

**Submission
No 130**

INQUIRY INTO ANIMAL WELFARE POLICY IN NEW SOUTH WALES

Organisation: Robelletoy Poodles

Date Received: 26 February 2022

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Hon. Kevin Anderson MP
Ground Floor, 13 Fitzroy Street
TAMWORTH NSW 2340

Dear Mr Anderson,

Re: Draft Animal Welfare Bill 2022

Thank you for taking the time to read this letter and hear our concerns about the above Draft Bill. Obviously everyone should be concerned about Animal welfare in our country, no one more than people who already own, breed and show pedigree dogs. These dogs are loved and cared for with the utmost commitment and are kept in nothing like the awful conditions that we sometimes see in the media at what we know as 'puppy farms.'

Our concern and the concern of all recognised/registered breeders is that the Draft Bill as it stands will only serve to rule out small hobby breeders who take proper care of their pets. The real effect of this Bill will be to enhance rather than limit the puppy farms and so we would plead with you to oppose this Bill and not let it become law. Currently puppy farms come under no restrictions whatsoever and are often granted local council 'licenses' to own and operate massive puppy farms which are usually not even inspected. Everyone who really cares about dogs are very concerned about this.

Members of the recognised Australia wide ANKC (now 'Dogs Australia') and more specifically Dogs NSW for us, already have an extensive Code of Ethics; strict criteria for housing - with inspections; financial membership which includes registration and rules for each puppy; limits on the number of permitted litters; age of the breeding females and so on. It is very strict, works very effectively and the penalties are severe.

What we would like to see is for Dogs NSW (and their members) to be made exempt from the current Bill so that fully registered hobby breeders like us can continue to have the few numbers of litters we have each year and be able to own and show our dogs through the current system. The exemption is already in place for greyhounds and 'working dogs'.

What really would solve the problem of puppy farms is more/better inspectors, which of course requires funding. The current Bill – which will be so difficult to police, will see many genuine registered and certified breeders completely wiped out while the large non-caring puppy farm industry thrives. The easiest way at the moment to find any breeders is through the legitimate groups that function already, using their data bases. There will be no way of finding these massive puppy farms because they are very experienced at flying under the radar. This Bill won't change that.

Dogs NSW has already had people from animal welfare groups gain access to breeders details and subsequent puppy litters as these are easy to attain, but they don't have an easy way of finding out who the puppy farmers are.

A better way would be to stop Councils in NSW approving licenses for puppy farms for numbers over 10 or 12 breeding age females. We are aware of a couple of puppy farms that were recently granted Council approval for 100 and 300 dogs respectively. Most hobby breeders have under 10 females and like us take very good care of 'our girls.' We currently have two litters from very healthy mums – one litter is in our family room and one is in the spare bedroom – our dogs are housed inside and if expecting a litter the girls sleep in the bedroom with us. They have free access to the backyard and come and go as they please. They are well fed and under the care of our local Vet. All are vaccinated and micro chipped. We do everything right and our dogs are part of our family. We abide by the Dogs NSW Code of Ethics by not over breeding the girls and resting them regularly.

One of the items in the proposed Bill is that male studs should be de-sexed at 6 yrs. Our Australian Champion stud 'Yoda' has just turned 6 – he is very healthy and fit and gives us beautiful healthy puppies. He doesn't need to be de-sexed now at all – there is no reason for it. This Bill also proposes that a female can only have 2 litters and then must be de-sexed. This is also not necessary as any Vet will tell you if the bitch is well and healthy and has no trouble delivering. What the Bill will do is create a massive excess of females in the market – females who will have had 2 litters then are de-sexed and disposed so the puppy farms can replace them under their number limit with more breeding females. While the purpose of the Bill is to reduce the number of surrendered and rescue dogs it will in fact have the opposite effect entirely by creating a massive new group of surrendered dogs.

In addition to our concerns here, we have attached a recent Dogs NSW media release which highlights the most serious concerns shared by all their members. There are many statements in the Draft Bill that just haven't been thought through carefully and also many terms which are not defined or clarified – leaving it open for an individual inspector or council to interpret it how they wish and then the only recourse is legal action, which of course the large puppy farms can afford but most of the smaller, reputable registered hobby breeders cannot.

Please note we would be more than happy for anyone to see how we care for our dogs at any time. They are loved, respected and treated very well and our Vets also know this. I spoke with one of our Vets last week and she knew nothing about this proposed Bill. If Vets across NSW have not been consulted on masse then who is it that is providing the appropriate and responsible information for this Bill to be considered and discussed?

We would be happy to answer any further questions or provide any information you might find helpful. Our concern is that the premise behind this whole Bill from the Animal Welfare/PETA people is that they want NO animals kept by humans. So their criteria is a direct attack on the great Australian love that we have for our family pets. We would plead with your Government to find a better way to stop the cruel treatment of animals that doesn't take a 'shotgun approach' and actually take out all the ones who are doing the right thing.

Surely a simple answer would be for registered hobby breeders with under 10 breeding aged bitches to be exempt. Local Council permits can be given for larger organisations but be limited to 30 breeding bitches. Then easy inspections can occur and rules can be enforced.

Thank you again for your time and your service to our community.

Kind regards

Michelle Griffith
Robelletoy Poodles

Media Release

February 11, 2022



DOGS NSW WARNS BILL WILL CRIPPLE DOG OWNERSHIP

DOGS NSW President Lyn Brand explains why proposed legislation will have a devastating effect on the industry.

When did you last see a stray dog that was eating from a bin in the street, malnourished, distressed and – worst of all – unwanted?

Most likely you have seen none because these days pet owners cherish their animals. When you see a dog in the street, it will be on its lead or harness, sitting with its family at an outdoor café, part of a community.

The pandemic has changed the place of companion animals in homes. Laws shore up the rights and obligations of owners, pets and neighbours.



But proposed legislation, with massive over-reach, threatens not just to keep strays off the streets but also to remove our pets from our homes or yards.

In the NSW Upper House, the Animal Justice Party is promoting the Companion Animals Amendment (Puppy Farms) Bill 2021, mainly aimed at eliminating, as it says, puppy farms – a practice that my purebreed organisation, DOGS NSW, abhors. Other key aims include limiting puppy and kitten sales (the Bill covers dogs and cats) in pet shops.

The Bill, at best misguided, aims to curb “intensive breeding of companion animals” by capping the number of dogs a breeder can have and the number of litters. Under these limits, genuine and responsible purebred kennels become the low-hanging branch, as they account for just 13.4% per cent of dogs bred in NSW.

DOGS NSW members observe their own code of ethics and follow rigorous standards of welfare and certification. Anyone who breaches these will be penalised or suspended -- but, if the amendments pass, some breeders could become instant outlaws. The proposed limits are: 10 breeding animals; two litters only from each female, then they must be desexed; and males to be castrated at six years of age.

Legislation like this will be counter-productive. It will tug at the heartstrings but it will break hearts. It will push good people out and open the door to yet more dodgy businesses. It will restrict access to outside bloodlines and potentially spell the end of some breeds.

And it will deny people the companion or pet, puppy or kitten, of their choice because scarcity will push prices up, even if you can find a breeder with available litters or you can wait months or longer for one to arrive from restricted mating.

Meanwhile, cross-breeding kennels fill demand, producing dogs with sought-after coat colours and other traits and, anecdotally, getting tens of thousands of dollars for them.

There are draconian measures in the Bill, for example, local council officers being authorised to seize animals without recourse – from a licensed, regulated and caring operation and a breeder who microchips his new litter and certifies their fitness for sale.

How will that measure apply to the “farmer” who goes under the radar, selling puppies from a facility where bitches are bred constantly in horrendous conditions. The farmer, if he comes to the attention of animal welfare inspectors, moves further north, west or south to another isolated shed.

The Bill seeks to wipe out this practice but has the potential to persecute the people maintaining breed consistency. There are fines and jail terms at worst. It calls for breeders to have one staff member for every five animals, which is more than the ratio in aged care.

DOGS NSW members are not puppy farmers -- we love our animals, so we are not in it for the money. For what I have spent on buying dogs from overseas to improve bloodlines, flying and quarantining them, then looking after their welfare and feeding, I could have built a house!

The number of breeders is declining, though, and this will lead eventually to scarcity of some breeds. During the pandemic, lots of families brought dogs into their homes – now, this Bill threatens to take them away. Instead of your child asking, “Can we have a puppy?” the question will be, “Where can we get a puppy?”

Lyn Brand
President DOGS NSW