

**Submission
No 150**

INQUIRY INTO ANIMAL WELFARE POLICY IN NEW SOUTH WALES

Name: Ms Elizabeth Davidson

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Draft Animal Welfare Bill 2022

Background

- My experience as a registered dog owner, exhibitor, hobby breeder and international dog judge spans some 35 years. I have been a member of Dogs NSW since 1987 and am very much involved in my chosen breed.
- As a dog judge of the Non-sporting & Toy groups I have judged in Norway Sweden France Taiwan United States of America New Zealand and of course Australia.
- My passion for dogs is not solely about showing and breeding but also their history, health and their importance in our lives.
- With the help and assistance of Dr Karen Hedberg BVSc I was able to guide my breed club [French Bulldog Club of NSW Inc] to implement a health scheme which has been adopted by breeders in all states of Australia. Dogs Australia [Australian National Kennel Council] records the data and results are available via their website.
- As editor of our club magazine, I help educate our members about responsible breeding and dog ownership. As responsible breeders, our members advise the public with any enquiries or concerns they may have. Our club also assists with any rehomes or rescues – all voluntarily.

I attach a submission I prepared on behalf of my breed club which outlines various concerns I have with the draft Bill.

- Of particular concern is “Division 3 Prohibited and restricted procedures; Prohibited Procedures (1) (e) surgical insemination on a dog. Category 2 penalty.” As stated in the attached submission it is noted that the Minister has provided to the Greyhound Racing fraternity assurances that this has been withdrawn. We seek written assurance that this clause has been withdrawn across the board and that it will not be enforced under other prohibitions such as “unnecessary harm”.
Restrictions or bans may have the undesired result of the Bill in this instance. Registered breeders with Dogs NSW and members of their respective breed clubs as stated above are already bound by Codes of Ethics and follow the National Code of Practice for hereditary diseases. When there are breaches breeders/owners of dogs are dealt with accordingly. Genetic diversity is essential for a healthy population. On welfare grounds it is far better to import fresh bloodlines via frozen semen than transporting live animals. Flying animals to Australia is not only expensive but it is stressful for dogs. The use of frozen semen eliminates this and allows breeders to maintain a healthy breeding program.

The Bill makes allowance for Transcervical inseminations (TCIs). Not all dogs are candidates for artificial insemination by TCI. If there is poor semen quality or quantity insemination by TCI may not be an option. To quote our vet Dr Karen Hedberg BVSc "A short acting anaesthetic and surgical insemination can be carried out in around 15 minutes. Pain medications are usually given as they would in any routine procedure with most bitches up and out within 30 minutes". We respectfully request that the Bill be amended to allow for surgical artificial insemination by qualified veterinarians. Veterinarians should be the ones to decide the best welfare option decisions.

- **Licensing** We are confused and seek clarification about whether Dogs NSW hobbyist breeders will require a licence – see pages 1 and 2 of the attached submission. Will an exemption be given to Members of Dogs NSW to the proposed licensing scheme and if so, what will be the nature of that exemption? If we as hobbyists are going to be subject to this licensing regime, then breeders who breed dogs in their home would not be protected under the provisions of S67.1. The holding of a licence would automatically remove the protections for residential property. We seek clarification about this.
- **Exhibition of animals.** The Bill is not clear about the **Showing of Dogs**. Exemptions must be provided to approved activities organised and conducted under the regulation of approved organisations e.g. canine control bodies and agricultural societies.

The draft Animal Welfare Bill 2022 does not differentiate between **Dogs NSW registered breeders** who are on the whole hobbyists and **unregistered commercial puppy farmers**.

- Dogs NSW registered breeders are visible, easily found, already bound by our strict Code of Ethics, National Code of Practice for Heritable Diseases, and custodians of pure-bred dog breeds.
- Unregistered puppy farmers are untraceable, the worst of them breeding solely for profit, no health testing, undermining everything Dogs NSW breeders are doing to breed healthy dogs.
- Dogs Australia (formerly Australian National Kennel Council) have publicly stated "Here lies the elephant in the room." We ask how will this Bill solves this problem? Don't make the mistake of targeting the very people who dedicate so much of their lives to preserving and protecting their chosen breeds.

Moving forward. I strongly recommend that Dogs Australia and Dogs NSW be afforded accreditation as primary stakeholders in the drafting of this Bill. There is a wealth of experience, both scientific and practical which should be given due consideration.

At the end of the day, we are all on the same side in putting in place legislation which will be fair for all stakeholders, especially for our beloved pets.

Yours faithfully