

**Submission
No 217**

INQUIRY INTO PUPPY FARMING IN NEW SOUTH WALES

Name: Miss Rae Hennessy

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I support and applaud efforts to shut down unethical and unscrupulous breeding of companion animals. However, I do not believe this bill is going to achieve that in any meaningful way, and further I believe it will have far-reaching, negative, unintended consequences for the very animals it is trying to protect.

By way of introduction, I am an animal acupuncturist of 30 years, have been involved in the breeding of companion animals since childhood- some 50 years. I have owned and bred working dogs for over 30 years and have had several years' experience working in a retail pet shop. I feel my opinions on this matter are well informed.

Firstly, this bill is called the Companion Animals Amendment (Puppy Farms) Bill 2021, and yet it does not define what is meant by a 'puppy farm'. The term conjures up images of emaciated animals kept in small cages and bred from, season after season with no care or concern for the welfare of the mother or the offspring beyond keeping the latter saleable. This is, of course, an abhorrent practice which should be stopped.

However, throughout the bill the terms used are things like breeding arrangement, companion animal breeding business, micro breeder (being a breeder with less than three females)

These terms could readily define any and all of the reputable, ethical breeders in NSW. People like myself, who love and care for their dogs and raise their puppies as member of the family before placing them in carefully selected loving forever homes. Ethical breeders who vaccinate, treat for parasites, nurture, toilet train and socialise their puppies and are proud to stand by what they sell. Or breeders who place their breeding girls in loving pet homes and take custody of them every year or two, to deliver their puppies and then, once puppies are weaned, return the mums to their families where they will eventually live full time after breeding retirement.

Many of these breeders have a policy of their pups being returned to them if they don't work out with their new homes. Also, many of them are registered members of Dogs NSW and breed purebred dogs. Almost every pure breed has a breed rescue to keep an eye on pounds and rescue facilities and take in any representative of their breed for rehoming if need be.

These ethical breeders are not the problem. The pound and rescue facilities are not overrun with purebred dogs, they are overrun with pups produced by the 'ill-defined' puppy farms this bill should be aiming at.

Unfortunately, it will be the small, family breeders, the devoted show breeders, the breeders that we most want producing our companion animal who will be closed down or scared off by this bill, while the unscrupulous animal exploiters will carry on as before only worse. Because if this bill is passed and they can only breed each bitch twice, there will be a glut of discarded, unwanted, unsocialised, former breeding bitches in a need of homes or worse still... bitches being culled and dumped in mass graves as we have seen in other situations.

Whereas, the ethical breeders, restricted to only two litters per bitch, will largely keep their retired girls and overall, simply produce less, good quality, well cared for pups, leaving a vacuum for the 'puppy farmers' to fill.

Further, there is no compelling medical reason to restrict a normal healthy bitch to two litters in a lifetime. In fact, keeping a bitch cycling year after year between matings can increase the risk of serious health consequences such as pyometra.

Also, in relation to the definition of a fertile female, I do not think you can couple dogs and cats together under the one definition when they have very different breeding cycles and ages of maturity. Nor can you have a blanket definition for all breeds of dog as there are differing ages of maturity between large and small breeds.

There is also no definition of what is meant by 'related by blood' in relation to prohibitions on breeding.

All in all I fear that this bill will do more harm than good to our beloved companion animals, will decrease the number of ethical breeders in NSW and do nothing to prevent unscrupulous people from profiting through animal exploitation.

I am more than happy to speak further on this matter to any interested party.