



NZVNA statement: Tauranga Court Ruling

The New Zealand Veterinary Nursing Association (NZVNA) is deeply concerned by the recent court ruling in Tauranga regarding the dog attack on a well-known veterinarian. There are no winners in this case and there are certainly a lot of learning opportunities for all involved, but the court ruling, and conduct of all parties has been extremely damaging both to the New Zealand veterinary community, and for reactive dogs everywhere.

While we recognise this is a very complex situation, the dialogue around this case in the press has unnecessarily eroded confidence in the veterinary sector, and the impacts are significant. The judge's ruling to remove accountability of the owner in effect diminished the veterinarian's vast years of experience and compassion and failed to acknowledge the high risk and challenging situations that veterinary professionals find themselves in on a daily basis.

From the outset of this attack, vitriol has been rife on social media. It has been heart-breaking to see the vicious verbal attacks on the veterinary community, especially with the growing trend of abusive client behaviour in veterinary practice and the mental health consequences this brings to our workforce.

The NZVNA is determined to ensure that we do everything in our power, and within our resources, to support our professional community to overcome this.

Our action plan includes:

1. Reviewing our member advice about professional conduct on social media - Our professional conduct extends to all forms of communication where our words carry deep meaning and reflect upon our professional community. As veterinary professionals, it is never OK to abuse anyone on social media.
2. Providing continuing professional development - Advancing skills about handling aggressive animals, de-escalating reactive animals, and advising clients how and when to seek help from a qualified behaviourist.
3. Providing continuing professional development - Advancing skills on combating the emotional, physical, social and spiritual exhaustion that comes with caring for others.
4. Promoting compassionate consideration of all veterinary professionals – We will promote tools to improve communication about acceptable behaviour, boundaries, and expectations for compassionate communication.

As always, we will continue and advocate for our profession, promoting ways to improve safety for veterinary professionals, the animals, and people we serve.



**NEW ZEALAND
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ASSOCIATION**

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