



Appendix 1 - submission by All About Pups on the “Stop Puppy Farming” Consultation Paper.

## The real Issues behind dogs in shelters in WA

I propose to research the literature to determine the true state of the dog shelter problem in WA and it’s origin and possible solutions, detail that is sorely lacking in all of the government papers relating to the “Stop Puppy Farming” proposed legislation.

### 1 Where do people source their dogs?

A University of Adelaide Study found that:

- (a) 29% online
- (b) 44% breeders
- (c) 8% friends
- (d) 5% pet shop

(Anne Barrowlough, The Australian Sep 19, 2015)

So pet shops are a relatively minor source of dogs in the population.

### 2 What makes up the population of shelter dogs?

Pet shelters are not forthcoming in providing breed statistics of dogs in shelters but a snapshot taken on the 22 May 2018 of council pounds and at [www.petrescue.com.au](http://www.petrescue.com.au) gives an empirical view on the state of affairs in WA dog shelters and rescue organisations.

#### (a) Pet Rescue Website (Total of 378 dogs within 100kms of Perth CBD)

This website lists all the dogs at the Dogs Refuge Home and numerous other rescue organisations in the state

16 small Breed (4%)	3 pups	13 adults	50% Jack Russel Terriers or crosses
228 medium breed (60%)	25 pups	203 adults	90% Staffy crosses, rest is Kelpie/Heeler/Mastiff etc crosses
134 Large Breed (36%)	14 pups	120 adults	Virtually all Staffy, Bulldog, Mastiff and Shepherd crosses
Totals	42 (11%)	336 (89%)	

**(b) Perth Council Pounds**

<b>Council/City</b>	<b>Number Displayed on website</b>	<b>Details</b>
Armadale	0	
Cambridge	Directed to Dog Refuge	
Canning	1	1 Greyhound x
Claremont	Not listed on site (Held at Swanbourne Vet)	
Cockburn	2	1 small breed, 1 Staffy x
Cottesloe	Directed to Dog Refuge	
Fremantle	Not listed on site	
Gosnells	3	2 small breeds, 1 Staffy x
Joondalup	2 (Send to RSPCA)	Large breeds
Mandurah	6	3 small breeds, 2 Staffy x, 1 Boxer x
Melville	Not listed on site	
Mundaring	1	1 Staffy x
Murray	Not listed on site	
Rockingham	9	1 small breed, 8 Staffy x
South Perth	0	
Stirling	Not listed on site	
Victoria Park	Refer to South Perth	
Vincent	Not listed on site	
Wanneroo	3	1 small breed, 1 x Rotti x, 1 x Staffy x
Totals - 19	27	8 (30%) small Breeds , 19 (70%) large breeds [12 (44%) of which are Staffy x]

**(c) RSPCA Malaga – 4 mixed breed medium and large dogs**

So this shows that a very small percentage of dogs in shelters on this day would be breeds even remotely likely to be sold in a pet shop.

What this indicates is that we don't have a pet shop derived dog shelter problem in WA but that **we have a Staffordshire Bull Terrier problem!**

**3 What are the Factors Affecting Shelter Dogs Numbers**

Statistics for WA in 2012/13 are that of 22,707 dogs admitted to all shelters 10,839 (48%) were reclaimed, 7,128 were re-homed (31%) and 4,710 (21%) were euthanised. (Chua, Rand and Morton - Animals 2017,7,50) This is an unfortunate situation that has a number of root causes:

- (a) Surrendering of Pets
  - i) Financial circumstances – Low socioeconomic conditions increase the likelihood of surrendering, especially if expensive health conditions occur or the owner's circumstances change.
  - ii) Job and personal circumstances. Moving from a city-based job to a FIFO job, moving to a location where pets can't be kept, moving to a retirement or nursing home etc may all precipitate the surrendering of a pet. This will particularly apply if the pet is a larger breed as it narrows the field of potential adopters.
  - iii) Lack of rental accommodation taking dogs. Being forced out of accommodation may mean that an owner can't access new rental housing that will accept a dog.
  - iv) Behavioural issues - Noise or Aggression being the most common
- (b) Lost Pets
  - i) Poor fencing
  - ii) Failure to desex – Large proportion of dogs in shelters are not desexed leading to an increased risk of escaping from the owner's residence seeking a mating partner.
- (c) Factors influencing Reclaiming of Lost pets

- i) Microchip Issues.
  1. Microchip not inserted - A recent study in Australia has shown that a dog with a properly recorded microchip details is twice as likely to be reclaimed than a non-microchipped dog.
  2. Microchip failure/Not readable— Some chip failures have been documented to have occurred. Also many chips not readable with all scanners
  3. Microchip details not accurate or not recorded - A 2015 Qld study found that 37% of stray dogs admitted to the RSPCA had inaccurate microchip data
  4. Multiple databases not always easily accessible.
- (ii) Financial issues – Cannot afford registration and fines
- (d) Factors Influencing Re-homing of Shelter Dogs
 

The national proportion of unclaimed dogs that are re-homed is 60%. There is a positive correlation between training of shelter dogs and re-homeability with supporting new owners to manage behaviours through training classes and counselling being integral to the success of the re-homing process.

Foster and rescue networks are also invaluable in providing behavioural conditioning. This needs to be carefully considered if the re-homing of shelter dogs is to be farmed out to other parties.

#### **4 Why are dogs euthanised in shelters**

Figures from the RSPCA in WA for 2017 showed that of 122 dogs euthanised, 62 (51%) were for medical reasons and 60 (49%) for behavioural reasons. It is likely aggression to people and other dogs forms the main component of behavioural reasons for euthanasia. The number is likely to be considerably higher in councils where rangers at the frontline of dealing with dangerous dogs.

#### **5 Interpretation of the above information in reference to the proposed legislation.**

- (a) Pet shops only form a minor source of dogs in WA, though likely are a major source of certain types of dogs, namely the so-called “designer cross breed” which are not significantly represented in the shelter dog population. The largest source of dogs is from registered breeders, then online sales currently at around 1/3 of sales but will likely grow to be the main source of dog purchases.
- (b) Pups form around 10% of the shelter population and of those, less than 1% are small-breed dogs. Shelters are not a realistic source of puppies for pet shop sales.
- (c) The vast majority of shelter dogs are medium to large-breed dogs, predominantly of Staffordshire Bull Terrier types which are not a feature of pet shop sales. The policy focus should be aimed at reducing Staffordshire Bull Terriers and their cross’s population and entry to shelters, rather than pet shops if the government was serious about reducing the shelter dog problem.
- (d) Councils have a patchy record in marketing their pound dogs with 6 out of 19 not advertising pound dogs on their site and no coordinated marketing of dogs between councils or use of external sites such as the Pet Rescue website. There is an organisation, much like Oscar’s Law, called “Saving Pets”, which exposes poor practices by dog shelters around Australia leading to poor re-homing rates and welfare concerns. Why isn’t this organisation consulted in discussions with the government as well as Oscar’s Law as they both have similar agendas, just targeting different parts of the shelter dog problem? Possibly because they don’t want to tackle all facets of the industry, just ones they have a dislike for.
- (e) There are a large number of factors that determine whether a dog becomes a shelter dog and all these factors should be addressed for a successful reduction in the shelter dog population.
- (f) Successfully re-homing adult shelter dogs requires a coordinated approach with after-sales behavioural training and counselling very important as well as behavioural assessment and training before sale. Pet shops would not have the resources to implement these services if required to act as re-homing centres and this would require duplication or a major extension of current services in this area to meet this requirement.

## **Conclusion**

The evidence presented does not support the assumption by the “Stop Puppy Farms” Consultation Paper that banning pet shops selling pups will lead to a significant decrease in the admission and number of dogs housed in dog shelters in WA.

I would like to see thorough, independent research and statistical evidence collected on the whole shelter dog industry. This will enable formulating effective approaches towards a solution in the number of dogs surrendered into shelters as this is the approach that will be the most cost effective and welfare enhancing.

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