

**Submission
No 15**

INQUIRY INTO PUPPY FARMING IN NEW SOUTH WALES

Name: Jason Gram
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TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

I would like to make comment on the:
Companion Bills Amendment (Puppy Farms) Bill 2021.
Introduced by the Hon Emma Hurst, MLC.

This bill if passed, will completely decimate the pet industry in NSW.

I have been in this industry for 27 years and my store (Room 4 Pets) in Bondi Westfield is one of the most highly regarded pet stores in NSW. From our store alone we have rehomed well over 1,300 Rescue Pets (including many elderly and special needs ones that are exceedingly difficult for the shelters to re-home) and our reputation is based upon sourcing high quality pets, for loving homes.

This proposed amendment attempts to ban the sale of kittens and puppies (other than rescues) through pet stores. Our ability to rehome the number of rescues we do, comes from selling purebred and designer puppies and kittens, without this rehoming of rescues would also drop off dramatically.

Here's a few relevant facts:

* If we cannot sell puppies and kittens through our store (only Rescue Pets as proposed), my store and every other pet store I know of, will not be able to pay the shopping centre rents. We will have no choice but to close and my 8 staff will lose their jobs and me my livelihood. This will be repeated in shopping centres across the state resulting in thousands of (lower socio-economic) job losses.

Please do not think this Bill will result in Rescue Dogs being sold in pet stores, it will result in the closure of pet stores.

* If you visit or speak to people who work in pounds and animal shelters, they will tell you the vast majority of the dogs that end up there are Staffy crosses, Cattle dog crosses etc, which on the whole are un-microchipped (every pet coming from a pet store is microchipped). They simply are not Cavoodles, Moodles, or other designer type dogs sold in pet stores. This bill would put us out of business, despite the overwhelming majority of dogs at the shelters not having come from us.

* Our shop gives a **Lifetime** Rehoming Guarantee, so none of ours would ever end up in a shelter.

* The closure of hundreds of pet stores which will be the result of this bill, would have a huge multiple effect on vets, product suppliers, breeders and shopping centres themselves in NSW. The job losses would be MASSIVE.

* Pet stores currently are **highly** regulated. RSPCA etc can come in at any moment and have full access to all my breeder records. All our puppies and kittens are heartworm/flea/intestinal worm treated, vaccinated, microchipped, come with a written health guarantee, one month's free insurance, a free vet check before and after purchase, free desexing for Rescue Pets, free health coverage and a Lifetime Rehoming Guarantee. This bill will force the closure of pet stores and put all the power into the hands of backyard breeders and people who currently sell unregulated on the internet.

* I am not sure of the exact current figures, however generally less than 10% of dogs and cats have been sourced from a pet store, yet most traditional pet stores in NSW will be put out of business by this bill.

I believe the main aim of this bill is twofold: the first being to stop puppy farming (which I wholeheartedly support), the second being to reduce the numbers of animals that end up in shelters across NSW every year (which I again definitely support). However, stopping the sale of pets through pet stores, and restricting breeders to having a maximum of 2 litters from each female dog will achieve neither of the above objectives of the bill and is attacking this problem at the wrong end.

I know this seems like a relatively easy fix, and apart from the issues it will cause listed above, it will cause more harm than good. In reality, one must accept that there is huge demand from the general public to buy puppies and kittens and this will not stop. By severely restricting breeding and then the sale of ethically sourced puppies/kittens through pet stores, all that will happen is the cost of puppies and kittens will rise dramatically, the difficulty in sourcing puppies and kittens for potential owners will rise dramatically also, and these two factors will drive a surge in unregulated black market puppy/kitten farming and illegal sales of puppies/kittens from these places.

I firmly believe that all puppy farms need to be shut down, but the targeting needs to happen at the source of the puppy farming – either a body needs to be created, or powers given to a body such as the RSPCA to track down these puppy farms and institute severe penalties to the people running them. This is the only real solution!

Apart from a proper regulatory body for breeding which can police puppy farms, may I suggest a few other better solutions than those listed in the bill so I can be a part of the solution:

- Give whichever regulatory body formed to police puppy farms proper powers to give punishments that are bad enough as to actually dissuade puppy farmers.
- Also give this same body the powers to properly regulate breeders and pet stores (as a pet store owner I am more than happy to be well regulated and I believe all pet stores should be to ensure that they are run ethically)
- DO NOT restrict female dogs to 2 litters for the life of their breeding – instead ensure that they are bred ethically by ensuring only 1 litter per year up to the age at which a veterinarian recommends they are no longer bred from.
- Allow pet stores to sell ethically sourced puppies, but make it a requirement of pet stores to sell a certain percentage of rescue animals as well.

I beg you not to support this bill. The impact would be devastating on the pet industry and the job losses would be enormous. It will not improve the numbers of dogs in shelters because they basically have not come from pet stores, and pet stores if this bill comes into effect will not be around to find homes for them anyway. This bill will in no way diminish puppy farming, but will in fact have the opposite effect.

Very kind regards

Jason Gram (Proprietor – Room 4 Pets)