

Re the STOP PUPPY FARMING project :

Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback on the current Government's proposed initiatives in this area.

My background. Like most Dogs West members and registered ANKC dog enthusiasts, I am truly a dogs' (in general) and a breed lover first and a dog breeder second. I first fell in love with a particular breed of dog over forty years ago and our family have owned and loved the breed ever since. Over those 4 decades I've bred litters from carefully chosen sires and dams and have cared for many adored pets, oldies, mothers, fathers and their puppies some of which became successful show dog champions representing their breed and many more which fulfilled the most important role of much loved and healthy and happy family companions.

I only ever breed a litter when planning to retain a pup myself to raise and in order to preserve and continue our much-loved and proven breed lines. Of course baby pups rarely arrive as singletons, so in each litter there will become available a small number of well-bred pet puppies destined for well-chosen homes, which I take great pains to select both for their own benefit and also for the long-term benefit of the pup. In addition to this, I remain personally responsible for every single puppy I bring into this world - for the duration of its life and that is made clear to my puppy purchasers. Over all those years quite a few families have come back to me for their second or third puppy having lost their golden-oldie, and rarely, I have had to take back and help re-home a dog where the family has encountered unexpected circumstances and are unable to keep it. This has happened just 3 times in nearly 40 years and each situation was easily resolved with a happy outcome for all concerned. Because I've always and only bred to obtain a pup to keep, each generation is selected for soundness in all aspects of health, character and temperament and detailed background knowledge of family lines is backed up with health testing using hip x-ray/evaluation and DNA testing for known genetic conditions in my breed. Dogs which don't make the grade on any of those levels are de-sexed and not bred.

Legislation to deter the irresponsible breeding of dogs and in particular put a complete stop to the abhorrent trade of puppy farming is most welcome and cannot come soon enough. Unfortunately and as Lisa Baker MLA stated; "you can't fix stupid" thus this legislation needs to be correctly tailored to suit the situation in order to be fully effective. Frustratingly and as with the war on drugs, as long as there are people creating a demand there will always be someone ready to exploit the situation and provide for that demand. Also, as long as people will impulse-buy a cute-looking, overpriced, irresponsibly bred pup viewed on-line or in a pet shop, the problem of unsuitable and unwanted dogs will continue AND due to the common cross breeding of "bull" /"staffy" / "mastiff" / hunting or guarding styles of dog, combined with a lack of correct training, socialisation and simply bad genetics, not all of these dogs will suit re-homing as "rescues" when abandoned or dumped on

pounds. Take a look at the photo listings on pound and "rescue dog" websites, the vast majority of unwanted dogs requiring re-homing are of this type. Even as cute puppies, they are destined to grow big and strong, plus headstrong, and with a strongly inherited drive to dig, chew, destroy and as is proven by reality, most carry the potential to wear out their welcome by far less than a year of age and end up abandoned and unwanted. These poor dogs were bred by irresponsible individuals in the hope of mere profit and should never have been born in the first place. We all need to *better educate* the general public on attitudes to dog ownership and responsibility required in buying and owning dogs. For this particular category of the unwanted dogs problem, their selfish and ignorant "breeders" are the ones any proposed legislation needs to target.

The second category of the unwanted dogs' problem relates to puppy farms as defined by the RSPCA. " A puppy farm (also known as a puppy factory or puppy mill) is defined as an intensive dog breeding facility that is operated under inadequate conditions that fail to meet the dogs' behavioural, social and/or physiological needs."

From various puppy farm situations, large and small, come the usually smaller, cross bred puppies destined as pet shop fodder and from on-line commercial websites for retail sale. Sometimes so-called "purebred" dogs are also offered for sale in these locations, but these badly bred and un-health tested dogs are not legitimate representatives of their breed nor are they the result of responsible breeding. ANKC registered, bona fide pedigree dog breeders do NOT sell to pet shops and are bound by a well recognised and enforced code of ethics which prevents that happening. ALL so-called "purebred" pups in pet shops and from on-line sellers with no ANKC verified membership number, are sourced from puppy farms or unregistered breeders. Sadly, a proportion of un-registered "purebreds" and also cross breeds, both possibly from badly chosen parent stock bred in the absence of breed knowledge or health testing awareness, will have problems which may impact their quality of life.

Now to the 'three pillars' of the proposed legislation.

1.) Mandatory de-sexing:

While in theory this sounds like a solution to irresponsible breeding, there are pitfalls in relation to applying it across the board to all pet dogs. Early de-sexing has been observed to be detrimental to the health and welfare of dogs and with regard to the procedure, if it is done at all, the actual age of de-sexing should be timed to follow on from the completion of full growth and maturity of the animal concerned. This aspect is in relation to the natural hormones affecting normal developmental processes and closure of skeletal growth plates, the timing of which will vary from approximately 12 months to three years of age. Many working dogs and dogs trained for agility and

performance, need to be left hormonally entire to preserve their strength, drive and endurance. Due to the adverse implications known to be associated with de-sexing, in Norway and other forward-thinking European countries it is illegal to de-sex dogs and I am reliably informed that stray/unwanted dogs are not a problem there.

Most pet dogs are family companions never intended for breeding and due to that fact most do not need to be de-sexed. In comparison to the entire Perth population, currently at 2.6 million people, a small minority of irresponsible dog-owners currently use their backyard pets to breed speculative litters for sale and thus may contribute to the undesirable end result, which is a degree of unwanted and abandoned dogs. THESE dog owners should be the target of any legislation however due to their lack of ethics or sense of responsibility are the ones most likely to "fly under the radar".

ANKC dog breeders are hobbyists, not commercial breeders and do not wish to nor are they are in a position to supply enough pedigree puppies to cater for the demand for family pets. Unless dogs of all types are to eventually vanish completely from our homes (after thousands of years of mutual respect and companionship that is just not going to happen!) there is probably a need for some degree of ongoing and responsible pet dog breeding - in some form.

One other aspect which stands against mandatory sterilisation of all pets is the genetic diversity of dogs and breeds, so important in preserving healthy dogs and enabling their longevity and quality of life. Every time a dog is de-sexed, its potential and unique genetic contribution is erased forever and cannot be regained. Breeders of pedigreed dogs do not keep large numbers and to retain genetic diversity and preserve its essential options, will often put a breeding dog out "on breeders terms" which means that the dog enjoys all the attention, love and perks of being a family pet dog yet is able to return to the breeder for one or two breedings and contribute to the future of its breed prior to being de-sexed and fully retired to its chosen home.

2) Transitioning Pet Shops to Adoption Centres:

Dogs continue to be seen and appreciated by human society as valued family companions and there is and always will be, a requirement for suitable dogs as family pets. There is a valid need for dogs as pets and that need is mutual as dogs love to be in partnership with people. It should continue to be met. There are dog breeds and cross-breeds for almost every home situation and good homes will always be available for a well chosen and suitable dog destined as a family companion. If all "non breeding" dogs are de-sexed, in years ahead where will these dogs come from?

Large, unruly "rescue dogs" have often been badly bred and raised and come with inherent behaviour problems making these dogs hard to re-home and unsuitable pets for many home situations. People who simply desire a family dog to love but

with little experience with dogs of this background and type, will struggle or fail to cope with them, thus compounding the problem. In addition, RSPCA WA and other rescue groups derive income from the turnover and sale of these "rescue" dogs and in the push to force only rescue dogs on to people seeking a dog, is this a conflict of interest? People can already seek out and purchase rescue dogs directly from the RSPCA and rescue groups via on-line advertising. It is a folly to state unrealistically that "no more puppies to be bred until all rescues have a home", which is akin to saying "no more children to be conceived until all foster children have found a home" It's not a reasonable suggestion nor a suitable choice for most West Australian pet owners as the majority of homes will not suit the typical cross-bred rescue dog available and the various behavioural problems it may present.

Transitioning pet shops across to making "rescue" dogs the only choice for people seeking a puppy or family companion, is unrealistic and simply not an option. The aim of the proposed changes to legislation is to eradicate irresponsible breeding and the abhorrent practices found in disreputable puppy farms. Closing down easy retail puppy sales and impulse buys in pet shops may discourage puppy farmers, however as the demand for pets will persist many will simply continue to breed and sell on line. How to responsibly cater for this valid demand from West Australia pet lovers?

Central Registration System:

This at last is a good suggestion. Having a well maintained centralised registration system in place, recording all pet and breeding dogs and their origin and change of ownership trail would cease the unnecessary duplication of data and facilitate control of breeding practices. Council registrations aside, it would make the multiple and competing, commercially based registries which are really a type of exploitative business model and more about profit rather than service, obsolete. Having all the data on each dog centralised in one data base would help both pet owners and dog breeders by enabling purchasers to know exactly where their dog originated and also, track each purchase throughout its life via its microchip.

How would this work? As happens now with ANKC registered breeders, all puppies born would be microchipped prior to registration. At the time they are microchipped, their microchip number could be recorded on the centralised database and when transferred into new ownership, the new owners details would be added to the centralised data base at the time the pup is registered with its local council. The local council would use the centralised database for its records and not keep a duplicate data base. Who inputs this data to the central database? The veterinarian or agent who does the microchipping, and the local council with which the dog is registered. A set cost for the initial microchipping and recording of each pup could be charged - as is the case now however a proportion of that set cost could in future be used to administer and maintain the centralised database.

The hardest part would be getting a certain demographic of people to comply, and there will always be that factor to consider in any legislation.

ANKC registered and small scale occasional breeders are not the problem, nor are they the cause of unwanted dogs. IF pet shops are to continue to sell puppies, put the onus back on them. It should be a legal requirement for them to record the microchip and new owner of every dog sold plus keep and provide detailed records of where each puppy was sourced plus supply that information to the purchasers and to the proposed, centralised database.

ANKC breeders registered through Dogs West, self regulated and bound by a strict code of ethics should be exempt from additional government registration and be simply identified by their Dogs West membership number. If mandatory de-sexing is introduced at some future time, breeding dogs owned by Dogs West registered breeders should be exempt, regardless of where they are living. (E.g. Placed out in pet homes while on " breeders terms".) However, anyone who is not a Dogs West registered breeder and who breeds more than one litter a year, should be required to licence as a government registered breeder and pay an annual fee to be allocated a breeder registration number, which would then be required to given on all advertising and individual puppy sales. (Back again to the centralised database.) Any dog at any time, can then in theory, later be traced back to its breeder although in reality, good luck in finding some of those non-ANKC, government registered breeders.!

If you have read this far, thank you for taking the time. We are on the same side, we all want to see an end to puppy farms and the commercial breeding of huge dog numbers. Also an end to crates of puppy farm puppies being trucked or flown in from the eastern states for indiscriminate sale in local pet shops. That said, there will always be a need and a role for well bred, healthy pets in Perth's family homes.