

**Submission
No 257**

COMPANION ANIMAL BREEDING PRACTICES IN NEW SOUTH WALES

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As [REDACTED], we have been very forthcoming about the proposed laws for dog breeders by the Australian Labor Party in Victoria. These proposed laws relate limiting the number of breeding females in domestic dog breeding facilities to 10, and stopping the sale of puppies in pet stores besides those which are from registered animal shelters. [REDACTED] firmly disagrees with the proposal to reduce the numbers of female dogs in professional breeding facilities to 10; it will without doubt be extremely detrimental for animal welfare in the long term. The laws need to be based on standards, and not numbers.

[REDACTED] has been ethically breeding dogs for over 50 years and three generations and have the experience and subject expertise to understand the repercussions of introducing this legislation.

Limiting the number of breeding females in professional dog breeding facilities will dramatically inflate the price of purchasing a puppy, leading to a black market of puppies. This price inflation and an inevitable 'black market' will result in dogs not being de-sexed, which could further lead to an abundance of unwanted (and unlawful) dogs overpopulating animal shelters.

These reasons have been expanded in detail below.

Euthanasia in shelters

This new law would restrict the ability of Victorians to own a dog; but will not change the number of dogs who are euthanised. The RSPCA euthanises dogs primarily due to either 'severe behavioural issues including aggression' or 'medical reasons', with only 4.2% euthanised for 'other reasons'. Restricting the breeding females of professional, educated, and experienced breeders will not stop or reduce this issue as these breeders breed their dogs for temperament.

Price inflation and a puppy ‘black market’

[REDACTED], and other professional breeders like us breed dogs for families, and specifically puppies who fit into family life straight away. We are breeding for the market of customers who are allergy conscious, temperament conscious, and for families who require low shedding dogs.

Given that over 75% of dog owners now allow their dogs into the home, the want for low shedding, allergy friendly dogs is rising. This market of customers will not change if Labor changes the laws to restrict the amount of breeding dogs to 10 females. The average Victorian family will simply find themselves on a waiting list of five years, or forced to pay \$5,000-\$10,000 for these dogs which will become a rarity and thus increase in price. This will occur because there is a market of people who want a particular breed of dog to fit their lifestyle, and there will no longer be a professional market supplying this demand.

These proposed laws to restrict the number of breeding mums will dramatically increase the price of puppies. It will encourage inexperienced home breeding, as well as backyard and black market breeding sending the dog breeding market underground, making it harder to police.

Bypassing policy and increasing dogs in shelters

Due to the inflation of prices of puppies, it is extremely likely that home and backyard “breeders” will not undertake the costly process of desexing their dogs. This goes against the policies of the RSPCA, the Australian Veterinarian Association and PIAA which all support the desexing of companion animals.


78% of dogs in Australia are currently desexed, and in the past five years, the number and proportion of animals euthanised by the RSPCA have both dramatically decreased due to the policy on desexing companion animals.

This proposed law by Labor directly opposes this policy, and will encourage homes to have dogs which are not desexed, leading to an increase in the number of unwanted puppies and therefore the number of dogs in shelters.

Standards based laws

Laws should be based on standards. The current standards in Victoria are working, and are showing that the new laws have been set well. The standards in Victoria are world class. The issue is that these laws need to be policed. To solve this, PIAA is advocating a self-funded licencing system. The benefits of this is three-fold.

1. The public will be able to be reassured that the puppies that they are buying are from an ethical breeder. This is of ever higher importance to the public, and this will only increase.
2. The standards will increase across the board for breeders as the public becomes aware that the only place to buy a dog is through a ‘PIAA approved’



breeder that has been inspected and licensed. The issue with local government has always been that the public is unsure that they have been audited. Although we in Wellington shire are regularly audited and visited, we know that not all shires are this thorough.

3. We know that the demand for family dogs of even temperament will not decrease, this licencing system will ensure that this demand is met by legal, transparent breeders.

Laws which are based on numbers and not standards, will not do anything to increase standards. They will put a strain on the numbers of the breeds in demand which are available for the public, opening up an underground market.

The public should be able to choose a puppy which suits them and their lifestyle; we know that when a family chooses a dog who is wrong for their lifestyle, the chances of them forfeiting that puppy for adopting increases dramatically. Those who have thought about which dog best fits into their life, are at a very small risk of then giving that dog up. The price of dogs now ensures that there is a lack of impulse purchasing. Increasing standards increases costs for breeders, which then increases the price of the puppy. There are not many people who would pay upwards of \$2000 as an impulse purchase.

The key in this inquiry needs to be that laws should be based on standards. If they do not focus on standards and policing those standards, then it goes without saying that the standards *will not increase*. The public wants puppies, and breeding dogs to live in high standards. The only way for this to happen is to base laws on standards, and ensure they are policed. This can be through set policing i.e. local councils, or through the breeders doing more education and policing through self-funded licensing.

Summary

In our view the following two things need to happen:

1. The standard based laws of Victoria need to be applied nationally. These laws had animal welfare paramount, along with an understanding that the demand for these dogs will continue and this cannot be ignored. These laws have no grey areas, and ensure all physical, mental, and emotional needs of the dogs are met. They also ensure that professional breeders exist which is important so that the demand is met by ethical, legal breeders rather than a black market.
2. A self-funded licencing scheme should be encouraged at a federal level, and the scheme brought in across the country. This will ensure that the public is constantly reminded of the need to buy from ethical breeders – the stores and breeders will do the advertising themselves with the licencing system. This will continue the education of the public and ensure that the standards continue to increase across all breeders regardless of size.