



Politics and Common Sense

What would cause a Government to ban the regulated sale of puppies in pet shops and encourage the unregulated sales on the internet?

Prior to the last Victorian state election, the Labor Party made a promise to ban the sale of puppies and kittens in pet shops and to limit the number of breeding dogs of puppy breeders to 10. This promise was made without any consultation with the industry and with any understanding of what the ramifications of this decision would bring.

Following a recent meeting with the industry and Ms Pulford, the first mistake of this policy was understood – there are no kitten mills – kittens are in abundance during spring and summer and pet shops don't need to buy kittens, they are available free and pet shops do a public service in vaccinating, microchipping, vet-checked and recommending de-sexing these animals before making available for homing. It was explained to the minister that if you take away this service from pet shops then thousands of extra kittens would end up at shelters, or worse. It is my understanding that banning the sale of kittens in pet shops will **NOT** now be part of this policy. Had the minister approached the industry earlier, then it would have saved a lot of anxiety amongst cat lovers in the industry.

So, is the puppy policy a mistake too? Let's look at the facts:

Pet Shops supply about 10% of the market – 5% in some states. In the UK pet shop sales are about 2%. It has not solved the problem – Puppy Mills are still there and thrive on internet sales.

There **are** unethical pet shops and breeders – these are in the minority and need to be stamped out. If the RSPCA and the Animal Welfare League were given the right resources and in co-operation with the industry this could be achieved.

Most pet shops and breeders are ethical operators and have broken no laws. They will need to dismiss staff in some cases – some will close down with the possibility of losing their homes. If a politician is corrupt we don't sack all politician's, you just weed out the bad ones and get on with running the state/country. Why would you not take the same approach with the pet industry?

The Government has made their decision based on advice received from a vigilante group who operate illegally, trespass on private property, destroying fences and stealing property. They also fly drones with cameras over private property. I do not understand how some people in our society and especially a Labor government would find this acceptable behaviour. The NSW

Government along with the Federal Department of Agriculture recently held a meeting to discuss this situation and I understand that enforcement will be strengthened, and fines increased.

At a selected date the Trading Post had adverts for 2634 litters and Gumtree had adverts for 5537. This does not necessarily take into account breeders that have their own websites. The Victorian Government say they will do something about internet sale of puppies. No government in the world has been able to control the internet – I would be interested to see how the Victorian government is going to do it.

So why is the Victorian Government doing this when they know it will not improve the welfare of animals. Animal Activists conducted a great marketing campaign last year selecting some unethical breeders, suggesting all cross bred breeders were the same. They used photos that were on overseas websites and generally lied or exaggerated about the industry. The media looking for a bad news story, not worrying whether it was true or not ran the stories. This got the Facebook crowd into a frenzy and the rest is history. The facts show that their policy will be detrimental to the welfare of animals, but the Government has got themselves into a position where they will lose face if they back down.

The NSW Government recently held a Parliamentary enquiry relating to companion animal breeding practices. The members were represented by the Animal Justice Party, 2 Labor Party, 2 National Party, 3 Liberal Party, 1 Independent.

The Committee found in part:

- The introduction of a breeders' licensing scheme for all commercial dog and cat breeding in NSW and the requirement that when advertising the sale of dogs and cats, via any medium, that the breeder identification and animal microchip numbers be displayed
- that pet shop sales **not** be banned, because a ban would lead to less scrutiny of animal sales without improving welfare
- that the NSW Government implement the recommendations of the Companion Animals Taskforce as a priority
- a finding that the number of animals kept by a breeder is not in itself a factor which determines the welfare of breeding animals
- a need for a common database and better co-ordination between the enforcement agencies, including local government, in NSW to remove inefficiencies, duplication and achieve better animal welfare outcomes.

Government's Response Due: Saturday 27 February 2016

Despite these findings the Victorian Government continues its policy to appease the minority despite knowing that it will have a detrimental effect on animal welfare.

I have used the words Puppy Mill in reference to unethical breeders. The word Farm to me reflects open fields, live animals, growing crops and a freedom that city life cannot give you. Animal activists have turned the word farm into a dirty word in its effort to denigrate the breeding of animals.

A rescue animal isn't ideal for everyone and preventing people from buying an animal at a pet shop could push buyers to the unregulated Internet marketplace.

Should you decide that a puppy is what your family wants, taking into account the responsibility that you will be committing to over the life of the dog, then your first thoughts should be "would a shelter dog be suitable and is it what I want?" Don't do it because it will make you feel good about rescuing an animal, do it because the animal will suit your lifestyle and environment.

If you want a purebred dog then you should find an ANKC member of the breed that you prefer and visit the breeder to select the puppy. Not all ANKC members are ethical breeders, which is why I recommend you visit their premises.

If you want a crossbred puppy then your source should be a PIAA pet shop, they deal with ethical breeders and will help you make the transition to pet owner.

People have the right to make their own decisions, if we live in a free country, individual people should have a right to choose.

The Victorian government will allow Pet Shops to sell animals from shelters – on the surface most people will say this is a great idea and will reduce the number of animals in shelters. The reality is that while many shops are doing this already it is not feasible for all shops.

The following is a chart of a survey taken out earlier this year on 6 shelters showing dogs available for rehoming by breed. This shows that out of 550 dogs 464 were generally **not** sold from a pet shop. This means that most dogs in shelters didn't come from a pet shop and if the new laws come into effect in Victoria, pet shops will be supplied with animals not suitable to a pet shop environment and would most likely be the dogs that the shelters have been unable to rehome themselves.

Dogs in Shelters by breed on 24/5/15

	NSW RSPCA	NSW AWL	Doggie Rescue	Blacktown Pound	Renbury Farm	Hawkesbury Pound	Total
US Bulldogs X	2						2
Staffy X	31	13	13	43	5	17	122
Cattle X	19	1	9	2	1	2	34
Kelpie X	33	2	12	6		2	55
Terrier X	2	1	13	1		1	18
Beagle X	1				1	1	3
Border Collie X	12		4	2		1	19
Boxer x	1	1					2
Bullmastiff X	13						13
Chihuahua x	1	2	5				8
Dachund X	1						1
Foxy X	9	1	42	1	1	3	57
German Shepard X	3	3		1		2	9
Great Dane X	9	2	1				12
Greyhound	6						6
Irish Wolfhound X	5						5
Jack Russel X	4	1	29		1	2	37
Lab	3			1			4
Lab X	5					1	6
Maltese X	7	1	22	3	2	3	38
Mastiff X	18	4		2	2	1	27
Pom X	3		2	3	2	1	11
Cavoodle	2						2
Ridgeback X	1	1					2
Shar Pei X	5			1	1		7
Shih Tzu X	1		6				7
Husky X	1						1
Undetermined		1		1	2		4
Bedlington X		1					1
Pointer X		1	3				4
Rottweiler X		2		4			6
Bull Arab X		1				3	4
Min Pin X			2				2
Jap Spitz X			3				3
Italian Greyhound X			1				1
Pug X			3				3
Poodle X			4				4
Malamute X				2			2
Pappion X						1	1
Dog de Bordeaux X						1	1
Bull Terrier X						1	1
Tibetan Spaniel X						1	1
Dalmation X				1			1
Corgi X			3				3
	198	39	177	74	18	44	550
no - not generally sold in pet shops	179	36	132	67	13	37	464
yes - some sales in pet shops	17	2	45	7	4	6	82
some (less than 5 per year)	2	1	0		1	1	4
	198	39	177	74	18	44	550

It isn't any use in criticising the Government without having an option to resolve the problem. It is so simple – licence all breeders (including purebred breeders) and pet shops. Set an annual fee which would go to the RSPCA and/or AWL that would allow an inspection of the breeding premises before the licence is issued. They would have to conform to the Code of Practice, the Government already has this in place (PIAA also has a code). 'Breeders' mean anyone that has a puppy for sale. In any advertising this breeder licence number and/or microchip number must be quoted.

Under the new Labor policy, dog breeders will be limited to 10 breeding stock. This will create a shortage of puppies in Victoria. The price of puppies will increase and internet sales from breeders interstate shipping to Victoria will increase. The number of 10 dog breeders will increase in Victoria making it more difficult to control.

The NSW Parliamentary enquiry found that the number of animals kept by a breeder is not in itself a factor which determines the welfare of breeding animals.