

To Whom It May Concern,

I am writing in response to the legislation changes that are being proposed by the State Government of Western Australia under the banner of "Stop Puppy Farming."

There are some aspects of the proposal that have merit, such as a centralised registry for breeders, which is particularly needed for people having multiple litters a year.

However, I do not support the blanket ban on pet stores sourcing and selling puppies.

Pet stores are a valuable source of knowledge across a range of dog breeds. Most people who get a puppy care about where it has come from and the conditions in which the puppy's parents live. Many breeders live in rural or semi-rural areas and it is difficult for customers to go to them. This is the role that a good pet store undertakes and provides, finding ethical breeders and building relationships with them in order to source healthy puppies for customers. Pet stores will often have pups of different breeds available at the same time, providing customers with choices and education on the different breeds, as well as on-going support once they take a puppy home.

It is incorrect to say that puppies from pet stores often end up in shelters. The majority of puppies sold in pet stores are family-orientated breeds and a significant proportion are small-breed non-shedding dogs. These dogs are simply not available from shelters as either puppies or adult dogs and as such one of the purposes of this proposed legislation, to get people to adopt rescue dogs, is inherently flawed as pet store pups are very different from shelter dogs and should not be considered as interchangeable when people are looking for a pet.

As of the 13th June 2018, only 18 small breed dogs were available in WA for adoption via rescue organisations (source: petrescue.com.au, 3:30 PM on 13/06/2018) and none of these were puppies. This strongly refutes any arguments that pet stores are a significant cause of dogs ending up in shelters. The majority of dogs in rescue shelters are not the types of breeds that most people are looking for, that can fit in with their life-style and circumstances. Good Pet Stores can actually prevent dogs from ending up in shelters by ensuring they are going to good homes, and that new owners understand the long term commitments of having a pet. This legislation could actually drive more people towards getting puppy farm dogs, as locally bred puppies will become scarcer, forcing people to purchase pups on-line from the Eastern States, and likely a puppy farm.

Another cause for concern is the loss of protections that consumers have when purchasing a dog. When buying a pet through a pet store the customer is protected under Consumer Protection Law, so if there is a problem with the puppy they have recourse available. This is not the case when purchasing privately, and also is much more difficult if purchasing on-line from interstate.

Not all pet stores are the same, and ones that get their puppies from ethical breeders should not be lumped in with those that sell puppies from puppy farms. Rather than banning pet stores from selling puppies, regulation of them would be a better first step. This could be achieved through regular Vet or RSPCA inspections to ensure that the pups they have are in good conditions and are healthy.

Large-scale commercial breeding facilities need to have better controls placed upon them, and there should be a greater focus on regulating the interstate importation of puppies. Something as simple as increasing the age at which they are allowed to be flown across, from 8 weeks to 13 weeks, would reduce the number of puppies from puppy farms reaching Western Australia.

Sincerely,

Kassi Johnsen.