



SPCA
愛護動物協會

Society for the Prevention
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Clerk to Bills Committee on Veterinary Surgeons Registration (Amendment) Bill 2014
Legislative Council Secretariat
Legislative Council Complex
1 Legislative Council Road
Central
Hong Kong

19th January 2015

Dear Miss Kwok

Written Submission Regarding Veterinary Surgeons Registration (Amendment) Bill 2014

As previously mentioned the Society of Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (Hong Kong) (SPCA (HK)) fully supports the proposed amendments to the Veterinary Surgeons Registration Ordinance (Cap. 529) as outlined in the Veterinary Surgeons Registration (Amendment) Bill ("The Bill") 2014.

The mission of the Veterinary Surgeons Board (VSB) includes the development and improvement of professional standards, regulation of ethical standards and diligent exercise of disciplinary control of the professional activities of registered veterinary surgeons. The SPCA (HK) believes there is an urgent need to increase the number of board members from 10 to 19 to improve the VSB's capacity and efficiency in handling its responsibilities and in order to achieve its mission we firmly believe it is vital to maintain the current ratio of 2:1 veterinary surgeons to non-veterinary surgeons.

When one reviews comparable boards world-wide, lay-persons are present to provide transparency, a non-veterinary view on various matters and ensure that public needs are met from their perspective. However, veterinary issues pertaining to the way the profession is run such as ethics and acceptable standards of treatment can only be judged by those with suitable training and knowledge (especially with regard to the complex nature of the complaints). Veterinary surgeons undergo at least 5 years of university training (not including post-graduate training) and are sworn by oath on qualifying to uphold their profession and act in the best interests of animal welfare. They are best placed to regulate their profession with oversight from non-veterinary members.



It should be noted the ratio of veterinary surgeons to non-veterinary surgeons at 2:1 is well within the remits of comparative jurisdictions such as Australia where the ratio is generally greater than 2:1 (up to 6:1), New Zealand (2.5:1) and the United Kingdom where currently the ratio is 5:1, in no jurisdiction is the ratio 1:1. Within Hong Kong, comparable fields such as the Medical Council and the Dental Council of Hong Kong have ratios of 6:1 and 3:1 respectively.

In addition the number of available preliminary investigation committees (PICs) is woefully insufficient to deal with current high demand (it can take up to 3 years for decisions to be made regarding the validity or not of a complaint). As such the SPCA (HK) supports increasing the number of PICs to meet this demand, and at the same time expanding the number of persons sitting on each PIC to three (from two). In order for the PIC to perform its duty of determining whether the defending veterinary surgeon had acted in an acceptable manner (i.e. a standard expected amongst veterinary surgeons) it is vital advice is sought from veterinary surgeons with experience in the field relevant to the case. As such the composition of the PIC should include two veterinary surgeons with at least one from clinical practice (in the field relevant to the case) and a non-veterinary member to act on behalf of the public.

In closing we would like to reiterate the need for increased resources to be allocated to the Veterinary Surgeons Board so they can meet both the demands of the profession and those of the general public. However, the composition of both the board itself and the PICs need to be carefully considered in order to meet these demands in a fair, ethical, professional and efficient manner.

If you require further information please do not hesitate to contact me on my direct line [REDACTED] or via email [REDACTED].

Yours sincerely



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