Stop Puppy Farms

WA Labor Consultation Paper

May 2015
Executive Summary

WA Labor has committed to stopping puppy farms in WA. To achieve this, the oversupply of puppies in the WA market must be addressed.

WA Labor knows that there are no easy or quick solutions to stop puppy farms and overbreeding in WA.

WA Labor wants to safeguard the proper breeding and sale of puppies, and educate consumers so that they do not support illegal puppy farmers.

WA Labor acknowledges the wide body of research from animal welfare experts in Australia, and recognises that puppy farms are associated with severe animal welfare issues.

A state-wide strategy is needed that brings together all interested stakeholders to protect dogs.

This paper contains a brief overview of the issues relating to the cruel industry of puppy farming and overbreeding, and some key ideas for consideration.

Please provide your feedback by 30 September 2015 at www.markmcgowan.com.au/puppies or email puppies@walabor.org.au

Key Ideas for Consideration

• Implement a breeder registration system that allows every breeder to be identified and standards audited.

• Limit the number of litters that may be produced by a female dog to five in her lifetime, with compulsory vet checks pre-mating and post birthing.

• Ensure that pet shops only sell dogs from rescue organisations, approved animal shelters and registered dog breeders.

• Create education programs to ensure the public purchase puppies from registered dog breeders and not ‘backyard breeders’, online advertisements, or from newspapers.

• The sterilisation of dogs not intended to be used for breeding.
Puppy Farms

The term ‘puppy farm’ commonly refers to an illegal dog breeding establishment that operates outside of any industry organisation and has inadequate standards of care.

Puppy farms keep dogs in squalid conditions in order to profit from a cruel industry. They are often characterised by overcrowding, overbreeding, hereditary deformity from in-breeding or cross breeding, poor hygiene and limited social contact.

There are many registered dog breeders in WA. For instance, pedigree dog breeders are members of Dogs West and must comply with the organisation’s standards for care and sale of puppies.

According to the RSPCA (Australia) a puppy farm is “an intensive dog breeding facility that is operated under inadequate conditions that fail to meet the dogs’ behavioural, social and /or physiological needs”.

The RSPCA (Australia) uses the internationally recognised “Five Freedoms” as the determinants of adequate behavioural, social and /or physiological needs of puppies as a companion animal. These are:

1. **Freedom from hunger and thirst** – access to fresh water and diet to maintain health and vigour;
2. **Freedom from discomfort** – provide appropriate environment including shelter and comfortable resting areas;
3. **Freedom from pain injury or disease** – prevention or rapid diagnosis and treatment;
4. **Freedom to express normal behaviour** – provide sufficient space, facilities and company of own kind;
5. **Freedom from fear and distress** – ensure conditions and treatment to avoid mental suffering.

Puppy farms are often characterised by:
- overcrowding
- overbreeding
- hereditary deformity from in-breeding or cross breeding
- poor hygiene
- limited social contact
Oversupply of Puppies in Western Australia

The RSPCA (WA), Dogs’ Refuge Home, dog shelters and rescue organisations, pedigree dog breeders, veterinarians and other experts in animal welfare agree that there are far too many puppies being bred in WA.

There are an estimated 420,000 pet dogs in WA. However, the average age of a dog in WA is only four years which means that the lives of many young dogs are cut short through euthanasia. Healthy, young dogs make up a high number of these deaths.

The oversupply of dogs in the WA market comes as a result of illegal puppy farms and the overbreeding of dogs.

However, WA faces an additional challenge as the markets for puppies bred on puppy farms in other states closes down through tighter state laws. Those illegal operators now sell their puppies to WA pet shops and consumers online (via sites like Gumtree and Quokka) or through newspaper advertisements.

WA Labor recognises the need to have strategies in place to block these elements of the supply chain into the WA market.

How are other States dealing with this issue?

Victoria

Victoria has already implemented a breeder registration scheme and a breeder Code of Practice. New measures announced recently include the following:

- Breeding dogs will be limited to only five litters in their lifetime
- Facilities will be limited to a maximum of 10 breeding females
- Pet shops will be able to sell animals only from registered animal shelters

New measures recently announced include:

- Councils to seize animals from breeding businesses if the owners refuse to register or if they have been found guilty of animal cruelty
- Mandatory veterinary checks before and after each litter

Further legal changes in effect from July 2015 will see pet shop owners required to keep records about every cat or dog sold from the store.
ACT
The ACT have recently outlawed puppy farms and introduced a licensing scheme for breeders, allowing for the inspection of breeders’ premises to ensure animal welfare standards are maintained.

South Australia
The South Australian Government has announced plans to do the following:

- All dogs and cats will have to be microchipped before they are three months old
- New database for councils to help them track down the owners of stray pets
- Introduce a code of practice for breeders to ensure dogs were bred in humane conditions.

Feedback Welcome

Please provide your feedback by 30 September 2015 at
or email puppies@walabor.org.au