

Online questionnaire report: Inquiry into puppy farming in New South Wales

As part of the inquiry, the Select Committee on Puppy Farming in New South Wales, chaired by the Hon Mick Veitch MLC, launched an online questionnaire to enable greater public participation in an efficient and accessible way.

The questionnaire was not intended as a statistically valid, random survey. Like the submission process, respondents self-selected in choosing to participate. Respondents are subsequently not a representative sample of the New South Wales population, but interested members of the public. It should be noted that some participants reside outside of New South Wales.

The questionnaire was complementary to the usual submission process. The submission portal was available to individuals and organisations who wished to provide a more detailed response to the inquiry's terms of reference. Some respondents may have completed the questionnaire and made a submission.

Questions

The questionnaire comprised 10 questions. This included background information about the respondents including contact details, and whether or not they reside in NSW.

A mix of multiple choice and open-ended questions sought the views of respondents on:

- the current framework regulating dog and cat breeding in New South Wales;
- whether laws should be introduced to stop puppy farming;
- comments on the Companion Animals Amendment (Puppy Farms) Bill 2021;
- animal protection issues associated with puppy and/or kitten farming, and;
- consumer protection issues associated with the sale of pets from puppy and/or kitten farms online and in pet shops.

The full list of questions is at Appendix 1.

Responses to questions

The questionnaire was open from 28 January 2022 to 6 March 2022 and received 6,088 responses. A sample of answers and summaries of responses is provided for each question below representing various viewpoints expressed in the responses.

70.5% of the respondents were New South Wales residents.

1. *Do you have any comments on the current framework regulating dog and cat breeders in NSW, including but not limited to: Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1979 (NSW), Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Regulations 2012 (NSW), NSW Animal Welfare Code of Practice: Breeding Dogs and Cats?*

The vast majority of respondents believe the current framework regulating dog and cat breeding in NSW is inadequate, and does not go far enough to uphold animal welfare standards:

- "I believe they are inadequate to reflect best practice for the animals as well as no longer reflecting acceptable social standards"
- "The laws and regulations governing puppy and kitten farms are woefully inadequate. There is no state-wide licensing or registration scheme in place, no minimum staffing requirement to ensure proper care, no limit on the number of litters dogs or cats are forced to have, and no qualification requirement for breeders... Consumer demand for buying companion animals rather than rescuing strengthens a market for unscrupulous operators and the cycle of suffering continues."
- "Dog and cat breeders are notorious for the squalid, neglectful and exploitative conditions the animals face. Despite this no action is taken overall under the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals acts and Codes of Practice. This indicates that either the laws are woefully inadequate or their implementation is corrupted."
- "I strongly believe that the NSW Animal Welfare Code of Practice: Breeding Dogs and Cats needs to be strengthened in restricting the number of Breeders, and the number of litters that a dog can have. Greater regulation of the living situation of breeding dogs and puppies. Greater responsibility of Breeders to rehome dogs once no longer able to breed. Yearly inspection of breeder's kennels. Minimum standards of kennels for breeders."
- "The Act, Regulations and Code of Practice do not offer enough protection to animals nor severe enough penalties for a breach. There must be clear guidelines on the acceptable conditions under which breeding can take place. Ideally restrictions on the profit that can be made."
- "NSW Animal Welfare Code of Practice: Breeding Dogs and Cats needs to be strengthened, to stop practices such as vanity breeding/general cruelty."

Some respondents commented that the current standards are outdated and do not reflect contemporary needs and expectations:

- "I would recommend that the current framework be reviewed to reflect today's views on prevention of cruelty to animals 2022."
- "This Act, Regulation and Code of Practice are very out of date and do not keep up to date with community standards. As a minimum, the NSW legislation must be at least as strong as the Victorian legislation, otherwise NSW will simply attract breeders who find that

legislation too onerous. In addition, the Victoria legislation is thorough and provides the best level of care for breeding females."

- "The current framework regulating dog and cat breeders in NSW allows for the existence of abuses of animal rights such as the completely inhumane practice of puppy farming. The current legislation is, therefore, obviously completely outdated and must be revised so that companion animals cannot be continuously bred while housed in filthy and horrific conditions, all so that unscrupulous breeders can make large profits from the animals' misery. Our government's Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act and Regulations and the Code of Practice for Breeding companion animals must be updated to protect dogs and cats from breeders abusing and neglecting animals for profit. The NSW community completely condemns puppy farming and the NSW voters will not support a government that allows this practice and its associated cruelty to continue."
- "There should be more monitoring of breeders, more fines and punishments. The prevention of cruelty to animals act is completely outdated, it's over 40 years old. It needs to be revised and updates"
- "I believe the prevention of cruelty to animals act 1979 Is outdated and requires reform. It does not adequately protect animals from neglect and cruelty. I have witnessed this first hand."

Conversely, there were also respondents who contended that the current framework regulating dog and cat breeders in NSW is adequate, with no further legislation required:

- "The current act contains all the necessary power to control dog breeding in NSW and needs no further augmentation."
- "I feel having a code of practice that aims to make a minimum standard for animal welfare is the ideal way to address the breeding of dogs and cats. Being overly legislated will not make the unscrupulous comply, it will make them cover their tracks. The current code is satisfactory and should not be replaced by legislation."
- "I believe that our current framework is vigorous enough to ensure a high quality of care and positive welfare outcomes. I believe that we must be careful to ensure good welfare and the ability to breed stable, healthy companion animals."

Some respondents commented that the problem with the current laws and framework is enforcement:

- "I think that current laws are reasonable but not well policed. More needs to be done with regards to linking breeders to the puppies they sell so that breeders who aren't doing the right thing with regards to health checks can be looked into."
- "Current legislation and regs are more than adequate to control dog and cat breeders if they were enforced. It would be more productive to enforce existing framework than to introduce more."
- "The current framework is flawed in that it targets caring, ethical breeders who do all the right things by their dogs and/or cats. These breeders can be easily found due to the fact that they do all the right things, which makes them traceable... The people who are not members of these associations are the ones who fly under the radar and breed without thought for the health and quality of their breeding animals and resultant progeny. These people who fly under the radar without care are the ones who need to be sorted out and

stopped, not honest hobby breeders who belong to registered associations that demand their strict code of ethics be adhered to."

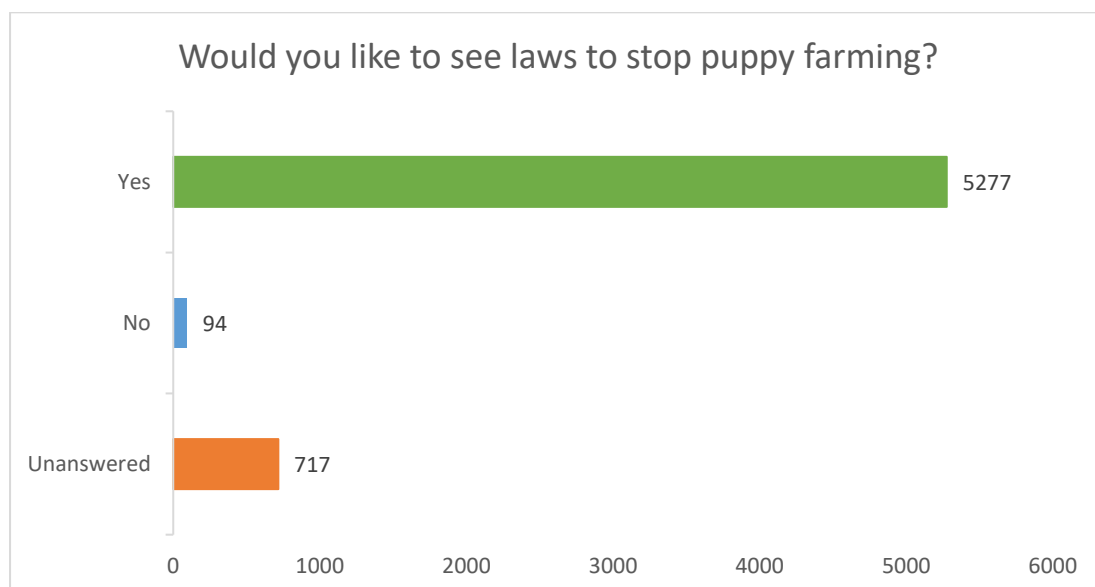
- "There are sufficient laws in place to prevent the cruelty to animals, regulated by the government funded RSPCA. Puppy farmers are getting around current laws and will continue to even with harder laws that will stop the true dog and cat breeders and do it with love and to the letter of the law."
- "The current POCTA legislation and the DPI Animal Welfare Code of Practice for Breeding Dogs and Cats along with current legislated requirements under the Companion Animals Act 1998 PLUS supporting regulations more than adequately provide robust animal welfare laws in NSW. The misconception that NSW has allowed puppy farms/factories to proliferate because of lack of legislation just is not true. Any sub-standard companion animal breeding establishments operating in NSW do so because of lack of enforcement of the current legislation... Much of the content duplicates current systems in place in NSW BUT the worst aspects of the Bill is that it will eliminate responsibly bred dogs and cats."

Some respondents commented that the codes of practice and codes of ethics imposed by breeder organisations are already appropriate for managing breeding practices in New South Wales:

- "The breeders organisations, like Dogs NSW, who have done a wonderful job holding their members to a Code of Ethics for many years have been largely ignored during the development of the Welfare Code of Practice. They have the expertise and dedication to work for the betterment of breeds and best possible health and welfare outcomes for puppies. The Code has been formulated by people who have a sad lack of understanding of the real issues involved in breeding. They are aimed to hinder the very people who hold and apply the key to better outcomes for dogs."

2. *Would you like to see laws to stop puppy farming?*

The vast number of respondents would like to see laws to stop puppy farming (86.67 per cent).



a. If yes, what should laws to ban puppy farming look like?

Many respondents called for: the licensing and registration of dog breeders; compulsory microchipping; ongoing welfare checks; breeding limits (restrictions); minimum standards of health and hygiene; staffing requirements; restrictions on the sale of puppies and kittens (online and through pet shops); and harsh penalties for breaches and non-compliance. A sample of responses include:

- "Factory farming of dogs and cats should be illegal in NSW. Please include enforceable litter limits for bitches according to the rules of the Australian National Kennel Council (ANKC). Ban the sale of puppies in pet shops. Dogs should only be bred ethically, with love, exercise, socialisation, quality food and comfort. Cap breeders dog numbers. It should be illegal to kill dogs that are no longer required for breeding. All breeders should be registered and it should be illegal for unregistered puppies to be sold. Accidental litters should be surrendered to rescue groups and shelters. There should be an enforceable a code of practice for all dog and cat breeders."
- "1. Registration of dog breeders - Animal management legislation. 2. Compulsory microchipping of all dogs before 12 weeks of age and prior to sale or transfer - Animal management legislation. 3. Microchip information recorded must include microchip ID number of dog's mother and breeder registration number - Animal management legislation. 4. Breeder registration number must be displayed at the point of sale and in advertisements - Animal management legislation. 5. Mandatory standards for the conduct of dog breeding - Animal welfare and management legislation. 6. Power for courts to make interim ownership costs and prohibition orders while legal proceedings are on foot - Animal welfare and management legislation."
- "State-wide licensing or registration scheme in place, minimum staffing requirement to ensure proper care, limit on the number of litters dogs or cats are forced to have and qualification requirement for breeders."
- "Must be licensed, must have less than 2 pregnant dogs at a time, dog must not be pregnant more than twice in 2 years, dog must have access to walks and human connection. Must provide access to premises without notice for inspection, must provide names and contact details of all dogs they sell. Dogs must be registered within a month of sale, dogs must be neutered within 6 months unless approval otherwise. Cannot be sold to anyone who has had given up an animal or has been reported for neglect/abuse. Cannot sell via eBay, Gumtree or the like only via an approved organisation."
- "Numbers of breeding dogs should have a limit. Conditions should meet RSPCA standards. All breeders should be registered and meet acceptable standards of health and hygiene. All animals should be subjected to annual veterinary examination. Any misdemeanour result in instant deregulate action and confiscation of any animals. Proved cruelty to result in a criminal record and fines"
- "Breeding should be restricted to one litter a year. Sanctions placed and animals that are overbreeding should be removed. Vets should be required to report puppy farmers. Breeders to be checked via microchipping registration services. Pet shops should be banned from selling puppies (and kittens) unless a lawful system is established and followed ensuring sources are ethical & lawful."

Some respondents said that they would like to see puppy farming stopped altogether:

- "Laws should ban puppy farming altogether."
- "Just make it illegal."
- "Puppy farming should be illegal altogether, if an animal cannot be kept as part of a family, with activities and enrichment then it is not acceptable to keep them in a cage solely for the purpose of breeding from them."

b. If no, please explain why?

Many of the respondents who said they do not want to see laws to stop puppy farming argued that the proposed laws would unfairly target small scale hobby breeders. They asserted that the current regulatory framework (that is, code of ethics and code of conduct) is sufficient:

- "The proposed amendments will overwhelmingly target small scale breeders rather than the large scale low-welfare breeders that operate outside of the regulated sphere of breeders. Changing regulations that are already ignored will do nothing to affect their activities. Creating more onerous regulations will simply drive more breeders to the unregulated sphere or to states with less harsh legislative requirements. Further, as a professional scientist and a University Professor of genetics I can tell you that the proposed changes are more likely to damage population diversity and increase risk of genetic disease by reducing breeding population sizes."
- "Animal organisations like the Australian National Kennel Association and Dogs NSW ALREADY have regulations, limits, guidelines and health & genetic controls for their breeding members which work appropriately. Why start a new regime if you are unable to police & regulate it. It would simply be better to impel all breeders to be functioning members of existing Associations"
- "Define a puppy farm? This is the first issue with this question. It makes more practical sense to set achievable standards that encompass animal welfare as a priority, rather than making something illegal. We haven't stopped people illegally selling and using drugs, is this how dog ownership will turn out? The reason "puppy farms" exist, is because the public are funding them. Public education and making dog breeding more open and less hidden, will bring about a better result than chasing the unscrupulous down a rabbit hole. If the public stop buying from illegitimate sources, then those sources will go out of business by their own accord. "
- "Well regulated, compliant puppy farmers are meeting a need that hobby preservation breeders can't, farmers that are meeting full DPI regulations are very careful about welfare and employ enough staff to care for their animals. Non-compliant puppy farmers and backyard breeders need to be stopped."

3. *The Companion Animals Amendment (Puppy Farms) Bill 2021 states that its objects are to amend the Companion Animals Act 1998 to:*
- a) *Regulate the conduct of businesses breeding companion animals and other companion animal businesses,*
 - b) *Provide enforcement powers for the purposes of regulating the conduct of companion animal businesses.*

Based on your own understanding and the information above, do you have any comments on the Companion Animals Amendment (Puppy Farms) Bill 2021?

Most respondents agreed with the intent of the Companion Animals Amendment (Puppy Farms) Bill 2021 to enable better regulation of the breeding of companion animals and provide effective law enforcement powers:

- "I agree with both of these amendments as this "industry" is not self-regulating in any way. There needs to be very clear laws and repercussions for failing to meet minimum care standards in any animal business (not just for companion animals). There needs to be independent animal advocacy bodies that can inspect sites at will, and be empowered to enforce these laws to ensure that the companion animal business know that they are not above the law, and that their biggest responsibility is to the animals in their care. "
- "This bill is desperately needed in NSW to mainly protect the animals, but also consumers, who often fall foul of these unscrupulous operators by unknowingly taking on sick animals as a result of the lack of regulations. The Companion Animals Amendment (Puppy Farms) Bill 2021 will provide this protection for animals and give more powers to those that are regulating these facilities, so it should be passed and made into law."
- "Puppy farming is mostly unregulated and we surely need strict regulations to ensure animal welfare and consumer protection and so far animal cruelty and exploitation to the extreme are rampant. The [Companion] Animal Amendment Bill 2021 needs to be passed and made into law. Breeding of any sort on a large scale is not sustainable and always lead to neglect and horrors due to overpopulation. Puppy/kitten farming needs to be banned full stop and breeding needs to be restricted to a small number of regulated and fully transparent operators."

On the other hand, respondents raised concerns about the agenda of animal welfare organisations and potential overreach which negatively and unfairly impact on breeders:

- "Providing enforcement powers is needed, however there also needs to be an avenue for breeders to appeal decisions in a timely and fair manner. Breeders should be given a chance to fix their mistakes and fines should only be issued after they have been given a chance to rectify the situation. Fining people on first inspection is purely for revenue raising and causes much un-needed stress. Animals should never be taken from breeders unless there is an obvious welfare issues. RSPCA has taken animals from owners without valid reasons in the past, we have all heard the horror stories. For ethical responsible breeders taking our animals is like taking our children."
- "Regulation should be through the recognised peak body, in the case of dogs through Dogs Australia. Enforcement should not be by council staff or individuals. Enforcement should be a joint task of Dogs Australia (or relevant peak body) and police officers in the appropriate jurisdiction. Animal welfare organisations are not appropriate as there is a

different agenda in these organisations with representatives often unnecessarily confrontational."

Many respondents proposed that the proposed legislation would see the rapid decline of breeders leading to an increase in the cost of puppies and kittens. They believe that the proposed legislation would unfairly impact upon hobby breeders as they won't be able to afford the expenses associated with ensuring compliance:

- "Hobby breeders should be classed separately to commercial breeders. Not everyone makes money off breeding, and the smaller breeders only breed for the love of it and to provide happy and healthy pups to families. They provide only the best of the best care to their animals and should be thanked and respected. They should not be put in the same basket as businesses/commercial breeders. The larger breeders need to be regulated a lot more and need to health test just like the caring registered breeders do."
- "I will be DEVASTATED if the current Bill is passed into legislation as I will be denied the opportunity to continue to hobby breed my beloved boxers and positively contribute to the lives of my fellow Australians. In my opinion, the 'dog world' will be all the poorer if this legislation, in its current form, is passed. By all means get rid of the puppy farms but ALLOW the true lovers of dogs - the hobby breeders to continue to do their wonderful work."
- "Many companion animals are not bred in a business context but are instead bred by families as a hobby, or farmers, or service organisations to fulfil service and working dog requirements. The proposed legislation would inflict onerous and expensive requirements on these non-commercial breeders that would drive up prices for family pets - as we have already seen. The large increase in puppy prices is likely a direct result of recent changes in breeding regulations that prevent the accidental breeding of dogs and encourages spay/neuter. Further regulation of this sector is likely to create a situation of companion animals as a luxury item."
- "Don't lump registered pure bred breeders in the same basket as puppy farmers. Allowing inspectors to simply march into a suburban home and seize loved and cared for animals is immoral, as is ordering responsible breeders/owners to comply with impossible conditions that have no relation to their dog/cat ownership and activities. Limiting registered breeders of purebred animals would see many breeds become rare in Australia. Why hit everyone with a very big stick when the puppy farmers and the anti-pure bred lobby are the ones causing the problems."
- "(a) The regulation would see the rapid decline in breeders and reduce the diversity of breeding age dogs. The proposed regulations would see a significant increase to the cost of puppies. I did a quick cost analysis, I could see a cheap puppy being offered for sale upwards of \$20,000. Meaning that dogs would only be available to the RICH. The new inflated premium prices will only entice underground puppy farms to set up. This would collapse the \$12.2 billion dollar pet industry and threaten the livelihoods of 13,000 veterinarians, 4,000 groomers, trainers, dog walkers, minders, manufacturers, pharmaceuticals, importers. (b) At present 'Enforcement Officers' are able to interpret their own definitions from the code, are poorly qualified and are not answerable to any oversight committee in the engagement of their duties. There are no repercussions for enforcement officers who lie or exaggerate claims to justify entering my private residence and seizing animals and/or possessions which 'Enforcement Officers' deem as evidence."

4. Do you have any comments in relation to the animal protection issues associated with puppy and/or kitten farming?

Respondents identified the following animal protection concerns: the importance of breeding limits; medical and hygiene standards; mandatory de-sexing; and the need to promote animal adoption from rescue organisations and shelters rather than the sale of puppies and kittens:

- "A cap of 10 breeding dogs, a limit of two litters per female, ban pet shop sales, ensure the animals living quarters are good, eg: no darkness, caged for long periods of time, allow socialisation, stop breeding after an amount of litters."
- "I am also concerned about the tens of thousands of abandoned, unwanted companion animals in shelters and pounds due to the oversupply of puppies and kittens to capricious buyers who don't consider the commitment required to take on the responsibility of an animal's lifelong welfare and then dump them in shelters when they're no longer convenient. Dogs and cats are sentient beings who deserve better."
- "It's driven by profit not care or love of the animals. It should be stopped. Animals are not afforded a basic life of love and care instead are kept in deplorable circumstances, denied a loving home, access to proper exercise, mistreated, denied necessary medical treatment just so the owners can breed them as hard as possible to increase their profits. It is unacceptable and cannot continue."
- "The conditions these 'breeders' are allowed to keep these animals in is totally inadequate. Sizing of enclosures does not accommodate for giant breeds and without proper registration, animal numbers held and bred grow. All cats and dogs need to have mandatory desexing to limit the ability of these 'people' to breed and a limit should be placed on how often an animal can be bred from."
- "The public should be informed that there are so many animals looking for homes that they should rather consider giving these a safe haven than encouraging breeding of dogs/cats, the breeds of which are a current fad and will pass as another new fad arises."

Meanwhile, other respondents worried about "over-regulating" the industry and instead called for better enforcement of existing regulations and requirements, and educating the general public on where to source puppies and kittens from reputable legitimate ethical breeders:

- "Animals involved in breeding are already protected by POCTA. The emphasis needed to protect them further is community education so that the general public stop buying animals from illegitimate source, which in turn encourages said sources to continue. Over regulating the industry is not going to stop people that are currently doing the wrong thing. If anything, more regulations are just going to make breeders that are lawful reduce the availability of quality offspring and open up the market to underground dealers that are harder to detect or cause more sight unseen sales as the public go interstate for more obtainable animals - sight unseen opens up a huge market for the unlawful dealers."
- "Commercial breeders are breeding for profit which can lead to cutting corners to maximise profits. Existing laws need to be better enforced to find those who are not "doing the right thing". Many hobby breeders, particularly pure breed breeders do not consider profit at all and are driven by a love of their breed and desire to produce the best dogs they can with good temperaments and reliable features that make their breed what it is. Both can be covered by current legislation but should not be treated as a 'one size fits all' situation."

- "Education of prospective puppy or kitten purchasers is the key rather than over regulation of honest and ethical breeders. Better research and targeting by enforcement officers would help ensure that the unethical and cruel puppy farmers are brought to account, rather than simply terrorise breeders who love their dogs and provide wonderful healthy conditions for them."

5. Do you have any comments in relation to the consumer protection issues associated with the sale of pets from puppy and/or kitten farms online or in pet shops?

The majority of respondents called for a ban on the sale of puppies and kittens through pet shops and online markets (e.g. Gumtree), also proposing that breeders should be verified and registered. Many respondents also called for minimum age limits for puppies and kittens to be sold, along with mandatory de-sexing, microchipping, vaccination, and health checks before sale:

- "Animals should not be allowed to be sold online. Prospective buyers need to see the animal they wish to purchase, in its current surroundings, and judge whether it would make a suitable pet before committing. This could reduce some impulse buying without giving the idea proper diligence, thus reducing high abandonment rates."
- "All forms of marketing and sales that enable a non-educated decision, impulse purchase and unverified welfare suitability of the new home should be banned. People who sell animals should be legally responsible for who they sell them to and for it to be properly registered."
- "Impose a consumer ban on any online purchases from unregistered breeders and prohibit any sales through pet shops sourced from unregistered breeders. Consumers can easily verify genuine registered breeders via their registering organisation. Registered breeders already comply with the legislation - enforcement simply needs to eradicate those operating outside of the legislation."
- "A Registered Certificate of Breeding should accompany each Animal Bred."
- "Pet shops should not be allowed to sell any puppies or kittens from breeders, they should only be allowed to promote and sell those needing homes from shelters. People should not be allowed to purchase these animals without having a microchip, being fully vaccinated, tested and have a clean bill of health, and be desexed before allowing any home to have an animal."
- "Puppies and kittens in pet shops are often sold under age. A puppy shouldn't be sold under 8-10 weeks. Online sales should be stopped on Gumtree, Facebook and other social media sites as they are rife with scammers."

Other respondents commented on the need to verify and control breeders who sell online or through pet shops, and the role of consumer education in ensuring prospective purchasers are fully informed:

- "Online advertisements should show the full details of the business, including ABN and any other pertinent information. Pet shops should be able to produce a certificate showing the source of the animal, microchip and vaccination details."

- "Pet shops need to have more information readily available for consumers about where the puppies come from. Any provider of animals to pet shops should be registered breeders that have strong ethical practices and or rescue groups."
- "A lot of ppl are clueless that puppy farms exist and buy puppies off gumtree. These consumers need awareness of how to buy /adopt a dog responsibly. There needs to be a way of validating that a breeder is legitimate and providing proper care for the animals."

Numerous respondents also spoke about the need to regulate the price of puppies and kittens:

- "Ban sale in pet shops and use a registered breeder and vet approved website to sell online. There must also be a cap on the price charged for any dog, COVID prices for puppies are sheer greed."
- "Both online & pet shops should NOT be able to sell cross-breeds at the same prices of registered breeds. All lineage of puppies & kittens MUST declared & paperwork supplied for same. Pedigree puppies & kittens being sold are to include lineage papers to enable authenticity. Breeders of animals sold either online or in pet shops need to have a duty of care & be able to be contacted by consumers if they have questions."

Some respondents didn't think there should be any consumer protection for people who purchase puppies or kittens:

- "If people are stupid enough to buy from these people, no I don't think they should be protected. If anything they should be charged with something like buying stolen goods knowingly. I'm sorry but it is these people that are keeping these farms alive."

6. Do you have any other comments?

The overwhelming majority of respondents called for the end of puppy and kitten farming, with a number calling for more support to rehome pets in shelters. Many noted that the recent laws enacted in Victoria have led to more puppy farms operating in NSW, and advocated for our state to follow Victoria's legislation regulating dog and cat breeding, with tight rules on the breeding and sale of cats and dogs, and harsh penalties for non-compliance:

- "A ban on unscrupulous breeders is long overdue. This has been a problem for decades."
- "Apparently with the recent outlawing of puppy farms in Victoria, it seems that operators are coming over the border to set up business here in NSW thus intensifying the associated welfare abuses, oversupply and euthanasia of healthy animals in our shelters. All the more reason to fast track the banning of this industry here."
- "Backyard breeding must end. As a society we need to step up and stop the influx of unwanted animals into shelters, all for the sake of profit. Dogs and cats are not commodities to be bought on whim and disposed of in the same way. The endless supply of dogs and cats must stop. We are dealing with living creatures who feel pain the same way that humans do, yet have no protections from harm in the way that we do. The pet industry that makes billions from the sale of animals must be brought under greater scrutiny and accountability and faced with serious repercussions for failing to comply with applicable laws and standards."

- "Let's follow interstate leads and update NSW to where it eradicates cruel and inhumane behaviours driven by greed."
- "People involved in puppy & cat farming need to be heavily fined and the industry needs to be much tighter regulated, animal protection needs to be foremost in all areas."
- "When similar legislation was passed in Victoria many businesses moved across to NSW to continue their activities here. This must stop. It is no longer acceptable in the general community to treat companion animals like this. We are as a nation, pet lovers who would consider their pets as part of the family. We recognise the worth of animals, as we saw during pandemic lockdowns and the personal solace a companion animal can provide in difficult times. Let's do the right thing and amend the Bill."

A number of respondents also suggested mandatory microchipping, spay and neutering of all dogs and cats sold, as well as a state-wide database of all registered breeders:

- "Australia requires much harsher penalties for the abuse of animals in all its forms in order to prevent any further crime against them. There needs to be a policing organisation separate to the police (to reduce workload) and the RSPCA (they do not have the manpower or resources) which is government funded and nationwide to ensure all animals within Australia are acknowledged and respected and cared for properly as they deserve."
- "Breeders need to be registered & have an identification number that consumers can validate & research. The term breeder needs to be redefined. Cross breeds come from puppy farmers, who charge extraordinary amounts for their puppies & kittens, & they need to be stamped out to avoid further overpopulation & overcrowding of pounds/rescues. If they cannot be stamped out, then they need regulating to ensure the health & safety of the animals they breed & breed with."
- "A significant proportion of the work of rescuing, fostering, caring for, and finding homes for the thousands of homeless dogs in Australia is performed by not-for-profit shelters, adoption groups, and networks of foster homes. These entities are primarily funded by community donations, state government grants, and bequests and are often heavily reliant on volunteers to sustain their work. Many are permanently overwhelmed and often refuse to accept animals because they have no room. Stopping puppy farming in New South Wales would help reduce the burden on volunteers and the community as a whole."
- "All pets must be sterilised and only breeders who are put in a statewide data base should be allowed to engage in breeding. There should also be a data base which shows people who have engaged in back yard breeding and have been convicted of exploitation. The kind of data that is put in a microchip for the dog must be more extensive and contain data on the breeder: there are too many animals that are suffering in horrible conditions due to sheer exploitation. Please also have a yearly state wide media campaign to educate people against buying pets from unscrupulous breeders, how to identify credible breeders as well as the penalties for violation. Please also educate the public on the need to adopt from shelters rather than buying Pets. Thank you."

Other respondents expressed concern for the welfare and health of the dogs and cats within the industry:

- "Having volunteered in animal shelters I have seen firsthand what the puppy and/or kitten farmers are capable of. They dump their 'spent' breeding animals once they are no longer profitable, all with health and severe dental issues, and many needing to be euthanised."

That these 'farms' are still legal in NSW is shameful and legislation must be passed to stop them."

- "Animals suffer from genetic disorders just as humans do and puppy farms are not inclined to give a damn about the genetic lines they are breeding. These animals end up suffering as they age and are sometimes left untreated due to owners not being able to afford the vet bills. This can all be avoided by proper regulation of registered breeders who take pride in the lineage of their animals."

A small number of respondents did not support the bill, particularly the definition of "puppy farm". They were concerned that legitimate breeders would be unfairly "lumped in" with unethical backyard breeders. These respondents believe that the proposed changes to the industry, including new regulations, will significantly reduce the number of puppies and kittens available for purchase, with a corresponding increase in the price of cats and dogs. They called for organisations such as Dogs NSW and the Australian National Kennel Club (ANKC) to be consulted before any changes are made to the legislation:

- "Care must be taken to not make regulations so onerous that small, caring breeders whose animals are much loved pets and who undertaken genetic and other prenatal testing to try to ensure the health of puppies are not forced out of breeding."
- "The Bill will not solve the problem but serve to drive out the genuine hobby breeders whilst simply driving unethical players further underground, escalate the cost of a pet to average families and discourage ethical preservationist hobby breeders with a desire to breed health sound puppies into extinction along with the breeds they seek to preserve."
- "I have been involved with dogs for over 40 yrs. I have seen the joy they bring to people. They give comfort to children, elderly, and assist people with illness. The way our country is going there will be no breeds that are viable left available for a person to spend their lives with. Gene pools will be destroyed and only cross-bred dogs with massive health issues will remain. Please consider all proposed bills so that they are for the purposes they were designed for. Not to desecrate life as we know it."
- "The proposed over regulation will lead to either restricted availability of kittens and pups with an associated increase in their price leading to them being beyond the reach of many families (thus depriving the next generation of the opportunity to learn how to interact with and care for pets) or to a booming business in illicit breeding. Or possibly both! Over breeding is not the problem here. The problem is lack of knowledge on the part of consumers. As a veterinarian I see many people happy to spend many thousands of dollars to buy a cute puppy go on the neglect and/or inadvertently abuse the resulting dog due to their ignorance and/or unwillingness to commit the necessary time and resources the pup needs. This is not the fault of the breeder."
- "I think Dogs NSW or the new Dogs Australia have the best interests of purebred dogs and breeders at heart and the members and breeders are passionate about their dogs and various breeds and should not be lumped in with the likes of puppy farmers that just cross breed dogs of all descriptions."
- "I'm not a breeder, but I think the ANKC's "National Code of Practice of Responsible Dog Ownership" is a good place to start. Some of the clauses in the bill are too harsh and will penalise and discourage reputable registered breeders. I think the bill should align with this Code."

Conclusion

The online questionnaire has served as a valuable tool to efficiently gather the views of interested stakeholders on the issues raised in the terms of reference. A snapshot of these views have been presented in this report. The information gathered through the questionnaire will inform committee members and will feed into the inquiry report. The committee may also use the responses to support its findings and conclusions.

Appendix 1: List of questions

1. Please enter your contact details
Name:
Email address:
Postcode:
2. Are you a resident of NSW? Select one of these options:
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
3. Do you have any comments on the current framework regulating dog and cat breeders in NSW, including but not limited to:
 - a. Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1979 (NSW),
 - b. Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Regulation 2012 (NSW),
 - c. NSW Animal Welfare Code of Practice: Breeding Dogs and Cats?
4. Would you like to see laws to stop puppy farming?
5. If yes, what should laws to ban puppy farming look like?
6. If no, please explain why?
7. The Companion Animals Amendment (Puppy Farms) Bill 2021 states that its objects are to amend the Companion Animals Act 1998 to:
 - a. Regulate the conduct of businesses breeding companion animals and other companion animal businesses, and
 - b. Provide enforcement powers for the purposes of regulating the conduct of companion animal businesses.Based on your own understanding and the information above, do you have any comments on the Companion Animals Amendment (Puppy Farms) Bill 2021?
8. Do you have any comment in relation to the animal protection issues associated with puppy and/or kitten farming?
9. Do you have any comments in relation to the consumer protection issues associated with the sale of pets from puppy and/or kitten farms online and in pet shops?
10. Do you have any other comments?