

**INQUIRY INTO PUPPY FARMING IN NEW SOUTH
WALES**

Name: Name suppressed

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SUBMISSION TO THE INQUIRY INTO PUPPY FARMING IN NEW SOUTH WALES

6 March 2022

I am a concerned member of the public and owner of a dog sourced from a breeder. I write this submission to support aspects of the *Companion Animals Amendment (Puppy Farms) Bill 2021*.

While there are genuine, ethical breeders who may be adversely affected by some of the provisions of the proposed Bill, I also feel that the majority of the provisions would be supported by ethical registered breeders in the interests of improving regulation within the industry. I believe that it should be possible to advance this Bill in a form that is ultimately acceptable to both the community and ethical breeders who have an investment in animal welfare.

The 'puppy farms' targeted by this proposed Bill are large scale commercial operations for the purpose of profit, with little regard for their animal welfare obligations. The wishes of such operators, as opposed to genuine ethical breeders, should be given little weight. I have heard personal accounts from rescue organisations about dogs previously used as breeding dogs at such facilities, who they describe as being 'broken' – physically and psychologically. There is no need to detail the well documented and publicised cases of abhorrent animal cruelty that takes place in some of these establishments, such as the well-known case of 'Strawberry' and many others like her. The number of severe cases that have been exposed should be enough to satisfy the Committee and Parliament that these are not isolated or rare incidences.

Animal welfare legislation already exists in NSW. However, the systemic and widespread nature of the contraventions and animal welfare breaches that continue to take place in 'puppy farms', make it clear that the legislation in its current form alone does not do enough to ensure compliance or allow enforcement of these existing laws and codes of practice. The weight of community opinion is in favour of stamping out exploitative facilities which place profit above animal welfare. The fact that more needs to be done is a matter of common sense and frankly, human conscience.

The proposed mandatory registration scheme, including the need for a 'source number' for advertised puppies, is the absolute minimum of what needs to be introduced in NSW. This was recommended unanimously by the Joint Select Committee on Companion Animal Breeding Practices in NSW in 2015 and yet these recommendations have still not been implemented, despite no persuasive arguments having been advanced against them by any reputable parties.

Mandatory vet checks for breeding dogs are necessary for the welfare of the animals and reputation of the industry, and are already common practice for ethical breeders. Such mandatory checks, along with the requirement to submit to annual inspections, are certainly not onerous and are consistent with existing welfare legislation. However, the enforceability of these mandatory vet checks and inspections and ensuring the success, longevity and reputation of genuine breeders is dependent on the existence of the proposed registration scheme.

The complete absence of regulation of breeders allows for exploitation of animals for profit without scrutiny. Initiatives such as the RSPCA's Intensive Breeding Taskforce are a positive step but are limited in their ability to monitor compliance with existing animal welfare legislation due to there being no mechanism to identify or even locate exploitative breeding facilities. As a result, their already limited resources are stretched further. Mandatory registration as proposed under the Bill would go some way to alleviating this issue.

Consumers and authorities also have little ability to ensure compliance with the *Australian Consumer Law* where puppies are sold with no identification or traceability to the breeder. Mandatory registration and vet checks may go some way to reducing the flood of puppies and unwanted dogs that result from unregulated overbreeding, and the dumping or surrendering of

dogs after discovery of health issues resulting from inbreeding or poor health of the mothers. Such measures would ease the burden and financial strain on authorities, council shelters and rangers.

I feel that the limit of two litters per female proposed by the Bill may be particularly contentious, however I do not believe that opposition to this provision should act as a barrier to the remaining proposed provisions.