. For example, a key concern outlined to Skills Insight by the United Workers Union is a lack of structured training and career pathways, contributing to workforce attrition. This issue is reflected in the Award, which identifies a veterinary nurse at level 4, whereas at level 5, the only identified role is 'practice manager'.

In contrast to the Award, the Skills Review heard that multiple large workplaces recognise a structured progression of skill level and remuneration as mentioned in Section 1 of the [Key Findings and Recommendations](#).

One stakeholder commented that 'There is currently no incentive for nurses to increase their skill level because there's really nowhere for them to go except into management' (Ward nurse).

In response to stakeholder feedback, and particularly the identification of skills and knowledge, the Skills Review recommends that Skills Insight:

Reviews the current structure and intended outcomes of the Certificate IV and the Diploma of Veterinary Nursing with guidance from the Technical Committee. Connects to recommendations 1 (Confirming purposes of the qualifications) and 2 (Reviewing and re-designing the qualifications).

Under-utilisation

Utilisation (specifically under-utilisation) of veterinary nurses has consistently been raised throughout consultation activities during the Skills Review. Utilisation in this context refers to the extent to which veterinary nurses' skills and knowledge are used in a veterinary practice. Many nurses and association representatives argue that veterinary nurses are not being used to their full potential, with veterinarians performing many of the routine tasks nurses have been trained in, or nurses being used to perform functions that less trained or less qualified personnel such as animal attendants could be undertaking. However, as discussed elsewhere in this report, there is some risk involved in training nurses and establishing expectations about the roles they are able and trained to undertake, which is then limited by legislation or other factors.

Under-utilisation was raised by veterinary nurses most frequently in connection to job satisfaction and burnout. It has also been identified by veterinarians as an area of opportunity to address burnout. Utilisation is a topic explored in the Legislative Council report on Veterinary workforce shortage in New South Wales (2024), in the Australian Veterinary Association's submission to the SA Parliamentary Inquiry into the Mental Health and Wellbeing on Veterinarians in South Australia (AVA 2025), it is the topic of a VNCA position paper (VNCA 2021), it is raised in JSA's *An Essential Ingredient: The Food Supply Chain Workforce* report (JSA 2024). This is not intended to be an exhaustive list but as indicative of the degree to which utilisation has been identified as a key issue in many submissions, reports and research.

As discussed in the legislative section of this report, many stakeholders propose that implementation of mandatory registration will potentially increase veterinarian 'trust' in nurses' capabilities and could be effective as a mechanism to increase the utilisation of veterinary nurses.

Title protection and mandatory registration in connection with utilisation

Consultation activities uncovered a range of views regarding mandatory registration and title protection. While the issue of registration is not within the scope of the Veterinary Nursing Review to address directly, the Skills Review has reviewed the VNCA's Day One Competencies against the essential skills and knowledge identified by stakeholders in the Supplementary Tables. This is discussed in more detail in: [Implications for Training Product content](#).

In the Jobs and Skills Australia report *An Essential Ingredient: The Food Supply Chain Workforce*, one of the recommendations directly applies to the Veterinary Nursing Review:

‘Skills Insight should review the mapping of veterinary nursing skills standards in training products in light of potential mandatory registration for veterinary nurses.’

The Skills Review has aligned the VNCA’s Day One Competencies against the essential skills and knowledge identified by stakeholders in the Supplementary Tables.

With the publication of amended legislation in WA during this Skills Review creating a broader scope of practice for general veterinary nurses and introducing a new category of advanced nurse, there may need to be inclusions of skills which cannot at this time be undertaken by veterinary nurses in every state and territory. As such, the TPPR phase of the Veterinary Nursing review will need to carefully consider how these skills are reflected in training products.

Psychosocial issues

Safe Work Australia defines a psychosocial hazard as ‘anything that could cause psychological harm (e.g. harm someone’s mental health)’. Such hazards have been identified in the veterinary sector, experienced by both veterinarians and veterinary nurses and technicians and include compassion fatigue, burnout, and secondary traumatic stress, all of which have been identified as factors in retention in current roles and in the sector (Rohlf et al 2022).

During consultation activities in this Skills Review, stakeholders frequently alluded to the presence of a range of psychosocial hazards in industry. In particular, the United Workers Union highlighted mental health impacts of work as a key issue and noted that it is exacerbated by inadequate support systems.

A number of stakeholders, including [Sophie’s Legacy](#), a mental health charity for the veterinary industry, suggested opportunities to address or improve issues related to psychosocial hazards. Regarding updates to training package products, some stakeholders recognised an opportunity to add content in training package products to increase learners’ emotional intelligence and resilience for the role. A number of stakeholders identified that learners would benefit from being informed of a business’s obligations to manage risk of psychosocial hazards under Work Health and Safety (WHS) legislation.

Another suggestion recommended by stakeholders (and in place in some higher education delivery of Veterinary Technology) was to explore ways of increasing learners’ exposure to a range of workplaces and thus increase their exposure to a range of management practices and styles to increase their confidence in choosing workplaces in future that are better managing psychosocial hazards.

In response to stakeholder feedback, the Skills Review recommends that the TPPR phase of the Veterinary Nursing Review, with advice from the Technical Committee:

- includes review of the unit [ACMGEN304 Promote positive wellbeing in self and others in animal care workplaces](#) for inclusion in the veterinary nursing qualifications
- explores opportunities to select training products for inclusion in the veterinary nursing qualifications with the aim to increase skills and knowledge around emotional intelligence and resilience, and employers' obligations to manage risk of psychosocial hazards under WHS legislation
- works closely with RTOs to identify opportunities to increase learners' skills and knowledge for handling psychosocial hazards and increase exposure to workplaces, including additional guidance provided in non-endorsed products
- connects to recommendations 6 (Learner suitability for the industry), 8 (Investigate benefits from increasing exposure to range of workplaces) and 9 (Improving mental health and wellbeing content in training products).

Awareness of and suitability for the industry

Veterinary nursing competes for new entrants with a wide range of other professions. The Veterinary Nurse & Technologist Awareness Week run by the Veterinary Nurses Council of Australia is an example of a strategy to address this issue.

While attracting new entrants to the industry is essential to meet workforce demand, attracting suitable entrants is also critical.

Feedback from multiple stakeholder groups including RTOs, employers and clinics hosting learners, indicated individuals may have a misconception the role provides an opportunity to minimise contact with people. Additionally, multiple stakeholders reported individuals enter clinics without realistic awareness they will be dealing with:

- sick or injured animals and associated sounds
- presence of animal faeces, blood and vomit and associated smells
- cleaning
- euthanasia of animals, including as a treatment for illness, injury or behaviour.

Beyond lacking awareness, stakeholders reported that some individuals are unsuitable for the job role. Some examples provided include:

- once becoming aware of the above factors, they are not prepared to continue in the job role
- their belief systems are incompatible with the role, for example, holding antivaccination views for humans and animals

- they are incompatible with working with animals due to fear or allergies.

Some RTOs already have strategies in place, with one RTO offering a non-accredited one day Introduction to Veterinary Nursing short course to give ‘an insider’s view of a day in the life of a Veterinary Nurse and help decide if this is the career path for you’ (RTO website) while another RTO offers 6-months online access to a non-accredited Introduction to Veterinary Nursing Short Course which provides ‘credit’ towards learning in the Certificate II or III required entry qualifications.

One large employer reported that some learners have graduated with no placement and have retained incompatibilities throughout the course to the point of graduation.

Some feedback identified concerns with learners entering the qualification without adequate language, literacy, numeracy or digital technology levels. Veterinary nursing requires the ability to calculate sometimes complex numerical equations (e.g. drug dosages or ratios of cleaning products; setting up or adjusting fluid flow rates, calculating billing, etc); as well as language and literacy skills to read and interpret product labels and safety data sheets (SDS); prepare written communication and care instructions for clients; record patient treatments; etc. Similarly, most practices have electronic patient management software systems, while some are already adopting artificial intelligence (AI) systems for record management.

In response to stakeholder feedback, it is recommended the TPPR phase of the Veterinary Nursing Review explores requirements in the training products and opportunities for improving learners’ suitability for entering qualifications, where possible, prior to enrolment and prior to entering clinics as a learner.

[Note: Connects to recommendation 6 (Exploring requirements identified in the training products to ensure learner suitability)]

As noted earlier in this report, the Veterinary Nursing Review TPPR phase will occur after the revised Standards for Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) take effect in July 2025. The implementation of Outcome Standard 2.2 may assist in improving suitability of learners entering the qualification.

Standards for RTOs 2025, outcome standard 2.2 ‘VET students are advised, prior to enrolment, about the suitability of the training product for them, taking into account the student’s skills and competencies.’

‘The intent of this standard is to ensure that students are able to make informed decisions about whether a training product is right for them, based on their skills, competencies and learning needs. This seeks to protect student wellbeing by minimising the risk of students unknowingly participating in training that is unsuitable for them, recognising the challenges faced by students who do not have the necessary foundation or other skills or attributes to successfully complete the training’ (DEWR 2025)

Knowledge about and skills with a range of species

The Skills Review heard that students and vet nurses struggle to access broader skills and knowledge to work with species other than cats and dogs.

Corns cites data from a July 2023 Australian Veterinary Association (AVA) submission to the Legislative Council report on Veterinary workforce shortage in New South Wales, that 'Over 80% of all veterinarians in Australia are employed in small to medium businesses providing services to companion animals' (Corns 2025). It would therefore stand to reason that a similar percentage of the veterinary nursing workforce would also be employed in practices providing services to companion animals, and that skills and knowledge required by veterinary nurses would be predominately focused on companion animals.

The Skills Review sourced Certificate IV in Veterinary Nursing course information from registered provider websites to identify elective options offered by each and confirmed that caring for cats and dogs were the most offered elective options, as well as birds, rodents and rabbits.

Beyond the expressed concerns about dog/cat centricity, the most prevalent feedback was about the critical need for the development of skills and knowledge in the handling and care of wildlife, as many veterinary practices are presented with found, sick or injured wildlife from the public. The Review heard that even veterinarians had limited expertise with wildlife and due to business priorities, the care of wildlife was often assigned to veterinary nurses. A specialised wildlife hospital told the review that handling wildlife varies from handling other forms of animals due to the variety of wildlife species and the animals' fear of and natural instincts towards human interaction, unlike companion animals.

Stakeholders from equine specific and mixed practice veterinary practices provided feedback about the limited equine knowledge and skills for veterinary nurses in the face of demand and desire for equine-specific education. Only two providers currently offer equine elective options (equine anatomy and physiology, horse nutritional needs, horse health and welfare, handling horses, knowledge of horse behaviour, nursing foals and foaling down mares) in the Certificate IV in Veterinary Nursing, with enrolment data indicating low enrolments of 5 to 25 enrolments per year over the past 3 years (NCVER 2024).

However, it was determined that some of the feedback was potentially more in relation to the desired development of an equine veterinary nursing specific qualification, similar to the NSW accredited 91165NSW Certificate III in Equine Nursing which expired in December 2013.

The Skills Review was provided with details of this expired course to review and compare accredited units with current training product units.

The course information describes 'Equine Nursing [as] a specialised occupational field [that] predominately caters for the thoroughbred sector of the horse industry and for veterinary practices that specialise in equine issues. Most of the treatment and care is provided specifically for mares and foals'.

The Certificate III offered a pathway into the broader Certificate IV in Veterinary Nursing ('Graduates will be able to enter the Certificate IV in Veterinary Nursing with significant credit for units of competency achieved in this course') including six core units from the Certificate IV. The course did not include skills or knowledge in reception or office procedures; providing advice about animal health or dental care; or preparation and administration of drugs; however, did include three units on foal care.

Stakeholder feedback indicates that sources of equine-specific education are in demand, as evidenced by veterinary nurse attendance to (equine-specific) Bain Fallon Memorial Lectures, which one stakeholder estimated attracted 50 nurses in attendance in the Hunter Valley in 2024. Feedback was also received that did not support equine specific or exclusive veterinary nursing qualifications, rather advocated for the adoption of a similar model to what is offered currently, albeit only by two providers, that allow for a broad base training across all species for future flexibility, and the ability to select a career track/stream that offers species specialisation.

The Skills Review recommends that Skills Insight engage with RTOs to identify potential barriers to offering a broader range of species knowledge and skills, including in the design and flexibility of the training products and in RTO practice.

[**Note:** See Recommendation 3 (Exploring incorporation of a broader range of species into veterinary nursing qualifications).]

Lacking depth of knowledge

The Skills Review heard concerns from stakeholders that some veterinary nursing graduates and many of those who learnt 'on-the-job' without formal training, lacked the required knowledge to understand the reasons underpinning what they were doing or the potential medical consequences of some veterinary nursing tasks, thereby limiting their ability to trouble shoot or resolve potential problems. Examples included knowledge of diseases; effects of parasites; pharmaceuticals (not just storage and dispensing processes, but what they are, how they act etc); different types of pathology tests and their purposes (not simply procedures to run tests). One respondent provided an example of understanding why a practice is 'running bloods', what the blood results can mean for the patient and the ability to positively explain (an additional expense or procedure) to a client.

Samples of feedback:

- [Veterinary nurses] do not have the required knowledge to understand why they are completing specific tasks and are therefore unable to trouble shoot when faced with a complex problem (Snr Veterinary Nurse, multiple practices)
- training doesn't provide the knowledge behind the practical skills (Veterinary nurse, exotics practice)
- 'Knowledge is very important for a Veterinary nurse. Although performance is important, someone needs years working in a veterinary clinic to master these skills. If the nurse has a good base knowledge of anatomy, physiology and anaesthesia the patient will be safer even in the early stages of their career.' (Veterinary nurse and trainer and assessor).

One respondent posited that in many cases the required knowledge is specified in the training product, but questioned 'how much do they need to know?' (such as about anatomy and physiology). The extent or depth of the knowledge was, they argued, generally constrained by time and resource allocations of the provider and further influenced by the professional opinion, expertise and experience of individual educators.

A research report conducted by Griffith University for Skills Insight (*Training product translation: Good practices in learning resource development*) sampled four providers of the Certificate IV in Veterinary Nursing. The report indicated that:

'some Cert IV providers felt that units in this qualification do not provide enough guidance, leaving them too open to interpretation, and regretted the removal of 'range statements' from Training Package documentation: They were really helpful in deciphering what the package is actually asking us to train and assess. So that would be, I think, useful to bring back in. I'm not sure why it was stopped but they definitely helped.' (Griffith University, Skills Insight 2024)

One stakeholder in providing feedback to Skills Insight on a number of units commented about a specific unit:

'Because the range of variables⁵ has been removed from training package it is very difficult to work out what is meant by this element and PC' and in another unit of competency: 'unless I had read in the range of variables [in a superseded unit] that this referred to support with CPR, I had no idea to what [sic] this [PC] referred.'

⁵ This stakeholder is using 'range of variables' to refer to the 'range statement', a mandatory endorsed component of a unit of competency under an earlier iteration of the standards for training package development

Conversely, some stakeholders considered the training products too prescriptive, citing examples of specifying equipment or procedures not commonly available or performed. For example, 'not all practices treat using cytotoxic drugs' (Veterinarian).

In the process of locating identified required knowledge and skills in existing training products, the Skills Review confirms that superseded training products containing more specific and explicit knowledge requirements or range statements would have potentially provided more direction to training providers about the training products' intended medical or surgical procedures and associated knowledge requirements.

The report recommended that 'Skills Insight work with veterinary nurse educators to identify opportunities to more clearly specify the knowledge and general capabilities as well as the skills needed in veterinary nursing practice'.

The Skills Review concurs and recommends that Skills Insight work closely with RTOs to improve clarity in training package products and provide support with additional guidance in non-endorsed products.

[**Note:** See recommendation 4 (Improve clarity in training package products).]

Skill acquisition and development

The UK's Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons (RCVS) describes competence as a relative term, with an individual's standard of competence expected to increase throughout their career.

As such, they distinguish between 'competence' and 'skills'. For example, competency may be 'administering nursing care correctly'. In turn administering nursing care will include a number of associated skills such as monitoring and recording temperature, pulse and respiration, assessing levels of pain or consciousness, grooming and bathing patients, or hand feeding patients. Skills would therefore in the main, be assessed during a learner's program of learning, in the workplace, as evidence of developing competence. The more generic 'competence' requires more than just acquisition of technical skills: it involves applying relevant knowledge and having the confidence and ability to transfer what has been learnt to a variety of contexts and new unpredictable situations.

When asked to identify the most essential skills required in veterinary nursing, stakeholder responses included technical skills (such as animal handling and restraint, handling instruments and operating equipment, giving injections, bandaging, placing catheters, drawing blood samples, feeding, cleaning, monitoring anaesthesia, etc) and equally important, 'soft skills' such as critical thinking, problem solving, working with others, interpersonal skills, and communication with team members, veterinarians, and clients.

As important as the skills themselves was the expressed requirement that skills were contextualised to and practiced in veterinary services environments.

The most consistently identified essential skill was low stress 'animal handling and restraint'. The primary concern was that handling and restraining animals in the context of veterinary nursing (when the animal may be unfamiliar, in an unfamiliar environment, in pain, ill, or confused) was quite different to handling and restraining known animals (such as pets) or in less threatening contexts. It is possible for learners to gain animal handling skills (that are an entry requirement) in other contexts, which don't prepare them for the job role.

While some stakeholders were critical of the technical skills of graduates, including of both veterinary nurses and veterinary technicians, and soft skills ('Nursing requires skills we aren't teaching, the soft skills are critical skills') many more raised concerns about work placement as the predominant (and sometimes only) vehicle for development of skills, including:

- difficulties sourcing placements, especially in regional and rural areas
- a practices' ability to provide the necessary range of work
- a practices' capacity to supervise, mentor and train in the workplace
- the number of hours to practice and acquire necessary skills – a majority of stakeholders cited the need for more than the 'mandatory' 240 hours being necessary for students to acquire skills.

The Mandatory Workplace Requirements On the Mark: 5 Good Practice Principles (Commonwealth of Australia 2022) states that:

'When used in training package products, mandatory workplace requirements are related to the conditions under which specified performance evidence and/or knowledge evidence are demonstrated in the workplace. Mandatory workplace requirements are therefore tied to assessment and the demonstration of required skills and knowledge'.

The minimum mandatory 240 hours in the current training products are therefore 'assessment conditions' rather than hours intended for skill practice and development, which is at the discretion of the RTO to determine in their training strategies and should be additional to the mandated assessment hours.

While some RTOs operate simulated veterinary clinics performing a range of minor procedures or have established partnership arrangements with veterinary services and facilities for hands-on training by providers, with varying models of live or simulated activities, the static geographic location of these facilities limit access for some learners. The Review was advised of online and distance training particularly in the Northern Territory and Tasmania where there are no local providers and where learners were more dependent on workplaces to apply learning and practice skills.

'Theoretical concepts of the ACM40418 Certificate IV in Veterinary Nursing will be taught via virtual classroom modality and practical

learning will occur at [a vet clinic] enabling you to put what you've learnt in the classroom into practice.' (RTO website)

Samples of feedback include:

- There is a disconnect in the industry and in individual clinics about what the role of the nurse is and what they can & are not allowed to do versus what they are trained during the course to do. (Emergency nursing team leader and Senior nurse)
- Vet nurse students in some facilities have very little opportunity. They are a lower priority behind interns and veterinary science students and sometimes the only option is to practice on anaesthetised patients prior to euthanasia. (Veterinary nursing manager)
- Practical on the job experience is worth so much more than theory in this job but this cannot be achieved with one day a week work placement. The real learning and experience begins once hired in a nursing position. (Practice Manager, General Practice)
- The clinic needs to be aware of how much they need to train and help the student nurses, not just have them there as a 'body' to help (a lot of this is happening) and the clinic needs to be monitored as well to ensure they are training the students properly/up to standards. (Head veterinary nurse, General Practice)

A significant number of stakeholders pointed to the superiority of international models of veterinary nursing qualifications, especially in the UK where veterinary nursing students are required to undertake 1,800 hours of work placement over a 2.5 to 3-year course, while the New Zealand program includes 750 hours of 'practicum' in four parts.

In Australia, the Fair Work Act 2009, which superseded previous jurisdictional legislation limiting unpaid vocational placement to 240 hours per year, does not prescribe minimum or maximum hours for vocational placement. It does require that work health and safety should be taken into account, and that educational institutions consider the learning outcomes and requirements of the course before setting the duration of the placement.

The Review heard of potential benefits of requiring learners to undertake work placement in more than one practice, including to experience different workplace cultures, broaden their experience with a range of species and workplace practices and range of procedures.

At least one RTO currently requires students 'to complete at least two small animal Veterinary Practical Placements and one placement related to their elective choice'

A comparison of the key features of international veterinary nursing programs is included below in section 4 of the Findings.

More than one stakeholder posited that making veterinary nursing a traineeship would support better learning outcomes, noting that the Certificate IV in Veterinary Nursing is already funded as a traineeship, while another suggested an apprenticeship model would be more beneficial, as in one jurisdiction the traineeship is 36 months' duration but only funded for 18 months.

The Skills Review recommends that Skills Insight, in conjunction with the Technical Committee and RTOs further investigate the required purposes, current and potential use, and duration of work placements for skill development, and assessment.

[**Note:** See recommendations 7 (Exploring opportunities for workplace- based skill development and assessment) and 8 (Investigating potential benefits from increasing learners' exposure to a range of workplaces).]

Theory vs practical application

As outlined in the Legislation and veterinary nursing section of this document, the lack of clear definitions and varying legislation across jurisdictions creates challenges in determining what veterinary nurses are legally allowed to do. The AVA also highlighted the challenges in training veterinary nurses to perform skills that may not be legally permitted in their jurisdiction, while some stakeholders cautioned against 'giving veterinary nurses a huge range of skills that will simply not get utilised'.

As identified by stakeholders, over-skilling can exacerbate perceptions of under-utilisation where nurses are trained in, but are not permitted to undertake procedures, due to legislation or individual veterinarian restrictions. However, guiding systems principles relating to portability and transferability of skills will need to be considered.

During consultations, stakeholders identified required knowledge or skills that the Skills Review questioned in relation to legislative restrictions, such as intubation, induction or administration of anaesthesia, performing blood transfusions or dental procedures.

Some respondents indicated that veterinary nurses should know how certain procedures are performed, and perhaps undertake simulated training, even though they may not legally be permitted to perform the procedure in the workplace or with live animals. For example:

'Some clinics reserve ET [endotracheal] intubation for vets; however, the vast majority prefer their nurses understand how to perform the task safely' (RTO)

'They should have knowledge about blood transfusions, but not the practicalities of it.' (Emergency critical care nurse and educator)

In a competency-based training and assessment environment such as vocational education and training (VET), where 'competence is a concept that integrates knowledge and skills, the application of which enables the professional to perform effectively, including being able to cope with contingencies, change, and the unexpected', the requirement for theoretical based knowledge without specific application (in related performance) is a challenge to be considered by the Technical Committee and Skills Insight in the training product development phase, with the potential opportunities afforded by the implementation of Qualification Reform.

Consistency of training content and quality

A submission to the Legislative Council report on Veterinary workforce shortage in New South Wales in 2023 noted that there was 'anecdotal evidence that (training) content is not consistent between providers'. Another submission 'noted concerns about the quality of training of some veterinary nurses. The organisation explained that some providers are unable to ensure veterinary nursing students get the necessary practical experience due to high demand for student places. It was suggested that this can lead to 'an abundance of inexperienced ... yet qualified nurses' who may not be prepared for the job requirements once they are employed'.

As discussed in sections above, inconsistency in RTO delivery and/or assessment content could, in part, be due to varying interpretations of the training products by individual training providers and educators and further, could be influenced by the identified requirements of providers' local veterinary practices, through their industry engagement strategies which they are required to engage in to inform their training and assessment.

Certainly, feedback received during the Skills Review strongly indicates that stakeholders face challenges with a lack of consistency, not just in training content, including:

- A lack of consistency in the breadth and depth of training content between training providers was reported from placement clinics and recruiters, noting that veterinary nursing courses range from 'up to 12 months' to two years in duration, and providers have different models of placement.
- A lack of consistency in practices in relation to application of the legislative requirements and workplace practices was reported by RTO and veterinary nurses.
- A lack of consistency in RTO and workplace support and supervision models was reported by RTOs and workplaces. Some nurses and practices reported a 'tick and flick' approach to signing off student performance due to lack of understanding of requirements and/or workplace demands.

- A lack of consistency in what the roles and responsibilities of veterinary nurses are, from almost everyone.
- A lack of consistency in skill proficiency or depth of knowledge was reported from industry.

The Skills Review did not review the training or assessment models, methods, practices or content of training providers, as the quality and practices of training and assessment is the remit of the national regulator, Australian Skills Quality Authority (ASQA).

The TPPR phase will enable a thorough review of the training products to identify where and how training product related solutions could assist with better consistency.

Feedback cited in the *Training product translation: Good practices in learning resource development* (Griffith University, Skills Insight 2024) indicated that some units are over prescriptive, sometimes referring to equipment or techniques not used locally such as ultrasound machines which may not be available in all veterinary practices, suggesting instead that generic terminology such as 'imaging' could be used, which would potentially lead to a perception of inconsistency if some students are trained in using ultrasound machines because they are available, and others not. Assessment requirements where options to demonstrate procedures or use equipment can be selected from a range, also have the potential to contribute to inconsistencies between providers.

Discussions with one stakeholder suggested that RTOs 'train to the assessment requirements' (such as naming the Veterinary Surgeon's Act, but not necessarily how it applies in a specific context of veterinary nursing).

Examples of feedback include:

'Some of these students have also only completed 1-2 week placements and have been marked as competent by their workplace supervisor. In an ideal setting, students should only be marked as competent by a qualified instructor meeting a set of requirements and not have individual workplaces mark as competent to create a standard across the industry. Or if workplaces are to mark as competent, they [the workplaces] should be regulated to ensure they meet 'gold standard' practices.' (Practice Manager)

'Many new nurses lack basic cleaning skills, how to use a mop, sweep and clean windows. These nurses have been to TAFE and yet lack these basic but highly important skills.' (Head nurse / Practice Manager)

'I went my whole course without placing a single IV catheter or drawing bloods.' (Emergency nurse)

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suggests that a review of qualifications and skill standards, as well as ensuring their alignment with regulatory requirements, could 'include an assessment of which skills/competencies are best delivered through work-integrated learning and classroom-based or virtual delivery'.

Multiple stakeholders positively referenced the UK veterinary nursing model of an independently conducted 'objective structured clinical examination' (OSCE) as a means of ensuring consistency.

The summative practical assessment must assess the student veterinary nurse's ability to work at the minimally competent level for contemporary practice. There are a number of different ways to deliver an OSCE or practical examination. Accredited Educational Institutions (AEIs) must ensure that the design of the examination includes a circuit of stations testing a broad range of the RCVS Day One Skills under examination conditions. The length of the examination, number of stations and marking scheme design can be decided by the AEI, but the design must be defensible. In order to minimise bias and increase validity it is usual to have a different examiner marking each station.

Similarly to recommendations above regarding the depth of knowledge, skill development and work placement, it is recommended that Skills Insight work closely with RTOs to improve clarity in training package products and provide support with additional guidance in non-endorsed products such as Companion Volumes. It is also recommended that Skills Insight, with RTOs and the Technical Committee, explore Qualification Reform opportunities that support improvements to consistency and quality of veterinary nursing outcomes, such as through holistic and/or work-based assessment.

[**Note:** See Recommendation 4 (Improving clarity in training package products including exploring Qualification Reform alternative templates and TPOF holistic assessment opportunities to improve training package products)]

3. Vocational Education and Training (VET) environment of veterinary nursing training in Australia

Having heard feedback on the vocational education and training (VET) and higher education outcomes for industry, the Skills Review identified the current state of VET products delivered in Australia and how they compare with international education for veterinary nursing.

There are currently two existing veterinary nursing specific qualifications in the Vocational Education and Training system – [Certificate IV in Veterinary Nursing](#) and [Diploma of Veterinary Nursing](#) – delivered by a total of 25 RTOs.

In addition, entry requirements for the Certificate IV in Veterinary Nursing include the completion of a Certificate II in Animal Studies, a Certificate III or higher in an animal science discipline (such as equine, livestock, exhibited animals) or equivalent skills and knowledge in a relevant animal science discipline. Some RTOs choose to ‘package’ the Certificate II or III as a pathway into the Certificate IV qualification.

The following figures provide an overview of the qualifications and selected electives, with more detail on qualification and unit enrolment numbers and annual qualification completions included in the Supplementary Tables.

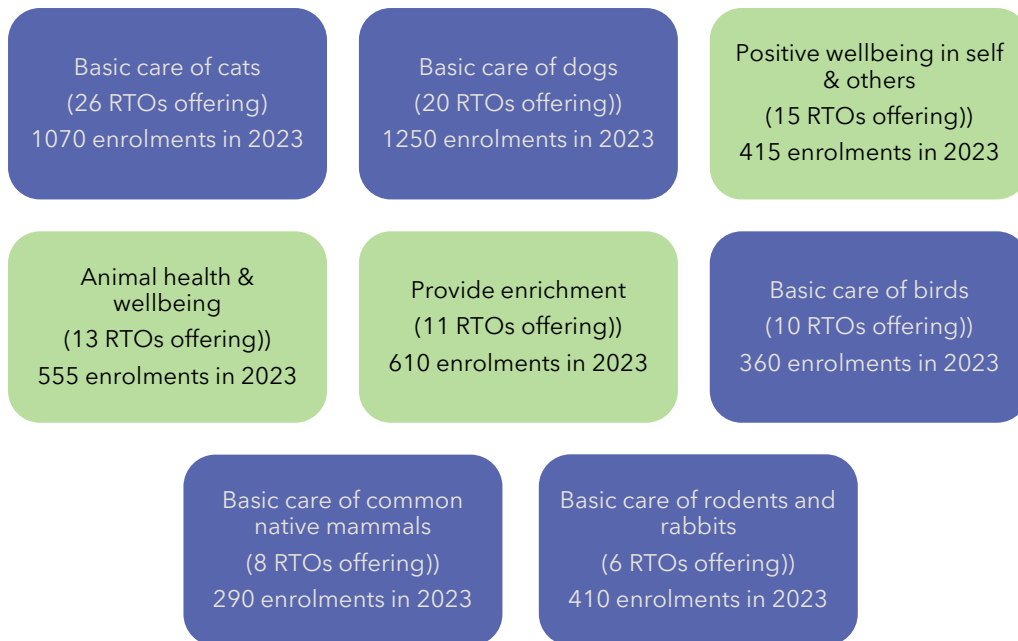
Figure 6: Snapshot of veterinary nursing in vocational education and training

ACM40418 Certificate IV in Veterinary Nursing	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 25 RTOs registered to deliver[^]• Approx 5,000 enrolments/year (2022/2023)• 42% of enrolments in 'basic care of' cats/dogs electives. 30% enrolment in animal enrichment & wellbeing and personal wellbeing electives• Approx 45% completion rate[#]
ACM50219 Diploma of Veterinary Nursing	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 2 RTOs registered to deliver• Approx 100 enrolments/year (2022/2023)• 50% in 'general practice' electives/ 30% in 'emergency & critical care'• 5 enrolments/year in dental

[#]completion percentage of total enrolments is an estimation calculated on 'continuing students' each year only (to allow for CIVs >1 year). I.E. 1891 continuing students in 2021 and 700 qualification completions.

ACM40418 Certificate IV in Veterinary Nursing qualification packaging rules allow selection of 4 electives (with a max of 2 from other than listed electives). Analysis of RTO websites offering ACM40418 indicates a total of 41 elective options offered. Of the top eight elective options, three are 'other than listed electives'.

Figure 7: Certificate IV in Veterinary Nursing top eight electives[^] (by RTO offering and enrolments in 2023):



[^]Number of RTOs offering electives may exceed 25 registered. One RTO offers two 'streams' while another public RTO has 10 different delivery/elective options. Six RTOs registered to deliver the Certificate IV are either not currently delivering or specific information about electives offered is not available on their website.

4. Comparison of key features of international qualifications

Stakeholders frequently referred to international qualifications, which they held in high esteem, with the UK system most frequently cited as producing highly skilled, proficient and sought after veterinary nurses.

Figure 8: Key features of selected international qualifications using sampled from specific providers (noting different providers may have variations in course duration, attendance and delivery models)⁶

	Australia	UK	US	NZ
Qualification type	CIV & Diploma	Level 3 Diploma in Veterinary Nursing	Veterinary Technologist - Bachelor	Diploma Level 6
Education system characteristics	National Training Product	<p>No national curriculum – educational institutes’ programs are developed to meet required standards and accredited</p> <p>Part A: General professional skills and attributes</p> <p>Parts B or C: Practical and clinical competencies – small animal OR equine</p> <p>Part D: professional behaviours and attributes</p>	<p>No national curriculum – educational institutes’ programs are developed to meet required standards and accredited. ‘Essential and Recommended Skills List (Skills List)’ outlines required skills (both psychomotor and knowledge-based) and associated ‘tasks’ and decision making abilities that must be demonstrated.</p> <p>An accredited college must maintain an on-campus veterinary teaching hospital(s), or have formal affiliation with one or more off-campus veterinary hospitals or other training</p>	National

⁶ Based on: UK - The College of Animal Welfare; US – Purdue University; NZ – Otago Polytechnic

			sites used for teaching	
Workplace-based requirements	<p>240 hours 'mandatory work placement'</p> <p>'When used in training package products, mandatory workplace requirements are related to the conditions under which specified performance evidence and/or knowledge evidence are demonstrated in the workplace. Mandatory workplace requirements are therefore tied to assessment and the demonstration of required skills and knowledge'</p>	1800 hours of work placement	1200 hours of clinical placement (in university veterinary hospital) + 480 hours off campus practicum	<p>750 hours of placement</p> <p>Y1: 205 hours in vet clinic and 45 hours in animal facility</p> <p>Equine or rural facilities are not suitable</p>
Duration	<p>1 – 2 years</p> <p>(excluding req. entry qualifications of 3 - 6 months)</p>	2.5 – 3 years	4 years	2 years
Structure	17 'core' units + 4 elective units	<p>9 'units'</p> <p>Professional veterinary nursing responsibilities</p> <p>Diagnostic principles</p> <p>Principles of veterinary nursing care_1 (anatomy, physiology and emergency first aid)</p> <p>Supply of veterinary medicines</p> <p>Practical veterinary nursing skills – portfolio of evidence</p>	<p>127.5 credits</p> <p>87 'major' credits (28 'courses', 7 clinical rotations and practicum)</p> <p>(Practicum off-campus 40 hours/week x 12 weeks = 4 credits)</p> <p>7-9 veterinary nursing specific elective credits</p>	<p>10 subjects + 4 practicums (1 per semester)</p> <p>Veterinary Nursing Practice</p> <p>Anatomy and Physiology</p> <p>Animal Husbandry and Behaviour</p> <p>Introduction to Anaesthesia and Analgesia</p> <p>Introduction to Medical Nursing</p>

		<p>Anaesthesia and theatre nursing skills</p> <p>Life stage and medical nursing care support</p> <p>Principles of veterinary nursing care_2 (fluid therapy, pain assessment, preventative care, physical therapy)</p> <p>Surgical nursing and patient care</p>	<p>35 – 38 general elective credits (chemistry, biology, algebra, communication, writing etc)</p> <p>‘The curriculum must provide at least 130 weeks of direct instruction. The summative, concluding period of clinical instruction must include a minimum of 40 weeks of hands-on clinical education involving the prevention, diagnosis, treatment, or mitigation of disease related to animal health, or other experiential, workplace-based learning that is supervised through real-time interactions with the instructor(s)’</p> <p>(American Veterinary Medical Association Council on Education)</p>	<p>Introduction to Surgery and Diagnostics</p> <p>Anaesthesia Management and Emergencies</p> <p>Medical Nursing and Diagnostics</p> <p>Surgical Nursing and Dentistry</p> <p>Imaging and Veterinary Nursing Services</p>
Learning models	<p>Varies considerably. Examples include:</p> <p>3 week intensive + 1 theory & 1 practical session/week x 18 months + 6 months practical</p> <p>2 – 3 days/week</p> <p>18-20 hours/week inc. placement</p>	<p>Employed = 1 day per week (in person or virtual lecture) release +</p> <p>10 in person practical training days</p> <p>OR</p> <p>Not employed = Y1 & Y3 = 1 day/week (in person/online) + 1 day/week VR practical skills development</p> <p>Y2 = full-time unpaid workplace</p>	<p>On campus</p> <p>5 days/week</p> <p>7:30 am– 4:30pm</p>	<p>35-40 hours/week including study and work placement</p> <p>Y1: 2 mandatory on campus blocks of 2 – 3 days (9:00 – 4pm) + ‘possible’ 3rd block</p> <p>(as newly implemented course, details for Y2 are not yet available)</p>

	Minimum 15 hours paid employment + 8 hours study commitment	(40 hours/week x 45 weeks)		
Assessment conditions	Performance in specified units demonstrated in 240 hours of mandatory work placement	'Objective Structured Clinical Examination' (OSCE) after assessment in clinical placement	National exam to become certified	Not specified Practicum 1 must be 'passed' before continuation.
Entry requirements	Certificate II or III in Animal Care or equivalent CIV required for Diploma entry	5 'General Certificate of Secondary Education' (GCSE) – year 10/11 - subjects at grades 9-4 (A*- C), including English Language, Mathematics and a Science subject. If already employed, must be 16 or older & in an RCVS approved practice. If not employed, must be 18 or over.	1 st year - high school graduation with minimum of 6 semesters each of high school science and academic math and 8 semesters of English. 18 years old. 2 nd year competitive entry.	Entry – Year 12 English, Math and Year 11 Science Or Level 3 or 4 specified animal care qualification

Implications for training product content

While gathering and analysing findings, the Skills Review set out to identify how the current training products compare with the essential skills and knowledge required for veterinary nursing, as reported through consultation activities across various contexts. The aim of this comparison is to find gaps or room for improvement in training package products and consider opportunities for improvement in the TPPR phase of the Veterinary Nursing Review.

Veterinary nursing essential skills and knowledge provided by stakeholders during the course of the Skills Review were compiled in Column A of the Skills and Knowledge sheets of the Supplementary Tables.

Units in the current Certificate IV in Veterinary Nursing, Diploma of Veterinary Nursing and commonly selected imported electives were investigated to identify where they matched against essential skills and knowledge. Units that match to the skills and knowledge identified in the Skills Review are noted through colour coding as either core, elective or imported (i.e. commonly selected) elective. This exercise of matching units to skills and knowledge identified through consultation is referred to as 'mapping' the units to the skills and knowledge.

Reference to specific skills or knowledge may have been identified within the elements (E), performance criteria (PE) and/or foundation skills (FS) of one or more units or in the Assessment Requirements (Performance Evidence (PE) or Knowledge Evidence (KE) of one or more units.

While most medical and surgical procedures are required to be supervised or only performed at 'the direction of the veterinarian', through the course of the Skills Review, a number of veterinary nursing procedures were identified by stakeholders as skills that it was essential veterinary nurses should be able to perform, but which are more or less restricted in some jurisdictional legislation, including:

- obtaining, possessing, supplying to a client and administering to a patient, S4 and S8 drugs and poisons
- dental prophylaxis
- extracting a tooth
- administration of local and general anaesthetic
- operating imaging equipment
- implanting identification devices.

The Veterinary Nursing Council of Australia (VNCA) has developed a list of essential clinical skills for a veterinary nurse or veterinary technician. The VNCA expects all veterinary nursing graduates should meet these minimum essential competences to ensure that they are safe to practise on day one. The VNCA Day One Competencies were 'mapped' against the identified essential skills and knowledge where relevant to identify any potential gaps or areas for improvement in veterinary nursing skills and knowledge in the training products, regardless of whether or when mandatory industry national or jurisdictional registration proceeds.

When providing feedback, stakeholders did not always specify whether the essential skills and knowledge identified was for all nurses, at what level or in what context, such as for general nursing, or for higher level clinical environments. For example, some skills and knowledge were very specific to remote or regional nursing contexts and from the perspective of nurses currently working in these contexts but may not be common to all contexts. Work will be undertaken with the Technical Committee to further refine and validate these skills and knowledge throughout the TPPR stage of this project.

An overview of the most commonly identified essential skills and knowledge is summarised below.

'Commonly' identified required skills

Triaging ('in person' / remotely):

Critical thinking/decision making
/questioning/listening/observing

Animal first aid

Intubating: Know how to do in case of first aid

Emotional intelligence: Resilience, self-awareness and regulation, empathy & compassion, wellbeing of self and others

Team work: Working well/collaboratively with others

Problem solving:

Seeing/knowing if/when something isn't right)

Critical thinking

Decision making

Time management and organisation: task switching

Numeracy

Literacy: Patient records, documentation (referrals etc)

Digital technology: Using electronic systems (patient files and records, appointment bookings and reminders, billing)

Communicating (orally):

- with clients (providing advice about products, information about procedures and gaining client consent, home care treatment requirements, taking patient histories, client/patient consults – examination (varies), de-escalating angry/distressed clients, supporting grief)
- with colleagues (team members)
- with veterinary surgeons (listening, taking instruction, providing info)

Conflict resolution: with clients, with team members

Handling: Handling (and positioning) animals specifically in a veterinary services environment – safely, humanely

Preparing patients for procedures: History, pre-meds, clipping etc

Administering injections

Monitoring anaesthesia and recovery from anaesthesia

Taking vital signs: Temperature, pulse, respiration

Inserting catheters: For intravenous administration of fluids, anaesthesia and/or medications

Taking images: Positioning patient – x-ray inc. dental most common

Taking and processing samples: Drawing blood, urine, faeces

Setting up and operating equipment: Blood machines, microscopes, multi-parameter monitors, fluid pumps, imaging equipment

Following nursing plans

Assessing patient pain

Organising equipment and instruments: For examination/ procedure/treatment

Handling instruments

Dressing wounds / bandaging

Cleaning, disinfecting and sterilising techniques: Facilities, equipment, instruments

'Commonly' identified required knowledge

Veterinary terminology: Procedures, names of instruments and equipment, drugs/poisons

Animal handling (low stress/'Fear Free'TM) and welfare: in a veterinary services context

Anatomy

Physiology

Parasitology

Microbiology

Common diseases: Signs, treatments, progress, effects on pathology/vital signs/medication efficacy

Principles of biodiversity, infection control, aseptic techniques: In veterinary services context

Procedures for triage and first aid

Purpose of range of laboratory tests: how to interpret results and potential causes of results out of range

Radiation safety

Positioning patients for clear imaging

Fundamentals of anaesthesia

Fluid therapy

Animal husbandry: Nutrition, wellness – vaccinations, parasite prevention, oral health, physical therapy

Common drugs and poisons: Uses, dosages, effects, interactions, side effects)

Legislation:

- Scope of veterinary nurse practice
- Storing, dispensing, administering pharmaceuticals
- Record keeping
- WHS – hazards specific to veterinary services environment and risk assessment
- Responsibilities for workplace safety – self and others – including psychosocial safety and actions
- Radiation use

Effective communication: diversity (cultural, socio-economic, personalities etc)

Gaps and room for improvement identified from skills and knowledge findings

From the mapping analysis of training product content against the identified essential skills for veterinary nursing in the Supplementary Tables, potential gaps in knowledge or skills were identified, as well as where there was potentially room for improvement (for example: clarification or more detail regarding explicit requirements for depth of knowledge) in the existing training products.

For example, the Performance Evidence of 'Carry out medical nursing routines' requires assessing a learner's ability to give subcutaneous, intramuscular and intravenous injections. In order to correctly give injections, it must be 'assumed' that learners would be 'taught' about the different types of injections, their purposes such as how and when they may be used in practice and administration techniques. However, there is no explicit knowledge evidence requirement in the unit.

In a similar example, stakeholders identified clipping patients for surgery and /or diagnostic tests. A performance criteria in the unit Coordinate and perform surgical nursing routines refers to performing 'routine surgical site preparation, including clipping, preparation of skin and positioning animal', but has no explicit knowledge requirements associated with the required procedure.

Figure 9: Summary of skills and knowledge identified through consultation activities as essential to veterinary nursing that are identified as potential gaps or requiring room for improvement in the training products

Potential gaps		Room for Improvement	
Skills	Knowledge	Skills	Knowledge
External coaptation of an animal's limb	Injection techniques	Triage	Preparing patients for surgery and / or diagnostic tests
Emergency in remote situations	Suturing	Wound management – changing dressings	Fluid therapy
Bandaging techniques (at CIV level)	Working in multidisciplinary teams	Placing catheters	Placing catheters
Suturing	Communication techniques with broad range and diversity of people & difficult conversations (finance/insurance, reasons for decisions etc)	Ventilation and oxygen therapy	Emotional intelligence
Inserting / removing ET, endoscope, nasal tube, NG tube, oesophageal and orogastric tubes	De-escalation of client anger or aggression etc.	Monitoring and trouble-shooting anaesthesia	Reflective practices
Surgically inserting feeding tube	Critical thinking methods and techniques	Low stress, fear free animal handling and restraint, esp. re dysphoric or aggressive animals & for range of species specifically in the context of veterinary services	Evidence based nursing practice
Expressing anal glands	Customer service - building relationships with clients (vs 'communicating with')	Safe lifting (patient manual handling) techniques	Time / work flow management / pressures (i.e. working effectively in the context of veterinary services)
Tattooing	Managing expectations, needs etc	Venepuncture	Physiology
Peritoneal lavage using indwelling drain	Selling (& promoting) practice, products, services	Using emotional intelligence	Anatomy
Castrating a cat	Parasitology	Problem solving	Aseptic and sterile techniques in the field
Administering local anaesthetic	Microbiology	Preparing catheter, injection and surgical sites	Veterinary practice specific 'infection control' including nosocomial infection
Administering a nerve block	Local anaesthetics	Time/ work flow management	Triage processes
Ultrasound guided cystocentesis	Animal diseases (signs, causes, effects, progression)	Communication (including using technology – e.g. telehealth platforms)	Understanding pathology tests – purposes, results and potential meanings
Performing peripheral incisional dermal biopsy	Patient enrichment		Techniques for using imaging equipment
Teamwork (multidisciplinary teams)	Personalised patient care – breed, species, age, genetics, diseases etc)		Radiation safety
Critical thinking			What variations in 'normal' TPR parameters

VN Scope of practice, code of conduct, work basics (pay, conditions)	Administering medication	may mean (species, disease etc)
Basic business management	Animal handling (range of species, veterinary services specific context)	Pharmacology (how drugs work, side effects, etc) not just requirements for dispensing or administering.
Cultural beliefs and animal welfare	Nail clipping / trimming	Pharmacokinetics
		Pharmacodynamics
		Psychosocial safety

Other opportunities for improvement identified by stakeholders included the language used in some components. Some stakeholders, predominately veterinarians, identified issues with the language used in some training products which could potentially be incorrectly used or subject to interpretation, such as 'examine', 'assess', 'supply', 'consult', 'administer' and even 'provide'.

One stakeholder strongly advised the need to remove 'conduct extra and intraoral examination of the patient under anaesthesia' as examination implies a 'clinical examination' and therefore it exceeds the scope of a veterinary nurse. Similarly, they stressed the need to remove 'record and report findings to the veterinary surgeon using industry terminology' as the 'nurse's role is to record the veterinarian's findings and treatment'.

Another veterinarian stakeholder cautioned the use of terminology such as 'assess' and 'provide'. In their feedback about performance criteria 'assess animal physical health status and body condition and note any abnormalities' they said 'consider rewording as assessment of (an) animal's condition should be done by the veterinarian' and in relation to 'provide analgesia to manage pain in animals under veterinary guidance', they strongly posited that providing analgesia, which are mostly S4 or S8 drugs, cannot be administered (i.e. provided) by veterinary nurses, although it is acknowledged that in some jurisdictions this may have changed since the feedback was recorded.

Qualification Reform

The new approach to training package product development under qualification reform will provide more opportunities for restructuring qualifications than have been available previously. A key aim of the reform is to apply design principles that improve quality, simplify course design and reduce complexity – goals that align closely with feedback received through this Skills Review.

Key changes in Qualification Reform include a move to a 'qualification first' approach, based on designing a coherent body of knowledge and skills rather than traditional range of only function/task- based units. Qualification Reform also enables developers to consider using a new Application of Skills and Knowledge (ASK) unit template describing knowledge and skill outcomes from training.

If determined by the Technical Committee to be appropriate, the use of the ASK template may provide opportunities to reduce duplication and consolidate skills and knowledge from multiple units, while enabling application to a broader range of contexts (as units are currently task/function based and siloed) and more clear articulation of required skills or knowledge.

If using the ASK template, it may be possible to design more in-depth knowledge based units (such as anatomy and physiology) where skills can extend beyond simply describing or classifying and where the knowledge and the skills can be applied in the context of various veterinary nursing functions and tasks, such as applying knowledge of anatomy and physiology to position animals for imaging or procedures, triaging, pathology sampling, etc.

In addition, the revised TPOF enables opportunities for developers to 'design assessments to enable holistic assessment of learners focusing on knowledge and/or skill acquisition at a key point(s) in a qualification training program. These may include for example proof-point assessments or capstone assessments', as identified in section 3.3.1 of the TPOF (2025, p.18). Holistic assessment could be explored to contextualise knowledge and skills (for example, biosecurity, infection control, aseptic techniques, sterilisation, even WHS) to veterinary nursing contexts such as surgical procedures, admissions, in practice nursing.

To fully implement Qualification Reform, the qualifications would benefit from being fundamentally redesigned. However, there may be limitations or restrictions such as stakeholder (including Technical Committee) lack of appetite for significant change or the use of units in other qualifications, creating significant consequences or flow-on effects.

In the event that the project does not favour fundamental qualification design changes, then other opportunities to meet the qualification first principles will be explored with the Technical Committee, such as identifying units that include foundational concepts in assessment conditions of other units that can be built on as 'co-requisite' type delivery or assessment.

Qualification purpose

Identifying the qualification purpose is a requirement under the TPOF, 2025.

However, multiple purposes may be applicable to each qualification. The TPOF identifies three examples of qualification purpose as:

1. **Qualifications designed and primarily used for a specific occupation** may require a higher level of specificity, e.g. for safety or the integrity of the trades
2. **Qualifications that prepare learners for multiple, related occupations** will consider skill similarity and transferability, with reduction of product duplication and specification where possible, while retaining industry relevance
3. **Qualifications designed to support pathways and applied learning** may be focused on cross-sectoral and foundation skills units and have a stronger emphasis on reducing product duplication and specification.

The Skills Review has identified that veterinary nursing qualifications would be best served if designed to align the job roles defined for this report as 'general veterinary nurse' (aligning to a Certificate IV in Veterinary Nursing) and 'advanced veterinary nurse' (aligning to a Diploma in Veterinary Nursing). According to the three examples above, the Skills Review proposes that both qualifications initially sit between the 1st and 2nd purpose; that they are designed for occupations of veterinary nurse and advanced veterinary nurse, but due to the level of variability within those job roles, the purpose is similar to preparing learners for multiple related occupations.

The indicative qualification purpose proposed in this Skills Review will be subject to review and confirmation by the Technical Committee as part of the TPPR phase. As the purpose serves as the foundation for qualification design, its final determination will play a critical role in shaping subsequent development decisions.

Next steps

Recommendations from the Skills Review have focused on the activities of the TPPR phase of the Veterinary Nursing Review and how input from stakeholders can be translated into meaningful changes to training package products.

Recommendations under the TPPR phase take into account the requirements of the TPOF. In particular, the Skills Review recognises that these recommendations and their implementation must be guided by advice from the Technical Committee, upon its establishment.

From July 1 2025, the Veterinary Nursing Review enters the TPPR phase (part 2 in the timeline below), at which point the recommendations will be considered by the Technical Committee for application in the drafting the training package products.



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Appendices

Appendix 1 – Skills Review Methodology

This project utilised a semi-structured mixed-methods consultation approach to gather qualitative input from a broad range of relevant stakeholders.

The topic guide (a structured outline of key discussion areas) used to collect stakeholder input was developed based on input from the Skills Insight Stakeholder Engagement Management team supplemented with insights from a wide range of published literature including Australia Bureau of Statistics, various industry reports, and qualification development materials. The final topic guide was developed with feedback from a trial with a small group of stakeholders.

The topic guide was designed to facilitate multiple data collection methodologies, including in-depth interviews, focus groups, and site visits. Numerous stakeholders also provided written responses to the topic guide via an online form.

This multiple-input approach was instrumental in minimising methodological bias in the consultation process by enabling stakeholders who are typically difficult to engage (e.g. those in remote locations and shift workers) to participate. A thematic analysis found a high degree of consistency between the different input collection approaches, and this methodology is recommended for future reviews of this nature.

Ensuring a diversity of input also underpinned the recruitment of participants in this review. Factors considered in the recruitment process included functional roles and employment setting, geographic locations, and perspectives including those of industry associations, unions, and regulatory bodies.

Three main participant recruitment strategies were utilised:

- Relevant organisations and individuals were identified from the Skills Insight stakeholder database and contacted to ask for their input.
- Study participants were also asked for suggestions of additional people or bodies whose contribution may be relevant. This proved successful in broadening the pool.
- The study was widely promoted in Skills Insight newsletters, on the Skills Insight website, and via social media, with interested parties encouraged to contact the project team.

In total, 354 formal submissions from more than 180 separate stakeholders were received (some responses were received anonymously, so some stakeholders may have responded on multiple occasions using different input methods.)

The topic guide and a breakdown of participants on a range of dimensions, including stakeholder type, role, and location, is included under following headings.

One-on-one consultations ranged from 30 to 90 minutes, with site visits often taking longer and involving interaction with multiple participants. Wherever possible and agreed, online consultations were recorded for later analysis. All participants provided approval for their input to be utilised in this study, received assurances that their data privacy would be maintained, and that their responses could not be individually identified in the final report.

The level of engagement demonstrated by the industry in this review was extraordinary and Skills Insight wishes to formally thank all participants for their commitment to the Review process and for their frank and honest input.

Note: Profile details for the stakeholders who provided their input via the online form are listed in the Consultation Log.

Topic guide

Role

For Veterinary nursing roles - role title:

Role title:	No. years:	Postcode:
(Optional) Previous role title:	No years:	Postcode:

If not working in veterinary nursing, current role and/or connection to animal healthcare environment (e.g. vet, facilitator, student, volunteer):

Qualification/s

Circle all that apply. Star for the qualification/s you had when starting out in a veterinary nursing role.

Certificate II in Animal Care, or similar (Australia)	Certificate III in Animal Care Services or similar (Australia)	Certificate III in Wildlife and Exhibited Animal Care (Australia)
Certificate III in Wildlife and Exhibited Animal Care (Australia)	Certificate IV in Veterinary Nursing (Australia)	Certificate IV in Equine Care, or similar (Australia)
Diploma of Veterinary Nursing (Australia)	Associate Degrees of Veterinary Nursing (Australia)	Bachelor of Veterinary Technology (Australia)

Veterinary Technician
Degree (USA)

Diploma in Veterinary
Nursing Level 3 (UK)

Workplace

Is your current/most recent workplace ...

GP, specialist/referral, emergency, mobile vet, wildlife sanctuary, zoo, animal shelter,
on-farm, education facility, research facility, govt facility, other:
.....?

How would you describe the workplace in terms of animals?

Companion animals, large animals, equine, avian, native, wildlife and exotics (may
include native), other.....

For one workplace, please give an estimate of the total number of people employed:

Estimate for the following roles:

Veterinary nurses:

Veterinary Technicians:

Veterinarians:

Administrative staff:

Animal attendants:

Based on your experience, what are the most essential responsibilities involved in
veterinary nursing?

Based on your experience, what essential knowledge do you need?

Based on your experience, what are the top 2 areas of responsibility or knowledge
that may become more critical in veterinary nursing within the next 5 years?

Anything else you would like to add/ask

Optional: contact details:

Email

Phone:

Appendix 2 – List of products for review or consideration in TPRR phase

Certificate IV in Veterinary Nursing

- ACMGAS307 Identify animal anatomy and physiology for animal care work
- ACMGAS308 Communicate effectively with clients and team members
- ACMINF301 Comply with infection control policies and procedures in animal care work
- ACMMIC401 Implant microchip in cats and dogs
- ACMVET202 Carry out daily practice routines
- ACMVET203 Assist with surgery preparation
- ACMVET401 Coordinate veterinary reception duties
- ACMVET402 Apply imaging routines
- ACMVET403 Perform clinical pathology procedures
- ACMVET404 Perform practice office procedures
- ACMVET405 Coordinate and perform surgical nursing routines
- ACMVET406 Nurse animals
- ACMVET407 Carry out medical nursing routines
- ACMVET408 Provide nutritional advice and support for animals
- ACMVET409 Provide specific animal care advice
- ACMVET410 Carry out veterinary dental nursing procedures
- ACMVET411 Prepare, deliver and review animal care education programs
- ACMVET412 Coordinate practice promotional activities
- ACMVET413 Prepare for anaesthesia and monitor animal anaesthesia and analgesia
- ACMVET414 Nurse foals
- ACMVET415 Provide intensive foal care and nursing
- ACMVET416 Assist with the preparation of veterinary drugs and poisons
- ACMWHS301 Contribute to workplace health and safety processes

Note: As per Recommendation No. 9, the following unit will be considered for review:

- ACMGEN304 Promote positive wellbeing in self and others in animal care workplaces

Diploma of Veterinary Nursing

- ACMSUS401 Implement and monitor environmentally sustainable work practices
- ACMVET501 Manage nursing requirements for specialised surgical procedures
- ACMVET502 Carry out post-operative nursing routines
- ACMVET503 Produce veterinary dental oral cavity images
- ACMVET504 Provide veterinary dental nursing support for advanced veterinary dental surgery
- ACMVET505 Prepare for veterinary emergency response
- ACMVET506 Perform emergency procedures to sustain life
- ACMVET507 Provide nursing support for critical care surgery
- ACMVET508 Support veterinary practice communication and professional development
- ACMVET509 Manage veterinary nursing procedures
- ACMVET510 Apply veterinary nursing pathophysiology
- ACMVET511 Apply principles of animal behaviour
- ACMVET512 Develop and implement specific practice policies
- ACMWHS501 Manage workplace health and safety processes