

Submission
No 248

INQUIRY INTO ANIMAL WELFARE POLICY IN NEW SOUTH WALES

Name: Mrs Courtney Spencer

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I am a long-time ANKC breeder and have shown dogs for my entire childhood and adult life. And I'm a voter. I am writing to express my deep concerns for the current Draft Animal Welfare Bill 2022 which is currently before the NSW Parliament and seek an urgent and passionate plea to have the specifics of this Bill reconsidered.

As an ANKC (Dogs NSW) member I own and breed with my mother, who has almost 50 years of dedication to her breed. Our five dogs between us live in a home environment, sleep on the couch, eat a premium diet, receive the best veterinary care on offer in Sydney, and participate in dog sports and activities regularly – they are part of our family. Over the years we have sold dogs into many loving homes and along with many other registered breeders, into homes with voters. People that have dogs or cats are voters and I don't believe that most of them know about this draft Bill, and I am sure that a lot would be shocked if they knew the real dangers they face in regards to the future of their pets, and of the real risk of losing the ability to choose a breed based on suitability, health and temperament from a loving and experienced breeder. Australia is a pet-loving nation – this will never change. However, pet shops and puppy farms certainly cannot and must not be allowed to be fill this void.

My main concern with this Bill in its current form is the potential that I will have to stop breeding, and I am not the only breeder who will suffer the same fate. Where will the family pet come from then? Commercial premises I assume as this Bill will make small hobbyist breeders untenable whilst large commercial facilities thrive. I don't believe that a commercial breeding situation will care as much for the health and soundness of a breed, their temperament or put in the care a small-time breeder can - the nature of a business is to make money. As a hobby breeder, I can tell you that we don't make money. Breeders of purebred dogs spend hundreds of dollars on health testing, hip & elbow scoring and DNA testing to utilise the most current veterinary research. We select pairings based on suitability (which is usually not the cheapest option), including research and knowledge of the family lines and traits of these dogs, spend more money researching and bringing in new bloodlines and with day-to-day cost of our dogs, this certainly adds up, especially for an average working family. We only breed occasionally (with an average of one litter every 2-3 years) and share our expertise and work together with other breeders. Our dogs are recognised for their quality worldwide. Our pet buyers keep in contact with us and receive support, guidance and advice for the lifetime of their dog. I would challenge any commercial breeding establishment to say they can do the same.

I deeply care for my dogs and their welfare is my absolute concern, and I want to be able to raise pups in a family environment, which is a normal residential property. I would hate to think that Australia is going to stop the breeding and exhibiting of dogs by the hobbyist and families. As a registered ANKC breeder, I comply with their Code of Ethics and Regulations, and I am confident that this organisation is capable for ensuring our compliance to a new Bill. My dogs are not a business, and my home is not a facility. However this Bill seeks to classify all breeders, no matter their intention and purpose, as one and the same – and reality dictates this is clearly not the case.

The Draft Animal Welfare Bill 2022 is far from supporting the welfare of animals, and if made law, this Bill will:

- Drive a lot of people out of the breeding dogs and cats
- Purebred dogs and cats are likely to disappear, certainly some breeds
- Commercial animal breeding will thrive
- Puppy farmers will fill the gaps left by hobby breeders no longer breeding, and charge outrageous amounts for animals bred without care or concern.

ANKC Members (via Dogs NSW) were asked to comment in consultation on the Bill and after the consultation process, items were added that had never been seen before, i.e. (restrictions on surgical insemination), definitions were included that confuse, regulatory powers that are seen nowhere else in our lives, are proposed including: 9. Page 29, Part 7 Enforcement and compliance, Division 3 Power to enter premises. How can the NSW Government expect to develop trust with its citizens when laws like this can be passed? How will this Bill bring about positive change for animals when those who care most for their welfare can be so easily targeted, because the Bill mandates requirements for kennel facilities as the only option?

It is difficult for any ordinary person to have a 'facility' that meets these rigid standards especially since ANKC registered breeders are already subject to their own quality guidelines. I support weeding out negligent breeders in any field or registry – but I do not support the effective outlawing of a hobby that has been such a fulfilling and enriching part of my life. The Draft Bill, in parts, is an overreach, definitions and construction are so loose that no ordinary person (including myself) would be able to afford the necessary legal representation to defend themselves as a dog owner/ breeder. There are no safeguards in this proposal to protect ordinary hobbyists, like myself and no protection to ensure the future of our purebred breeds. We need your support and the 'voice of reason' to find the logical middle ground so that the future of Australian pets and the right of Australian voting families to choose where their pet comes from coming into jeopardy. This is a real risk if the Bill is passed in its current form, and I urge you to please push for its review and amendment.