

## INQUIRY INTO ANIMAL CRUELTY LAWS IN NEW SOUTH WALES

**Organisation:** Australian Association of Pet Dog Breeders

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# Introduction to the Australian Association of Pet Dog Breeders

## Submission to the Enquiry into Animal Cruelty Laws

November 2019



Ethical, Responsible breeders of Healthy,  
Family Pets

The Australian Association of Pet Dog Breeders Inc. (AAPDB) was formed as an Incorporated Association in 2007 and was recognised as a breeder body in New South Wales in 2012. It has national membership and is applying for recognition in other States and Territories.

The AAPDB was formed to introduce standards and ethics in pet dog breeding and to provide a voice for pet dog breeders. It remains a relatively small, but influential voice. Membership is increasing rapidly as a result of increasing demand from consumers for quality assurance in pet dog breeding.

In order to provide quality assurance, the AAPDB, in 2010, was the first dog breeding organisation in Australia (and possibly the world) to require all full members to undergo a mandatory, annual, independent, welfare focused quality assurance audit, carried out by a licensed veterinarian.

Breeders joining the AAPDB have a 3-month probationary period before they must undergo the annual audit. It is not possible for breeders to renew a probationary membership. NSW has the most breeder members. They range from home based breeders with 1-4 dogs to large professional kennels.

The AAPDB is the only breeding organisation in Australia which embrace both purebred and crossbred dog breeders. The AAPDB does not register dogs, only breeders, and does not regulate what members breed, but rather how they breed their dogs, how they sell their dogs, their after sales obligations and whether the dogs they breed are suitable for the families who purchase them.

AAPDB auditing veterinarians are requested to audit on the AAPDB code of ethics, rather than the Code of Practice for Dog Breeders in their jurisdiction, because we are an Australia wide organization and Codes of Practice vary across Australia. We ensure that all members are aware of the Code of Practice in their State or Territory, and relevant legislation affecting dog breeders, before they are able to join the Association as probationary members. This information is also available in the members area of our web site.

The annual AAPDB audit risks a potential conflict of interest as veterinarians usually audit their clients. The association trusts the integrity and professionalism of veterinarians but recognises that an arm's length auditing process has advantages. However, it is beyond the resources of our organization to establish an auditing body.

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### The Pet Dog Breeding Industry Associations.

Dog breeding is a highly politicised and emotionally charged subject and the pet dog breeding industry is under attack from outside and is deeply divided within the industry. Pet dog breeders are represented by the AAPDB Inc and by Master Dog Breeders<sup>1</sup> who register purebred dogs and do not allow cross breeding except in breed development. Both organisations are regularly criticised by fellow breeders belonging to the Australian National Kennel Club and its State bodies.

The ANKC breed clubs register purebred dogs and show dogs for a hobby and register approximately 70,000 puppies each year<sup>2</sup>. The majority of ANKC registered dogs become pets, however the ethics of these clubs specifically reject the view that breeding pet dogs is an appropriate goal in itself.

Hobby breeders breed dogs to specific standards which relate to conformation and behaviour. These standards relate to the original roles the dogs were bred for, such as hunting, guarding or herding. Breeders have been criticised by behaviourists for not making suitable pet temperament a primary considerations<sup>3</sup> and

by geneticists for breeding practices which have caused increasing loss of genetic diversity in their dogs, leading to significant loss of health and life expectancy<sup>4</sup>. This has led to acknowledgment that sensible crossbreeding is an appropriate way to produce healthy, appropriate pet dogs<sup>5</sup>.

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### **Challenge to all dog breeders – Adopt don't Shop.**

Animal rights activists typically argue that **all dog breeders** are contributing to dog overpopulation and so to the death of dogs in shelters. They single out professional breeders as the cause of hundreds of thousands of deaths in pounds<sup>6</sup>.

These figures are repeated without any support across the internet, however the research into the issue of euthanasia in pounds and shelters by Queensland University Veterinary School estimates there were 211,655 dog admissions in pounds across Australia. Of these admissions 101,037 were reclaimed, 66,443 rehomed and 43,900 euthanased<sup>7</sup>.

There are currently estimated to be 4.8 million pet dogs living in Australian households<sup>8</sup>. Given a reasonable estimate of the median life expectancy of this dog population as 11 years<sup>9</sup>, maintaining this population requires approximately 436,000 puppies each year. If all dogs in shelters were rehomed there would still be an approximately 393,000 shortfall in the number of puppies required to maintain our pet dog population. While 43,000 is an unfortunate number of lives lost, clearly these figures do not support the view that euthanasia rates relate to overpopulation.

The problem of unwanted dogs is related to random or inappropriate breeding and poor socialisation. This is clear from the research which shows that the dogs predominantly surrendered are cross bred with Staffordshire Bull Terrier, Kelpie and Cattle dog and the reason more than half of all dogs are euthanised is because of aggression<sup>10</sup>. These dogs are not breeds bred by professional pet breeders<sup>11</sup>. Currently half of all pet dogs are obtained from a breeder (36%), a pet store (14%) or an animal shelters (16%) with 30% of dogs, which disproportionately contribute to the pound population, being acquired for free from sources such as neighbours<sup>10</sup>.

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### **The importance of the pet dog industry**

Nearly 2 in 5 Australian families own a dog and, as discussed, maintaining this pet dog population requires approximately 436,000 puppies each year. While the economic size and importance of this industry is undeniable it must be remembered that pet dog ownership has repeatedly been shown to have benefits to physical and mental health, particularly in older people<sup>12,13,14</sup>.

Veterinarians, shelter workers, research scientists, groomers, insurance companies, pet supplies companies, dog food companies, dog walkers, pet minders, dog trainers, dog boarding kennels and more, are all dependant on dog breeders to maintain this \$2,500,000.00 pet dog industry<sup>15</sup>.

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### **Breeding for Profit**

Pet dog breeders, whether they breed to supplement their income or as their main source of income, are accused from within and outside the industry of "breeding for profit" because they do not "breed to improve the breed" which is the hobby breeder's rationale for breeding dogs. It is assumed or implied that pet dog breeder's profit motive is placed ahead of breeding dog's welfare and the future welfare of the puppies. Everyone in this \$2,500,000 industry derive their income from pet dog breeding, but only the breeders are singled out and judged on their motives rather than their actions.

There is no doubt that sub-standard pet dog breeders do exist. Fortunately the pet dog buying public is increasingly aware now of the risk of buying a dog from a "backyard breeder" or a "puppy farm" and this market pressure, as well as increasing enforcement of State regulations, is making it increasingly difficult for sub-standard breeders to profit.

Most dog breeders enter the industry because they love dogs and think it could be a profitable enterprise. Some realise it is challenging and are not up to the challenge, some cut corners on welfare, fly under the radar and when discovered make national television, and some become overwhelmed, and depressed and end up as ‘collectors’ with serious mental issues.

Good, successful pet dog breeders, who are in the industry for the long term, feel privileged to work with wonderful animals and recognise that they have obligations to their dogs, their puppies and their new owners. Good dog breeders get enormous satisfaction from bringing many years of joy to Australian families.

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### **Enforcement of POCTA**

New South Wales has a good Breeding Dogs, Code of Practice<sup>16</sup>(COP), although some minimum standards need to be reconsidered. The RSPCA Position Paper 5<sup>16</sup> addresses responsible breeding and what constitutes a responsible breeder. The AAPDB fully supports this Position Paper and compliance with AAPDB ethics ensure that our members are responsible breeders<sup>17</sup>.

The RSPCA is highly respected by the NSW public and has many years of expertise in animal welfare enforcement. It has an established network for inspection of cruelty complaints but needs more support for its role in enforcing the NSW Breeding Dogs, Code of Practice. There are concerns that enforcement of the COP is not adequate and enforcement relies too heavily on complaints from the public. The AAPDB believes that an Annual Compliance Audit of all registered dog breeders should be considered.

Under newly introduced legislation and registration requirements all breeders selling dogs, on any platform in NSW, can be identified. The Government has initiatives underway to increase enforcement of the COP and while the AAPDB fully supports increased funding to the RSPCA for enforcement of the NSW COP it is perhaps appropriate that steps be taken to introduce annual compliance auditing of all dog breeders which may be beyond the scope of the RSPCA charter. Currently there are minimal requirements for Breeders to apply for and receive a Breeder Identification Number (BIN). Possibly a compliance Audit on application, prior to receiving a BIN, would minimise the need and number of Audits required. This may also lessen the workload in, not only number of follow-up Audits required, but in subsequent actions against those Breeders not meeting COP compliance.

Pet stores which sell puppies are under constant attack from animal activists as outlets for “puppy Farms”, but in NSW these stores are one outlet where sales and husbandry can be easily regulated and where, under the newly introduced NSW legislation, the source of puppies can be identified. The AAPDB supports ethical, responsible pet stores and supports Annual Auditing and strong enforcement of the Code of Practice for Pet Stores,

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### **AAPDB Recommendations for Improved Regulation of the industry**

1. The AAPDB strongly supports the role of the RSPCA for enforcement of the NSW COP under current legislation and believes RSPCA should be better funded for this role. The AAPDB believes that there is a need for an efficient auditing system to monitor all pet dog breeders identified on the NSW Companion Animal Register.
2. AAPDB’s supports the RSPCA as possibly the only truly independent body with the authority to act on the spot in COP breaches and animal welfare or cruelty cases, across the entire Dog Breeding industry. The RSPCA has the processes and infrastructure in place, an increase in funding by the NSW Government, is required to increase the resources and staff to enforce the NSW COP, POCTA and Compliance,
3. Alternatively, the Greyhound Welfare and Integrity Commission provides an independent auditing body for all greyhound breeders, with the RSPCA being called in when breaches of the Greyhound COP involve welfare. It could be argued that the role of this body, which is at arm’s length from industry and has established expertise in auditing dog breeding facilities, could be expanded to audit all dog breeding establishments with the RSPCA being involved when breaches of the COP involve animal welfare. Again,

increased funding would be required, and it may increase pressure on this body to 'gear up' for the change. Unfortunately, there is still a negative public perception of the Greyhound Industry and for the Pet Dog Breeding Industry, working hard to improve its own public image, this option would have to be well managed if Public approval is to be considered.

Either of these options, or a similar new independent body, could be partially funded by increased fees for all entire dogs registered with the NSW Companion Animal Register.

4. Breeder identification in advertising has been introduced but regrettably there is an exemption which allows microchip numbers to be used for "one off litters". This loophole will be exploited by unscrupulous breeders. The AAPDB recommends that this be revisited and that no puppies should be permitted to be advertised without a Breeder Identification Number traceable to the person responsible for breeding the puppies.
5. The AAPDB believes that there should be no differentiation between breeders based on their motives for breeding or their association affiliations. All breeders must be judged on equal terms under the NSW COP and effective regulation should apply to all dog breeders without exception.
6. Euthanasia of dogs in pounds is a serious welfare issue and the AAPDB policy has long been that Government should address:
  - Free education about responsible dog ownership, targeted at low-income communities with high abandonment rates.
  - Subsidised or free de-sexing programs targeted at the same communities.
  - Support campaigns for more 'pet friendly' rental accommodation.
  - Compulsory Breeder Identification for everyone who breeds and sells puppies.
  - Increased policing and enforcement of existing State and Local government regulations regarding all dog breeders regardless of the number of dogs they own or their motive for keeping breeding dogs.

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1. <https://www.mdba.net.au/>
  2. [http://ankc.org.au/media/9303/rego-stats-list\\_2010-2019v4.pdf](http://ankc.org.au/media/9303/rego-stats-list_2010-2019v4.pdf)
  3. <https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fvets.2019.00241/full>
  4. [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/233670946\\_Welfare\\_concerns\\_associated\\_with\\_pedigree\\_dog\\_breeding\\_in\\_the\\_UK](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/233670946_Welfare_concerns_associated_with_pedigree_dog_breeding_in_the_UK)
  5. <https://www.ingentaconnect.com/contentone/ufaw/aw/1999/00000008/00000004/art00004>
  6. <https://alq.org.au/adopt-dont-shop>
  7. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5532565/>
  8. <https://kb.rspca.org.au/knowledge-base/how-many-pets-are-there-in-australia/>
  9. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/21029096>
  10. <https://www.mdpi.com/2076-2615/7/9/67/htm>
  11. <https://www.aapdb.com.au/full-member-listing/>
  12. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2783630/>
  13. <https://www.bmj.com/content/331/7527/1252.short>
  14. <https://www.seniors.com.au/pet-insurance/discover/seniors-benefit-owning-pets>
  15. [http://animalmedicinesaustralia.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/AMA\\_Pet-Ownership-in-Australia-2016-Report\\_sml.pdf](http://animalmedicinesaustralia.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/AMA_Pet-Ownership-in-Australia-2016-Report_sml.pdf)
  16. <https://kb.rspca.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/PP-A5-Responsible-companion-animal-breeding.pdf>
  17. <https://www.aapdb.com.au/about-us/>
  18. [https://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/data/assets/pdf\\_file/0004/299803/Breeding-dogs-and-cats-code-of-practice.pdf](https://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/data/assets/pdf_file/0004/299803/Breeding-dogs-and-cats-code-of-practice.pdf)