



Department of
**Local Government, Sport
and Cultural Industries**



STOP PUPPY FARMING

Consultation Report

December 2018



Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries

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About DLGSC

The Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries (DLGSC) works with partners across government and within its diverse sectors to enliven the Western Australian community and economy through support for and provision of sporting, recreational, cultural and artistic policy, programs and activities for locals and visitors to the State.

The department provides regulation and support to local governments and the racing, gaming and liquor industries to maintain quality and compliance with relevant legislation, for the benefit of all Western Australians. This publication is current at December 2018.

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Contents

Contents	3
Minister's Foreword	4
Message from the Chair	6
Why we consulted	8
How we consulted	9
With whom we consulted	10
What we heard - Transitioning pet shops into adoption centres	11
What we heard - Mandatory dog de-sexing for non-breeding dogs	13
What we heard - Centralised registration system	15
What we heard - Dog breeder registration	17
What we heard - Mandatory Standards of Dog Breeding, Housing, Husbandry, Transport and Sale	19
Regional insights	21
Conclusion	22



Minister's Foreword

Firstly, I would like to express my appreciation for the response generated by the community on this issue. I am very encouraged by the community's willingness to engage with the McGowan Government's plan to stop puppy farming and ensure the policy measures achieve the best possible outcome for our dogs, and our community.

This project would not have been possible without a significant contribution of time, knowledge and effort from key stakeholders. I would like to thank Lisa Baker MLA, who has devoted herself to this project as Chair of the Stop Puppy Farming Implementation Working Group and has been a champion for change for animal welfare in Western Australia.

The response has required the cooperation of multiple Government agencies. The Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development is working to ensure appropriate standards are developed to address the concerns raised.

The State Government is incorporating the feedback received into the Stop Puppy Farming policy. With your feedback, we are confident of delivering changes that will ensure the welfare of our pets and put an end to the despicable practice of puppy farming.

I would like to recognise the following members of the Implementation Working Group for their contribution. The knowledge and experience provided by these individuals has been invaluable in assisting the McGowan Government in formulating the proposed policy measures:

- Mr Gordon Curtis, President, Australian Federation for Livestock Working Dogs;
- Mr Duncan Ord, Director General, Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries;
- Dr Lisa Smart, Executive Member, AVA WA Committee, Australian Veterinary Association;
- Ms Tarnya Widdicombe, Policy Advisor, Office of the Minister of Local Government;
- Ms Kelly McManus, Policy Advisor, Office of the Minister of Local Government;
- Mrs Jodie Holbrook, Director Local Government Policy & Engagement, Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries;
- Ms Sheryl Siekierka, Director Strategic Initiatives, Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries;
- Ms Lanie Chopping, Director, Retail & Services, Consumer Protection Department of Mines, Industry Regulation and Safety (Consumer Protection division);
- Dr Nyaree Jacobsen, Policy Officer, Animal Welfare Regulation Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development (Animal Welfare Regulation division);
- Ms Catherine Purvis, CEO, Dogs Refuge Home WA;
- Mr Des Kehoe, Vice President, Dogs West;
- Mr Grant Bradbrook, Local Government Professionals Australia WA;
- Ms Debra Tranter, Spokesperson, Oscar's Law;
- Mr Mark Fraser, CEO, Pet Industry Association of Australia;

- Dr Stephanie Hing, Animal Welfare Policy Manager, Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (WA);
- Mr James McGovern, Manager Governance, WA Local Government Association;
- Ms Rosalyn Edwards, Vice President, WA Rangers Association.



Hon David Templeman MLA
MINISTER FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Message from the Chair of the Stop Puppy Farming Implementation Working Group

I am delighted to see the continued strong support of Western Australians for the McGowan Government's proposals to stop puppy farming and improve the overall wellbeing of our canine friends.

In Western Australia now, dog breeding is totally unregulated and there are not even minimum standards for keeping a dog. Anyone can breed as many pups they choose and many dog breeding scenarios throughout the State fit the definition of a puppy farm. Quite simply, a puppy farm is any dog breeding facility, big or small, which does not meet the welfare needs of the dogs bred and raised there.

Unplanned litters are common and puppies are often sold to pet shops or advertised online, too often with little or no proper information about them being given to purchasers. Others may be dumped and, if they survive, roam as strays, before being impounded by local councils where they risk being destroyed if unclaimed. Genetic faults resulting from indiscriminate or unplanned breeding may not become apparent until later and new owners may face massive vet bills for corrective surgery or the heartbreaking decision to euthanise their new pet to save it from a life of pain and suffering.

I have personally seen many sad and distressing situations resulting from puppy farming and heard of even more. That is why, for more than six years, I have worked to develop a plan for legislative reforms to stop the overbreeding of dogs in unregulated backyard operations in Western Australia. At the same time, the reforms will encourage and reward good dog management and breeding practices.

My work on this issue began to take shape in 2012 when WA Labor State Conference passed a resolution to stop puppy farming. Following the conference, I started work with a team of key stakeholders to produce the first ever research paper on puppy farming in Western Australia. Our paper, titled "Puppy farming in WA - what is it and why it needs to stop," was released in 2015. It formed the basis of a plan to introduce legislative reforms which was presented to the Western Australian community as a pre-election pledge by WA Labor during the 2017 State election campaign.

Following the election of the McGowan Government, the Stop Puppy Farming Implementation Working Group was established, coordinated by the Department of Local Government and overseen by the Minister for Local Government, the Hon. David Templeman MLA. I have been privileged to Chair the Group for the past 12 months and, during this time, I have listened to and worked with vets, dog breeders, pet shops, rangers, dog trainers and rescue and rehoming groups and we have collaborated to refine the reforms necessary to improve dog welfare.

Early in 2018, the proposed reforms were publicised and Western Australians were invited to submit comments during a public consultation period between 3 May 2018 and 3 August 2018. The response was overwhelming with 4,754 submissions received.

The public feedback shows 93% of Western Australians support mandatory standards for dog breeding, husbandry, transport and sale. Mandatory de-sexing is supported by 77% and 83% support a centralised registration system to enable dogs to be traced. Pet shops becoming adoption centres for dogs needing a second chance to find a loving home is supported by 61%.

Over the past six years I have never doubted the WA community wants to see legislative reforms to stop puppy farming and improve dog welfare. I am extremely proud of the work we have done culminating in the reforms we have put forward and I thank you for the steadfast support you have shown every step of the way.

I look forward to working with you as we take the next step of drafting legislation ready for the WA Parliament in 2019.

In the meantime, please do what you can to help by choosing your new canine friend from registered dog breeders or adopt through a reputable rehoming shelter.



Hon Lisa Baker MLA
MEMBER FOR MAYLANDS

Why we consulted

Dogs are an important part of our lives; they are our friends and companions. In some cases, they play an important role in helping us, whether by working on farms, working as assistance dogs, or just by giving us emotional comfort and companionship.

We love our dogs, and we want them to be healthy and happy.

Currently, dog breeding in WA is not regulated. Over the past few years, the community has raised concerns about the breeding of dogs, including concerns about the practice of 'puppy farming'.

The RSPCA defines 'puppy farming' as

'an intensive dog breeding facility that fails to meet the dog's behavioural, social and/or physiological needs.'

Puppy farming can also be known as 'puppy mills' or 'puppy factories'. Other States in Australia have adopted various laws to help regulate dog breeding and stop puppy farming.

The WA State Government is looking to ensure puppy farming is prevented and stopped in WA by introducing the following proposals:

- the transition of pet shops into adoption centres that will only sell puppies and dogs from approved rescue organisations and animal shelters;
- mandatory de-sexing of dogs unless an exemption is requested for breeding purposes or for reasons stated by a registered veterinarian;
- a centralised registration system to ensure every dog and puppy can be identified at the point of sale or adoption, including in advertisements for sale; and
- mandatory standards for dog breeding, housing, husbandry, transport and sale.

The proposals have the potential to affect a large number of Western Australians in a multitude of ways.

As such, the Government has sought to consult the WA community to better understand the ways each proposal could potentially affect different stakeholders. It has been important to seek feedback from across the State as issues can vary from region to region, and in a State as large as WA, these differences can be significant.

Consultation on the proposals was held from 3 May 2018 to 3 August 2018. The following report provides an overview of the consultation and what was learnt.

What you said

'I can't begin to tell you the joy my dog has brought to my life. By walking him at least twice a day I have broadened my friendships as we all meet at the dog exercise park where our dogs socialise together with their owners... He has changed my life completely and I don't know what I would do without him.' **Anonymous** (dog owner)

How we consulted

The Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries (the Department) released the [Stop Puppy Farming Consultation Paper](#) on 3 May 2018. The Consultation Paper provided information on the proposals and what the introduction of the proposals would potentially mean for different stakeholders.

Interested parties could provide feedback on the proposals in a variety of ways:

- An online survey: respondents could choose from options and indicate their support for a proposal on a sliding scale.
- Public submission form: respondents could respond to the questions asked in the consultation paper in written form.
- Written submissions: respondents could write and compile their feedback into a written submission.
- Interview survey: attendees of the RSPCA Million Paws Walk 2018 and WALGA WA Local Government Convention 2018 could provide survey responses to interviewers.
- Consultation forum: respondents could attend a consultation forum to provide verbal feedback on the proposals.

The Department received **4,754 submissions**; a testament to the importance of dogs in the lives of Western Australians and the strong will of the community to end this inhumane practice.

With whom we consulted

Prior to the consultation period, the Department formed the Stop Puppy Farming Implementation Working Group (SPFIWG) to help inform the proposed policy measures. This group has been chaired by **Lisa Baker MLA** and consists of representatives from a variety of stakeholder organisations.

These organisations each have a unique and important interest in the welfare and management of dogs in Western Australia. The Government gained insights and knowledge from these stakeholders to help inform the consultation on the proposals.

During the consultation period:

- Representatives from the Department conducted on-site interviews with several pet shops in the Perth metropolitan area. These were conducted in order to gain an insight into how the pet shop industry operates in Western Australia and evaluate the impact the proposals might have on these shops, the animals they sell, and their owners and staff.
- Departmental representatives attended the RSPCA Million Paws Walk and WALGA WA Local Government Convention 2018, speaking with attendees, informing them of the issue and encouraging them to make a submission. The Department also engaged community consultation specialists Culture Counts to survey attendees.
- Five forums were held for community members. Two of these forums were held in the metropolitan area, in Kwinana and Stirling. The regional forums were held in Northam, Bunbury and Karratha and were attended by a mixture of dog owners, dog breeders, rangers, animal shelter employees, veterinarians and pet shop owners. These interactive sessions were conducted by Departmental representatives.
- A forum was held specifically for animal rescues and shelters, in order to further understand the ways in which these organisations may be affected by the proposals.
- The review received a significant amount of interest from the purebred dog association, Dogs West. The Department held four forums at Dogs West headquarters and these were very well attended by Dogs West members.

What we heard

Transitioning pet shops into adoption centres

Under this proposal, the *Dog Act 1976* would be amended so that pet shops would only be able to source puppies and dogs from State Government accredited rescue organisations or shelters. These dogs will undergo health and behavioural assessments to ensure that they are suitable to join their new families.

Your feedback at a glance

The following depicts the results from all submissions:

- Overall, **61%** of respondents supported transitioning pet shops into adoption centres.
- Overall, **60%** of respondents indicated that they would purchase a health and behaviour checked dog from a pet shop.
- **97%** of respondents indicated that information on a dog's vaccination and sterilisation status should be provided to a purchaser of a rescue dog at a pet shop. 94% of respondents indicated that information on a dog's health and behaviour should be provided to a purchaser of a rescue dog at a pet shop. Written submissions also indicated that information on the background of the dog should be provided where possible, such as information on the dog's previous owners, upbringing and rescue history.
- A high percentage of respondents (**95%**) supported the proposal for pet shops that sell dogs to register with a relevant authority.
- **77%** of pet shops that currently sell dogs, indicated that the model was not feasible for their business (it is approximated that 13 pet shops sell dogs in WA).

Key themes

Some of the most common themes that were raised through comments and written submissions included:

- Transitioning pet shops into adoption centres will help reduce the number of unwanted dogs in rescues and pounds.
- Pet shops should be monitored through inspections and audits to ensure they are complying with the requirement to only source dogs from accredited rescues and shelters.
- Transitioning pet shops into adoption centres is not a feasible model. Many indicated that the model was not feasible because the ability for pet shops to do the following would be limited:
 1. guarantee the health and behaviour of rescue dogs sold at their shop,
 2. rehome dogs that rescue organisations struggle to rehome,
 3. source puppies or dogs of a particular age or breed for potential owners that are suitable to their lifestyle and requirements (currently pet shops generally sell puppies and small-breed dogs to suit the lifestyles of their customers; such dogs may not be available from rescue organisations, or may not be provided to pet shops by rescue organisations),

4. recover adequate revenue from the sale of rescue dogs to enable pet shops to sustain their business.
- The introduction of this proposal could lead to an increase in the online sourcing and sale of dogs as families attempt to source specific dogs to suit their lifestyle that are difficult to source from local breeders or rescue organisations and shelters.

You also talked about

Some of the other issues and suggestions raised through comments and written submissions included:

- The pet shop industry should be regulated instead of being transitioned into adoption centres.
- Pet rescue organisations and shelters should be regulated regardless of their intention to provide dogs to pet shops.
- Dogs (rescue or otherwise) should not be sold through pet shops.

What you said

‘It would reduce the number of puppy mill bred animals, while at the same time increasing the chances of rescue animals being given a second chance in life.’ **Karin** (dog owner)

‘Pet shops are a valuable source of knowledge when it comes to the many different breeds and cross breeds of dogs. Pet shops that sell puppies help guide people in selecting the right type of dog for their situation. Good pet shops ensure that their puppies come from ethical breeders.’ **David** (pet shop owner) / Petition signed by 954 people

‘A pet shop should not stock or sell dogs or cats at all. This is not the best environment for any animal. Pet shops are also places where people are prone to impulse buy. A rescue dog needs patience and care and should not be bought on impulse.’ **Elisa** (dog breeder and Dogs West member)

‘...we have purchased two adoring dogs from... [a pet shop] in the last few years... These two dogs have become part of our family and I think that when people go into a pet shop they are expecting to see someone who might become part of theirs too. As they say ‘A dog is a man’s best friend’ which I believe to be very true.’ **11-year-old Abigail** (dog owner)

What we heard

Mandatory dog de-sexing for non-breeding dogs

Under this proposal, it will be mandatory for dogs to be de-sexed unless the dog is to be used for breeding purposes, or a veterinarian provides an exemption for health, behavioural or developmental reasons. Exemptions for other classes of dogs are also being explored.

Your feedback at a glance

The following depicts the results from all submissions:

- Overall, **77%** of respondents supported the introduction of mandatory dog de-sexing.
- **62%** of respondents indicated that mandatory dog de-sexing should apply to all dogs; whilst **22%** of respondents indicated that mandatory dog de-sexing should only apply to dogs born after a particular date.
- **46%** of respondents indicated that they supported an exemption from mandatory dog de-sexing for livestock working dogs.
- **58%** of respondents indicated that they supported an exemption for dogs owned by members of a recognised dog breeding association.

Key themes

There was great support for mandatory de-sexing and the positive effects that it may have. The most important of these effects was the reduction in the number of unwanted dogs that end up in shelters and rescues, and in some terrible circumstances, euthanised. Other benefits highlighted during consultation were the tempering of aggression and reduction in negative behavioural traits such as roaming and marking.

The support for this provision was not as strong among those respondents who completed written submissions or filled out the public submission forms. Members of purebred dog association, Dogs West, represented a high percentage of respondents using these methods and expressed great concern about this proposal.

The most prominent concern regarding this proposal was the age that a dog would need to be de-sexed, and the possible health impacts this may have on the dog. Consultation indicated that there is a growing body of evidence that early de-sexing may have significant health impacts on dogs, especially in larger dogs. Many submissions indicated that whether and when a dog should be de-sexed should remain the decision of the owner in consultation with their vet.

You also talked about

- Encouraging dog owners to de-sex their dog through a subsidy, rather than requiring dog de-sexing to be mandatory.
- Some concerns were raised about the ability of some community members to afford to de-sex their dog, particularly low-income earners and pensioners.

- The definition of ‘sterilisation’ currently defined under the Dog Act was raised, with some respondents questioning whether it could be extended to include non-permanent methods of de-sexing a dog.
- Questions were posed regarding how this proposal would be enforced.
- Some questioned how this proposal would ‘stop’ puppy farming.

What you said

‘This is essential. There are simply too many dogs many of whom have been bred to make money. The mother dogs are not looked after, lacking good nutrition and veterinary care, and are mated every time they come into season.’ **Megan** (dog owner and rescue volunteer)

‘I support it; there are too many unauthorised pet breeders and accidental pregnancies, so it would get more control over pet breeders and give them more business.’ **Samuel** (potential/future pet owner)

‘Mandatory de-sexing is a very blunt and inappropriate instrument to stop commercial and indiscriminate breeding and production of puppies. There is no evidence that mandatory de-sexing will ‘reach’ and stop the cruel puppy farming activities of (those relatively few) horrible people who don’t love their dogs and just see their dogs as money making machines. I consider that de-sexing a dog or bitch is a decision for each owner in discussion with their vet.’

Roni (Dogs West member)

‘I am strongly opposed to mandatory de-sexing whether breeding stock or not. Mandatory de-sexing brings its own set of health and welfare issues and can be seriously detrimental to a dog’s health. Many studies have shown the adverse effects in relation to diseases and behaviour caused by de-sexing. I also have a rarer breed and mandatory de-sexing would significantly reduce the already limited gene pool here in WA. Mandatory de-sexing is NOT going to stop puppy farming or stop dogs turning up in rescue.’ **Michelle** (dog breeder and Dogs West member)

What we heard

Centralised registration system

The State Government has pledged to introduce a centralised registration system to ensure that every dog and puppy can be identified at the point of sale or adoption.

Currently, there are 137 local governments in Western Australia. Each local government is responsible for the control of dogs within their district, and each maintains their own register of these dogs. Consequently, there are 137 different dog registers in WA, which makes information sharing and coordination very difficult. The centralised registration system would combine the information on each of these registers into a central register.

Your feedback at a glance

The following depicts the results from all submissions:

- This was generally a popular measure, with **83%** of respondents supporting this initiative.
- **84%** of respondents also supported including cat registrations and cat breeder registrations on the centralised registration system.

Key themes

Feedback indicated that a potential benefit of the system was the improved ability to trace and identify dogs across local government boundaries. Many believed the system would improve information sharing, efficiency and transparency, and assist in monitoring and identifying cases of non-compliance with the laws.

Many, even if they were supportive of the proposal, raised that there would be significant costs involved with developing and maintaining the system. Some argued that the system was not necessary as national microchip databases already exist and record information to identify dogs across Australia. Others raised concerns regarding who would have access to the system.

Members of Dogs West stated that they were already part of the national ANKC (Australian National Kennel Council) database of registered dog breeders so there was little benefit to their being part of another system.

You also talked about

In conjunction with dog registrations and dog breeder registrations, respondents indicated that the centralised registration system could also contain information on:

- Dog owners that are subject to Court Orders, or dog owners that have been convicted of offences against the *Dog Act 1976*, *Cat Act 2011*, and *Animal Welfare Act 2002*
- Pet shops that sell dogs
- Approved kennel establishments
- Dangerous dogs.

What you said

‘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.... 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.’ **Anonymous** (dog lover and dog breeder)

‘It would allow dog history to be better documented and accessible to Rangers.’ **Ron** (local government ranger)

‘Central registers are very difficult to establish and even more difficult to maintain and will always be incomplete or out of date. The cost would be significant and would be reliant on all dog owners and others notifying the register on each and every occasion a dog is acquired, passed on, sold or dies. Local government authorities have registers but have not been able to keep their own registers up to date. It is unlikely that a central register would be more successful.’

Nick (dog owner)

What we heard

Dog breeder registration

As part of the proposal to introduce a centralised registration system, it is proposed to introduce dog breeder registration to identify who is breeding dogs, and where dogs have come from.

Your feedback at a glance

The following depicts the results from all submissions:

- **91%** of respondents agreed that there should be restrictions placed on dog breeders. Many believed those restrictions should include appropriate property conditions in which to keep and breed dogs and no history of animal neglect or abuse.
- **43%** of survey respondents agreed that local government was best placed to enforce dog breeder registration. Some respondents suggested a central agency, such as a dedicated Government Department, would be a more appropriate body.
- **60%** of respondents did not believe that primary producers (farmers) should be exempt from having to register as dog breeders.
- **65%** of respondents did not agree that members of recognised dog breeding associations should be exempt from registering as dog breeders

Key themes

Written submissions focused on providing reasons why certain exemptions should be granted, particularly in regard to members of dog breeding associations.

Some respondents also called for exemptions to dog owners who owned dogs on 'breeders terms' (where an owner agrees to leave their dog entire (not de-sexed) so it may be used by another dog owner for dog breeding purposes).

You also talked about

There was some concern with the terminology of 'dog breeder registration'. Under the proposal, anyone who owns a dog that is entire will be required to register as a 'dog breeder' unless otherwise exempt, even if they do not intend to use their dog for breeding purposes. The registration is therefore of 'owners of entire dogs' as opposed to 'dog breeders'.

Some also felt that by requiring owners of entire dogs to register as 'dog breeders', these owners would be potentially given a mandate to breed dogs, even where they were not particularly knowledgeable about dog breeding.

What you said

‘...anyone who breeds a dog, irrespective of the purpose, must be registered as a breeder on the centralised system and comply with the mandatory standards.’ **Sentient** (veterinary animal welfare organisation)

‘If the breeders are registered and the litters they are breeding are all recorded it makes it easier to monitor animal welfare standards.’ **Kirsty** (vet nurse in training and pet sitting/walking business)

‘I think there will still be breeders who fly under the radar, but we have to start somewhere.’ **Janet** (RSPCA community outreach volunteer)

‘The Local Government already holds records of the dogs registered in their municipalities and whether they are entire or de-sexed. Owners of these dogs pay registration fees based on them being entire or de-sexed. This will add another layer to the bureaucratic and administrative nightmare for the Local Government, with additional costs for no benefit, we cannot see any useful purpose in this proposal.’ **WA Beagle Club (Inc)** (dog breed specific association)

‘What you are deeming as a registered breeder is everyone who owns entire dogs. So, people who have little knowledge on dog breeding are getting the green light to breed indiscriminately.’ **Dianne** (dog breeder and Dogs West member)

What we heard

Mandatory Standards of Dog Breeding, Housing, Husbandry, Transport and Sale

The proposal to introduce mandatory standards for dog breeding, housing, husbandry, transport and sale is intended to promote the welfare of dogs in WA. These standards will help to ensure that the care and management of dogs and puppies provides for their health and welfare, and meets their physical, psychological and social needs.

Your feedback at a glance

The following depicts the results from all submissions:

- This initiative was greatly supported with **93%** of respondents supporting the introduction of minimum mandatory standards that must be complied with in relation to dog breeding, housing, husbandry, transport and sale.
- **87%** of survey respondents indicated that the number of litters that a female dog can have in her lifetime should be restricted by law.
- **91%** of respondents believed that commercial dog breeders should have to comply with additional standards.

Key themes

- Many submissions raised setting a minimum and maximum age that a female dog may produce a litter.
- Many also indicated that there should be limits to the number of litters a female dog may have in their lifetime.
- Controls on the environment dogs are to be bred in and controls on the number of breeding dogs a person has were also suggestions raised in many submissions.
- Conversely, a number of other respondents indicated that as this is an animal welfare issue, emphasis needs to be placed on the welfare of the animals, not on the number of dogs. Some respondents have suggested that the number of dogs can be very high, as long as the needs of the dogs are met.
- Ensuring that a dog's environment is of a high standard was also a great concern of a high proportion of respondents. Popular requirements under this proposal included ensuring the dog's environment was clean, that there was sufficient space for the dog to exercise, that they had sufficient social experiences and were afforded adequate food, water and shelter.

You also talked about

A number of submissions referenced the Code of Ethics used by the Australian National Kennel Council and their affiliated organisations, such as Dogs West. Many of these respondents indicated that these should be used as a guide in drafting the standards.

Many people also expressed concern about the age at which puppies were taken from their mother, and that there should be a minimum time that puppies must remain with their mother.

What you said

‘Apart from the *Animal Welfare Act 2002*, which focuses on preventing cruelty, there are currently no standards or guidelines against which the care of dogs can be measured. The dog breeding industry is self-regulated and has failed to keep dogs safe. Introducing legislation where minimum standards and guidelines are mandatory will allow for better regulation and will improve the lives of hundreds of dogs.’ **Canine Welfare Alliance of Australia** (foster-based rescue group)

‘Any proposed changes should be solely based on animal welfare and the effects on the breeding animals and their offspring... To believe that poor animal welfare and substandard physical conditions are simply a result of greater animal numbers is naïve and wrong... It is critical that any changes remain focussed on animal welfare and any regulative measures introduced can be readily enforced. I think we are all very keen to eliminate all businesses and punish any operators who cause any suffering and harm of breeding dogs, bitches and their pups as a result of their substandard facilities and conditions or their poor management practices but this should happen regardless of whether they involve the breeding of one bitch or one hundred bitches.’

Doug (veterinarian)

Feedback in relation to the proposal to introduce mandatory dog breeding standards:

‘[There is a] lack of resources to regulate standards and laws. [It also potentially] encourages people to “hide” their practices and send puppy farming underground and on the black market. [It] still encourages backyard breeding.’ **Ashleigh** (qualified dog trainer)

Regional insights

The Department consulted with numerous regional stakeholders during the consultation period. The most prominent concern for regional stakeholders is the potential effects of the measures on livestock working dogs and their owners. Feedback informed us that the decision to use a livestock working dog for breeding is not made until the dog has matured and demonstrated its potential as a working dog. This assessment is often not made until the dog is two years of age or older, so a decision as to whether a dog will be used for breeding cannot be made until then. A mandatory de-sexing age would have a significant impact on a farmer's ability to breed quality working dogs, as they would not have the opportunity to assess a dog's performance and ability.

Local governments are currently required to enforce the Dog Act, with many doing so through their ranger services. A key consideration for local governments, particularly in regional areas, will be the resources necessary to enforce these provisions. Many local governments believe they are unable to properly enforce the current provisions of the Dog Act; and that without additional resources, enforcing the new provisions effectively will prove challenging.

Another concern raised by some submissions, was the ability of the provisions to be enforced in remote communities, where there is currently low rates of dog registration and microchipping.

What you said

'[regarding the proposed requirement to de-sex livestock working dogs] ... when a pup is found that has the necessary attributes, that dog – potentially – becomes a very important breeding animal. If such a good animal has been de-sexed, that valuable mix of genes is lost. For a breed such as the Kelpie, losing such a mix of genes contributes to a lowering of the quality of our national working dog and thus becomes a loss of Australian heritage.' **Jason** (pastoralist)

'Funding [provided to] Indigenous corporations to service dog health programs are not sufficient to encompass all the dogs in the region as there is no [sic] concept of how many dogs there are in the outlying communities.' **Wendy** (foster carer and animal advocate in the North of WA)

Conclusion

The **Stop Puppy Farming project** is one that has generated interest from a broad range of stakeholders, each with their own perspectives. It is evident that the desire to eliminate the cruel practice of puppy farming is universal and the State Government is committed to finding the best way to do that.

Consultation helps the Government make informed decisions. This report depicts only some of what we heard. Every submission was read and evaluated and has contributed to our understanding of this important issue and how it can be addressed.

From here the Government will make a decision on how to progress the proposals. Changing the law will take some time. The Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries will continue to provide updates as the project progresses.

For more information and to stay informed, please visit:

www.dlgsc.wa.gov.au/stoppuppyfarming

or contact us at puppyfarming@dlgsc.wa.gov.au

