



DOGS' REFUGE HOME (WA) INC

A | 30 Lemnos Street Shenton Park, Western Australia 6008

T | 08 9381 8166 **F** | 08 9381 3187 **W** | www.dogshome.org.au **ABN** | 38 564 984 197

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3rd July 2019

Dear [REDACTED]

Apologies for the delay in providing feedback on the new Dog Act legislation.

I wanted to raise our main concern which is the impact we see daily at the Dogs' Refuge Home relating to unsterilised dogs and subsequently unwanted litters constantly arriving in terrible conditions.

An example is in May this year when we had 2 mums brought in with large litters – one from Fremantle and one from Gosnells. Both were collected by rangers after complaints by concerned community members who had seen the mum's starving and heard the pups crying. Thankfully both dogs were brought into our care just in time although one was close to starvation and her organs shutting down and she certainly had no milk for her pups. One of the pups sadly didn't survive and the runt of the other litter is still being cared for in foster.

The same month we had a litter brought down from Geraldton and pups flown down from Broome plus many pups without mum's abandoned and needing hand feeding. We had over 40 pups available for adoption during the month of June alone.

Twice in this year we have had SOS calls to collect mum's and pups from owners who knew they were about to give birth and were unable to care for them. One mum gave birth on the door step the day before we got there and the other gave birth 4 days after arriving into our care.

Even worse than this are the numerous backyard breeders who notoriously have litter after litter available for sale. They even present the pups on their front verge in cages with signs 'guard dogs' for sale.



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One dog from a notorious home in Stirling, one of our staff managed to save (she had to pay \$500 to get her but did so because she could see she wouldn't have lived if left there). This case was brought to our attention by a member of the public who had already contacted the ranger and the RSPCA but was told there was nothing they could do!

We have no idea what happened to her pups but the dog we saved was only 9 months old and already had a litter. Because the pups were taken away from the mum too early she developed Mastitis and nearly died. Our vets operated on her and miraculously with only a 10% chance of survival she made it. This cost us thousands of dollars and as a self-funded organisation greatly impacted us but every dog deserves that chance.

Whilst we acknowledged the new laws will bring in a restriction on the number of litters and wellness of mum, plus how they are cared for, the ability to monitor this and ensure it is adhered to is impossible.

Only compulsory sterilisation will stop backyard breeding and unwanted litters ending up abandoned. This we feel very strongly about. Of course, there will always be exceptions and on the advice of a vet sterilisation may not always be an option but without having the resources to ensure the additional requirements set out in the new Dog Act are adhered to there is simply no point in including them.

I am attaching a copy of our latest newsletter Chinwag which includes a few more statistics and would be happy to chat with you further but I also wanted to get something in writing to you.

We would like to also make comment on Nuisance dogs and Dangerous dogs below.

Nuisance Dogs - the Dogs' Refuge Home recognises the annoyance, inconvenience and often distress caused to neighbours of a 'nuisance' dog who is constantly barking, whining and crying. From a welfare perspective, there is likely to be inlying causes of this that are not normally addressed by simply issuing a punishment being a fine or abatement notice.

The Dogs' Refuge Home would like to see offending owners provided with a simple information sheet that covers some of the reasons why their dog might be causing a nuisance to neighbours – left alone for long hours, constantly left outside and starved of human contact, bored, frustrated etc - and possible enrichment activities and remedies.

If the Ranger of Local Government are going to issue abatement notices, we would advocate that they do so in person and try to discuss the issue with the owner to determine if the owner can make some positive welfare changes for the dog. If the Ranger senses the owner is not willing to make changes or able to care for the dog due to lifestyle or working commitments, the Ranger can provide information on how to surrender the dog for re-homing as a guilt-free option.



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Community Facebook pages are full of people who are upset by neighbours' dogs barking but more particularly crying and whining, when they know the dog is in distress. People are also looking for ways to speak to their neighbours without causing issues or discomfort to their relationships, while seeking to improve conditions for the dog.

Our concern is for the increasing number of pet dogs who are injured or poisoned by frustrated neighbours or abused physically or mentally by their owners. If people are not able to care for their dog or willing to understand their need to be included in family time and activities, we would strongly encourage surrender to a pro-life rescue group so a more suitable home can be found for the dog.

Dangerous Dogs - Rangers have commented that, at times, dogs that are held in pounds or placed with rescue organisations may not have their history properly checked to make sure the dog has not previously been declared dangerous (or is a restricted breed dog) before being re-homed or placed in foster care.

As a large rescue group, Dogs' Refuge Home is supportive of all measures to protect public safety in relation to dangerous dogs and to knowingly re-homing or fostering a dog with a history of offending behaviours. As many dogs are collected directly from local pounds, the Dogs' Refuge Home would recommend that Rangers be required to handover any known information about the dog's history, background, previous ownership or incidents on the dog's record. Often lost dogs arrive at the Pound or shelter without identification and if they are not known to rangers there is no way to ascertain this history.

As part of the intake process for a dog surrendered by the public, the Dogs' Home has a mandatory questionnaire that asks the owner to declare all relevant information about the dog including any incidents of attacks or anti-social behaviour with adults, children, other dogs or cats.

All dogs made available to the public for re-homing are behaviour tested which includes an assessment of their social ability with other dogs and humans.

A central registry available to all Local Councils and registered rescue groups would help to track and monitor dogs who have been declared dangerous and for checks to be made when a dog arrives if photos are also available and uploaded to the database.

We would also like registered rescue groups, Registered breeders and local government rangers to have access to people convicted of crimes against animals or animal cruelty – dogs or not – and people who have been barred from owning a dog etc.

People would need to use the database confidentially and risk fines, dismissal for staff or loss of registration if they breach access to the database by publishing 'name and shaming' offenders. Getting access to the data is important to avoid adopting dogs or cats to be people with known criminal history in this area.



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I hope this is what you were after and apologies again for getting it to you later than I originally promised but if there's anything else please don't hesitate to contact me on [REDACTED]

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