



**Veterinary Practitioners  
Registration Board of Victoria**

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08 August 2019

Jaclyn Symes MP  
Minister for Agriculture  
Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions  
1 Spring Street  
Melbourne VICTORIA 3000

Dear Minister Symes

## **Ministerial Statement of Expectations for the Veterinary Practitioners Registration Board of Victoria for the period 1 July 2019 to 30 June 2021**

Thank you for your Statement of Expectations (SOE) dated 21 July 2019 for the Veterinary Practitioners Registration Board of Victoria (the Board). Under Section 62(3) of the *Veterinary Practice Act 1997* (the Act), the Board must consult with you and have regard to your advice and expectations in carrying out its functions and powers. This letter confirms the Board's continued commitment to improving its regulatory functions and provides you with information and advice in accordance with the Act.

### **Improvements and targets**

The Board will meet your priorities for improvement through the initiatives outlined below for the period 1 July 2019 to 30 June 2021 (or otherwise amended).

#### **Timeliness**

The Board recognises the importance of timeliness in relation to our stakeholder interactions. We are committed to improving our performance in relation to timeliness and the communication of timeframes to regulated parties and the community. The Board will continue to progress improvements to the information technology (IT) infrastructure and software used for case management, registrations and other interactions with stakeholders, with a focus on automating processes and capturing data to reduce regulatory and administrative burden. Timeframes that are published in our Service Charter will be adhered to, and feedback from users will be gathered and reviewed to ensure our functions are being delivered effectively.

<b>Improvement</b>	<b>Target</b>
Implement IT infrastructure improvements and introduction of web-based (html) forms, information transfer, electronic payments, automated communications and accurate reporting of administrative processes.	April 2021
Review current advice relating to timing and regulatory processes available on the Board's website and in forms and guidance notes, to ensure clarity.	March 2020

Improvement	Target
Provide status updates of regulatory processes to affected parties at a minimum of every six weeks during the regulatory process (including any anticipated delays).	July 2020
Collect and review data about the time currently taken to submit information for registration and complaints. Where appropriate offer the opportunity to renegotiate requested timeframes for providing information.	July 2020
Collect and review data about workflows and procedures to ensure timeframes published in the Service Charter are delivered effectively.	July 2020

### Risk-based strategies

The Board recognises the importance of risk-based strategies as effective tools to facilitate effective enforcement and compliance. We recognise that non-compliance by our members may result in adverse consequences for public and animal health. The Board will review its practices in relation to its regulatory and compliance responsibilities, with a greater focus on analysing regulatory issues, identifying regulatory risks and developing objectives and strategies that mitigate these risks. These risk-based compliance objectives and strategies will be published on the Board's website, so they are readily available to regulated parties. During the term of this SoE the Board will also conduct a review of its risk-based compliance objectives and strategies to ensure their continued relevance.

Improvement	Target
Review current practices and develop a risk-based compliance strategy, with a focus on regulatory risks.	December 2020
Publish compliance objectives and principles on the Board's website/newsletters.	February 2021
Review and update all risk-based compliance strategies and operation plans.	June 2021

### Compliance related assistance and advice

The Board provides a wide range of advisory material to veterinary practitioners and the general public through our website. We acknowledge the importance of providing advice that is both clear and concise, and we will continue to review our website content, fact sheets and guidance notes to ensure that material remains current.

The Board has undertaken a major review of the *Professional Conduct Guidelines for Veterinary Practitioners*. Following extensive consultation with stakeholders, completely revised Guidelines are expected to be published and disseminated by March 2020. Practical guidance will also be provided to veterinary practitioners in the form of explanatory notes and frequently asked questions, to assist veterinary practitioners to understand the Guidelines and the context in which they operate.

Veterinary practitioners have the privilege of being able to use scheduled drugs and poisons under the *Drugs Poisons and Controlled Substances Act 1981*, but they also have a responsibility to prescribe, supply, and use them in a way that constitutes professional conduct. The Board recognises the potential risks to animal and human health and welfare which may result from inappropriate prescribing practices and acknowledges its role in providing information and advice to veterinary practitioners regarding what constitutes professional conduct as reflected in the *Professional Conduct Guidelines for Veterinary Practitioners*.

The Board will work closely with the Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions and the Department of Health and Human Services to actively promote and make resources about responsible prescribing practices available to veterinary practitioners and the general public.

Improvement	Target
Report annually on performance against the Service Charter's standard of conduct	Annual report
Obtain and review consultation feedback and introduce revised <i>Professional Conduct Guidelines for Veterinary Practitioners</i> .	March 2020
Review the Board's website and all forms to ensure that they are current, accurate, easily understood, written in plain English and accessible to veterinary practitioners as well as the general community.	March 2020
Update the Board's website structure to make it more task-based and user-focused.	March 2020
Review and redesign support material, including hard copy guidance notes, fact sheets and other content (for example, about prescribing practices), to ensure currency, relevance and accessibility (e.g. HTML and printable versions of materials) for veterinary practitioners and/or public stakeholders.	April 2020
Report on the annual review of all websites and documents relating to regulatory process advice to ensure continued relevance.	Annual report
Develop a review process to respond to issues raised about registration and complaints processes for veterinary practitioners as well as the general community.	December 2020

### Accountability and transparency

The Board recognises the importance of accountability and transparency in its role as a Victorian regulator. As part of our commitment to this, an external audit and review of functioning of the Board was completed in December 2017, to provide impartial feedback on the Board's functioning. A summary of findings and recommendations, and our high-level responses to these, will be made publicly available on the Board's website. We have also undertaken a comprehensive review into stakeholder communications and engagement with the aim of establishing a communications protocol for all interactions with stakeholders. The review and our high-level response will also be made publicly available on the Board's website.

We will continue to undertake regular and effective communication about our activities and processes to all stakeholders, to ensure transparency in our business operations. This will incorporate regular communication about key discussions and decisions about regulatory issues that impact upon veterinary practitioners and the community.

Improvement	Target
Publish at least six summaries of key discussions and decisions about regulatory issues significant to stakeholders and the community on the Board's website.	June 2021
Publish at least six articles with information and resources about antimicrobial resistance (AMR) on the Board's website and quarterly newsletter.	June 2021
Publish a summary of the findings and recommendations of the 2017 external review and high-level response on the Board's website, along with a plan to implement these recommendations.	December 2019
Evaluate the Board's response to the implementation of the 2017 external review recommendations	April 2020

Improvement	Target
Undertake a follow-up external review	May 2021
Undertake an annual strategic planning workshop and develop an action plan.	Annually
Publish high-level findings of its review into stakeholder communications and engagement on the Board's website. Publish high-level response to the review on the Board's website.	November 2019
Develop and implement a comprehensive stakeholder communications and engagement strategy, covering all aspects of interactions with stakeholders.	December 2019

### Evaluation

An evaluation of the performance improvements contained in the SoE, including reporting against the Board's compliance outcomes, will be included in the annual report.

Improvement	Target
Evaluate annually the performance improvements and targets contained in the SOE.	Annual report

### Reporting

I confirm that the Board will report on the achievement of these targets in its annual report, incorporate the targets into the Board's Corporate Plan, and publish the SoE, as well as this response statement, on the Board's website.

Thank you for your direction on the regulation of veterinary practice in Victoria.

Yours sincerely



Professor Edward Whitem  
**President**  
 Veterinary Practitioners Registration Board of Victoria