

From: marta gorecki
To: [Puppy Farming](#)
Subject: Further feedback on Stop Puppy Farming Consultation Paper
Date: Friday, 3 August 2018 4:49:58 PM

Dear Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries,

Thank you for beginning the process of introducing new laws to improve the welfare of dogs in WA and for seeking public feedback. As a dog lover, rescue group volunteer and foster carer I would like to use this opportunity to raise some of my concerns regarding the enforcement of laws, community awareness and online advertisements.

Enforcement

I am concerned about how the new laws will be enforced, and am hoping that this will be thoroughly planned out. It has been my experience that local governments and Rangers throughout WA are either unable or unwilling (or both) to enforce all the current existing dog and cat laws including:

- The requirement for dogs over 3 months to be microchipped and registered with the local government
- The requirement for any puppy under 3 months to be microchipped prior to sale or transfer to new owner
- The requirement of all cats to be sterilised, microchipped and registered with the local government by 6 months of age
- The requirement of any kitten under 6 months to be microchipped and sterilised or come with a prepaid sterilisation voucher prior to sale or transfer to new owner
- The requirement to apply for a permit to breed cats

On occasions I have even communicated with Rangers and local government employees who had incorrect beliefs about these current dog and cat laws. Not only does this mean that these laws are not being enforced in some jurisdictions, but incorrect information is also being given out to the community by some officials. In my opinion, current compliance with and enforcement of these above current dog and cat laws is not good enough, and I am worried that the introduction of new dog laws will be a failure if they are simply implemented as an addition to the current laws. Is it possible for suspected breaches to dog and cat laws to be reported to police rather than local Rangers? If not, extra resources will be required to hire new Rangers and properly train new and existing Rangers regarding dog and cat laws. I also believe that oversight of local governments and Rangers is required statewide to ensure laws are enforced throughout all jurisdictions, rather than there being effectively different laws in different jurisdictions depending on the particular local government's stance.

Community awareness

In my view, general community awareness of the current dog and cat laws (including the requirements listed above) is not good enough. The *Cat Act 2011* and *Dog Amendment Act 2013* were introduced 7 and 5 years ago respectively, however in my experience many cat

and dog owners and those looking to get a new cat or dog are still unaware of the requirements under these laws. Disturbingly, it seems as though many current or future pet owners also seem not to show any interest in educating themselves about the laws or simply do not care about the laws. I have communicated with sellers and purchasers of dogs and cats who, even when presented with the requirements under current laws as well as the possible penalties, blatantly disregard them with no fear of being caught offending.

I don't know whether community awareness campaigns were run when the *Cat Act 2011* and *Dog Amendment Act 2013* were brought in or what has been done since then to educate the public about the laws, but I feel that a huge awareness campaign will be required to inform the public about the new dog laws, otherwise there will be the same level of ignorance about the new laws as there is for the current laws. I suggest that this should be seen as a good opportunity to also educate the public about the current existing dog and cat laws and the penalty for committing offences.

I would also like to highlight the need to raise awareness of current as well as future dog and cat laws to all vets in WA. Some pet owners only seek information regarding the sterilising, microchipping and breeding of their pets from their vet. I am unsure whether all vets currently advise on the requirements of pet owners under law, or whether all vets even have the correct knowledge of current dog and cat laws. A common excuse from people selling vaccinated but unmicrochipped puppies is that they weren't advised by their vet that puppies had to be microchipped prior to sale. In the particular instance of people who have sought vet treatment such as vaccinations for puppies they intend to sell, they may have voluntarily complied with the requirement to microchip puppies prior to sale if they had been properly advised by their vet. I would like to suggest to the Working Group that they consider:

- What amount of knowledge of dog and cat laws is expected of vets
- The role of vets in educating pet owners of current and future dog and cat laws
- Whether there should be a requirement to have educational material explaining current and future dog and cat laws (such as website links, pamphlets and posters) at all veterinary clinics

Online advertisements

The Consultation Paper states that "enforcement against non-complaint online advertisements will be difficult to enforce". In my opinion, enforcement against non-complaint online ads is already effectively non-existent. Every day, there are hundreds of dogs and cats advertised for free or for sale in WA on gumtree.com.au and countless are advertised through Facebook. This includes the sale or giving away of unmicrochipped dogs and puppies, and the sale or giving away of unmicrochipped and unsterilised cats and kittens (or kittens without desexing vouchers) by unregistered cat breeders. These advertisements are neither monitored by the online administrators nor are they enforced by local government Rangers. The unlawful sale of dogs and puppies will definitely increase

following the introduction of new dog laws and this increase must be planned for and a strategy prepared to cope with this. Are unlawful online sales in WA able to be followed up on by the police? Without addressing the rapidly growing and often unlawful sale of animals online (especially through gumtree and Facebook), the new dog laws may not end up doing much to increase the welfare of, and reduce the euthanasia rate of, dogs in WA.

Thank you for the work so far in developing the Stop Puppy Farming Consultation Paper and I hope for strong future dog laws.

Yours faithfully,
Marta Gorecki

