

Wage claim to go back to Commission

Emloyed vets will have to wait until next month to find out whether they are covered under the Professional Scientists Award

Seventy four veterinary practices around Australia were served with a log of claims in May from the Association of Professional Engineers, Scientists and

Managers, Australia (APESMA).

The major thrust of the claim was that vets are 'scientists' and therefore entitled to the minimum terms and conditions of employment as set down under the Professional Scientists Award.

At a hearing before Cmr McDonald of the

Australian Industrial Relations Commission in late May, the Victorian Employers Chamber of Commerce and Industry (acting on behalf of the employers) argued that 'veterinarians weren't scientists under the eligibility requirements of APESMA'.

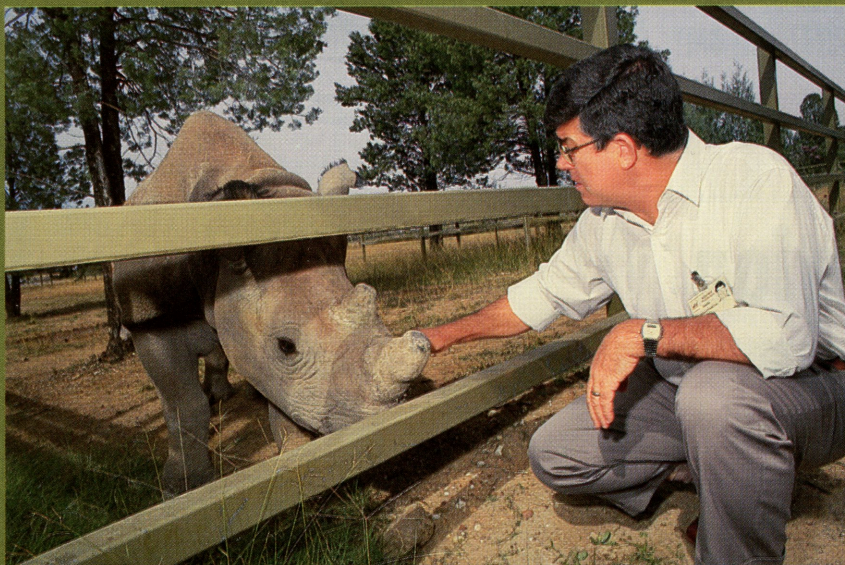
Cmr McDonald asked APESMA to provide a

written response to the employers' claim by the end of June.

The matter is now likely to be reheard in early July.

Members will be kept informed of the progress of this issue through their Divisional Newsletters and the new *AVJ*.

Rare rhino born at Dubbo



Arare black rhino calf has been born at Dubbo's Western Plains Zoo. The male calf is the first born at the zoo as part of its captive breeding program. The mother is a female black rhino transferred from Zimbabwe to the Western Plains Zoo in February, 1993.

The calf was sired by a breeding male imported from Texas in December 1994. The birth brings a step closer the establishment of a viable overseas population of the endangered species, eventually to be relocated to animal reserves in Zimbabwe.

The mother and calf will be left alone except for essential visits by veterinarians and keepers until the new arrival makes a public debut this month. Zoo director Ian Denney (pictured) said a further three rhinos had been mated. "The gestation period is 15 months - we are hopeful of achieving a few more births," he said.

Fears that HECS fees may rise

Veterinary faculties have reacted with dismay to speculation that the Federal Government may be planning to increase the HECS fees for professional courses.

Dean of Veterinary Science at the University of Queensland Professor Keith Hughes said if HECS fees for the professional faculties were doubled as has been suggested, a veterinary graduate in Australia would owe about \$33,500 in HECS fees after a five year course (5% inflation), together with any student loans that may have been taken out.

Current minimum salaries for veterinary surgeons are \$28,100 and \$31,250 respectively in their first two years after graduation.

"Upon graduation most vets have not many tangible assets," Professor Hughes said.

"The addition of a doubling of the HECS impost to the burdens of financing a car, a house, perhaps a young family, and in some instances, financing a share of a practice will be considerable.

"There are four inevitable outcomes if its goes ahead- a push for increased salaries by new graduates, an upward spiral in veterinary costs and fees, the social despair of graduates fearful of financial failure and a market trend for graduates to shun rural practice," he said.

"Vet faculties would strongly resist any such move," he said.