

Name: Neridah Sharrett

Suburb: [REDACTED]

Breeding Prefixes: [REDACTED]

Breeds: Irish Terriers 1983- present. Lakeland Terriers on and off since 1990's, Wire Fox Terriers 1990s and 2000, Kerry Blue Terriers 2000s, Australian Terriers – current, Bull Terriers since 2011

Background that bring expertise:

- Dog lover and breeder
- Judging dogs with experience locally and internationally
- Program manager for Detector Dog Unit – Federal Government. Finalised 2014
- Owner of Fur Kidz Resort Boarding Kennel
- Owner of Perth's only heated indoor therapy pool for dogs
- Previous member of the Dogs West disciplinary tribunal
- Previous Chair of Dogs West Investigation Committee
- Current member of Dogs West Rules and Regs review working party

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to respond to your proposal in relation to the 'Stop Puppy Farming Initiative'. I will address your proposal in order of the 4 pillars that support your framework.

**Pet shops** I am not at all in favour of Pet shops being involved in the trade of cats and dogs.

As a breeder with in excess of 30 years of experience I have personally evolved and changed the way I raise and prepare my puppies for their new homes, it is a vastly different experience now to what we did last century, it is even different to what we did at the beginning of the century. I have broadened my knowledge, I have checked that what I am doing is backed by science as the best way forward in producing the next generation of the breeds I love and ensuring the best possible outcome for puppy buyers.

I have not seen the sale of puppies through pet shops change one bit. You can still walk in the door, pay the money, fill out the microchip form then leave 30minutes later with a dog instead of your groceries that you went out to buy in the first place.

People need to negotiate with me in relation to purchasing a future dog. Many of them wait for up to a year. I do not have puppies readily available and people cannot make an impulse purchase. My puppy buyers understand that there is a lot of waiting involved but patience will be rewarded. They are fully informed about what to expect in the breed they are purchasing, the upkeep required, the feeding, possible health issues, the best way to train that particular breed, the likely personality traits, the grooming requirements and above all the average life span for the breed – they need to make a commitment that will last up to 16 years, maybe longer if they are lucky. I explain to young families that the dog will probably still be around after their children leave home and will probably see them become grand-parents. It is a BIG decision.

They get to meet dogs of that breed at all ages and in all stages of coat growth. They do not just get to just see a pretty show dog or a cute puppy. They will leave knowing that they are looking at an active dog that has wants and needs.

I tell people if the breed is not the right fit for them. I tell people which is the best puppy or selection of puppies for them. I watch the puppies interact with the family, especially if young children are involved. I have strict rules when people visit. I have strict time frames when they can visit. I do not let anyone pop in when it suits.

My puppy buyers know I will be difficult to get hold of as I spend a lot of time on our dogs. They appreciate that it is important to make sure that our breeding bitches are calm and sensible and that they do not get stressed or overly excited particularly during breeding season. We have researched the impact of stress on pregnant bitches and the impact that can have on puppies before they are even conceived. We screen people and only permit visits from people who will not compromise our end goal, a healthy, low stress puppy.

All of the relevant health tests are completed on our dogs, long before we contemplate them as suitable candidates for our breeding program. We invest time in exhibiting dogs at conformation shows so that we are getting an independent appraisal on our future breeding stock. There have been times when we have had successful show dogs that have not made the grade for breeding as there is much more to do than just exhibit dogs to make the determination that it is a sound breeding prospect.

When our puppies are born they are interacted with in accordance with the 'Puppy Culture' program, a wonderful, scientifically based series handling experiences for each puppy. The first weeks experiences are scientifically shown to awaken the immune system, improving heart and kidney function, and overall health. Slowly other experiences are added to ensure a strong mind and physical body.

Further to 'Puppy Culture' we have invested in play areas specifically designed to bring about strong bodies through early body awareness training.

Our puppies do not leave us until they are physically and mentally in condition to do so and they do not go to homes that have not been part of the journey of understanding why we do what we do.

It is all about ensuring a long life with one family.

Pet shops do not do this, they have done nothing to transition themselves to be in a place to do this. I know from my own research (phoning around to multiple pet shops) that most of them are flying pups in from 'breeders' in Victoria or NSW.

None of the staff in any of the pet shops talked to me about the way the puppies were raised, what the parents are like, the grooming requirements, life expectancy, the personality of each puppy, possible health issues. They simply told me that the pups came from 'breeders' elsewhere and what they cost. They also mentioned their 'next shipment'.

Attachment A will give you an overview of my day of phoning around pet shops.

### **Pet shops to transition to Adoption centres**

Please do not do this, not even as a notice board or live streaming option. It does nothing to encourage people to think about the choice of purchasing a dog. Many pet shops have managed to transition away from cat and dog sales. The few that haven't cannot be finding this as a surprise, they have had ample time to get their business plans in order.

It is widely known that a number of shelters are bringing in dogs from other states so that they have something to sell or 'rescue'. I have had in-depth conversation with people actively involved with

shelters and rescue work, they too have concerns about what is happening in the rescue space at the moment.

While saving dogs from euthanasia is a noble sounding gesture it is also fraught with hidden dangers if not managed correctly. Many dogs are travelling into this state on a weekly basis without health checks, just as puppies to pet shops are. Most come by plane, some come by road. There are no health checks or requirements before they board an aircraft or truck, although there is meant to be a minimum age requirement it is not being policed. These dogs could be carrying parasites that are not present in this state (paralysis tick for example). They could also be ill with viruses and expose other pets in transit to those viruses and, following a conversation with a well know Perth behaviourist I am know aware that 'community dogs' are being sourced by rescues and are being released to new owners while they still have active ringworm. The new owners, are not informed and are taking these dogs to training classes, putting other dogs at risk.

I have been told that one rescue will bring in dogs that have been declared dangerous in other states. How are you going to manage that?

We have already had a number of cases in Australia where lives have been lost because rescue dogs were not assessed and managed correctly. I know you are well aware of cases in WA. You mention that rescue dogs should be assessed by a behaviourist or Vet, I am already hearing that there is reluctance (actually the ones I have asked have said they will not), from those mentioned groups, to sign off on behaviour because it puts them at risk of litigation if the dog harms someone. If this does go ahead you will need some rigour around the process and who is authorised to assess. Many people call themselves 'behaviourists' but they are not.

### **Accrediting shelters**

I know this part was about accrediting shelters to sell to pet shops. I believe there needs to be accreditation of shelters and rescue groups full stop. They are springing up all over the place without any structure or framework, no qualifications, no accountability, no controls. Many of them are run by well-meaning people who cannot see that some dogs are not viable candidates for rehoming.

On visiting a number of shelters recently the vast majority of dogs in care were highly strung, anxious or stressed out dogs of multi-mixed breeding origins. Of those dogs a lot had signs on their gates advising potential owners to not look the dogs in the eye, or judge them by their behaviour in kennels as it was not indicative of the real dog. Environment should not be that big a factor, well raised dogs will adjust easily to situations like kennels. As an owner/operator of boarding kennels I have experience in this regard. If we get a dog that is not settling in we will move it to another kennel where it is more comfortable. Most dogs adjust well, those that don't have not been raised well from the beginning.

A number of the dogs in shelters on the day I visited were exhibiting signs of fear aggression. They were mostly medium to large dogs, most were in excess of 20kg. Most had a heritage of fighting/guarding breeds crossed with high drive working breed. Clearly little thought had gone into the possible outcomes of such breeding. Personally, as someone with decades of experience, I would not place most of these dogs in homes with first time dog owners. The vast majority of these dogs really needed people who could take on a problem dog and bring about appropriate change in that dogs behaviour. Unfortunately there are not many people who are well enough qualified looking for dogs like this. It is cruel and heartbreaking that these dogs will spend a long time waiting for

someone to take them on. It is not fair that they pose a risk to other animals and people but they should not be placed in a situation where they respond by biting.

I recently contacted the RSPCA looking for a pet for a relative, they did not have many dogs in the shelter, 4 in total, I was advised that a lot go out over the weekend. I was told more would become available as they came in from the pounds. I advised that I wanted a little dog, a fluffy one if possible, unbelievably I was told to stalk their page and come in quickly if I saw one as the last one was adopted within 40 minutes of going online.

I have no issue with pound dogs in Western Australia getting a second chance through well run rescues but when rescues use cross-border dogs to prop up their numbers it is becoming about finances and not rescue. It also provides a way for dogs that have been declared dangerous to skip town.

There is also the issue of accountability over donated funds. Many people, out of kindness and blind faith, donate their hard earned dollars to rescues. Recently my neighbour was caring for 2 rescued dogs in his kennel, the dogs got together when a gate failed and they got into a fight. He got badly bitten as did one of the dogs. The badly bitten dog was taken to a Vet, it required extensive surgery to repair tendon and bone damage. The consulting Vet had dealt with the dog previously and had noted that the dog had a poor temperament with people. It was recommended that the dog be euthanased. The rescue refused and insisted the dog undergo the extensive and expensive surgery. The 'carer' had to administer a sedative for the Vet to get near the dog. Again this sounds noble to many but when analysed it is agonisingly obvious that the recommendation from the Veterinarian should have been followed. The dog, with a poor temperament and with proven capacity to bite, is now going to have a life of arthritic pain. He is a worse candidate now than he was and he is now a huge bite risk in the future.

The more rescue organisations that spring up the more pressure they place on established sanctuaries as they compete for the same dogs. Dogs they need to sell to make ends meet. The benchmark for acceptable dogs for rehoming gets lowered and human life gets put at risk.

They also compete for the same donor dollars, suddenly money is spread thinly across many shelters instead of supporting a few well run shelters. Furthermore some shelters are not demonstrating careful decision making when spending that money on dogs that Vets are declaring dangerous and not fit for purpose.

I believe Dogs West has indicated that they will take charge over Breed Specific Rescue. It is evident that those rescues are working effectively. I am yet to see, after months of stalking all shelters, any evidence that shelters are having an influx of pure bred dogs. Having said that some shelters are leading by deception and are advertising dogs that are clearly multi breed crosses as pure breeds. There should be accountability in Pet shops and Shelters in terms of advertising. If they do not have proof that a dog is a certain breed then they should not be guessing.

A further note on advertising breeds. It is important that dogs are the breeds they are advertised as. There is a plethora of misinformation relating to dog bites. Many pure breeds have been wrongly accused of dog attacks when it is far from the truth. When photos are finally shown it is pretty obvious that the dogs involved are the previously mentioned cross breeds ie fighting or guarding dogs crossed with high drive working dogs. People need to know what they are buying, they need to make informed decisions.

## **Mandatory de-sexing**

You define de-sexing as removal of reproductive organs. You quote that this will result in longer lifespan and also reduction in some cancers. This is extremely misleading. Personally I believe your statement warrants a retraction.

I attach at [Appendix A](#) a copy of a paper that summarises the pros and cons of spay neuter and waiting. In it they quote *Dr. Villalobos, a well-respected veterinary oncologist states, "It is earth shattering to consider that some of the cancers we have been battling may have been enhanced by early neutering instead of the reverse."*

You only have to go to google or google scholar and ask the question about when it's the right time to spay or neuter dogs. Most of these comments are from USA or UK, the majority suggest well after puberty. Early de-sexing is no longer widely embraced.

In Europe it is a crime to de-sex an animal without a medical reason. They do not have the problems you suggest in your paper.

From a breeders perspective I cannot undertake conclusive health testing, which can vary in cost from \$550 to over \$1000 until a dogs is fully mature. While many disorders have DNA markers we are far from finding all of them. Our dogs have DNA sent to UK, urine sent to Germany and USA, ultra sound investigations on internal organs. I know that I can ask for dispensation under your proposal but I cannot hang on to all of my dogs until they are old enough, it is not fair to the dogs, they need to be establishing themselves into a family, not waiting at my place. Dogs need to be growing up as family pets from puppyhood if they are to be really successful at it.

My Irish Terrier males need to be intact and at least 12 – 18 months of age for complete and accurate urinalysis completed. They have a condition that is testosterone dependent, if they are castrated it will give a result of clear. I need to be able to gather data on this condition and can only do it when dogs are intact. I have no problem castrating males that fail as, in this rare case, castration can be lifesaving as, for some reason, cysteine levels return to normal within weeks post-operative. This removes the risk of life threatening stones forming BUT I am working with a limited gene pool, I need to undertake studies to help preserve this wonderful and very old breed.

I ask you carefully consider the needs of Dogs West breeders in relation to this piece of legislation particularly where we have males out on breeders terms. These dogs get to live the best of both worlds. I have placed dogs on terms since I started breeding dogs, it has been a rewarding experience for all parties. The boys do not suffer a personality disorder, as suspected, after they are used. In fact they are calm, rational dogs that generally only show signs of excitement when I visit. They come home with me for a few days then go back to their owners and sleep it off for a day or two. They do not become some 'nuisance dog' as your paper suggests. Just sensible dogs that will do a job when required, then back to normal.

I take a very responsible approach with bitches out on terms as I cannot afford any mishaps, this would put my reputation at risk and also result in sanctions from Dogs West. We care for all girls that are on terms when they are in season. If we breed them, they come back to us a week prior to whelping date so we can manage them and get them used to everything. This way we can ensure proper early handling of pups and care for mums.

I am vehemently opposed to the thought of putting our puppies under anaesthetic at an early age. Can you please change your position to at a time deemed by a qualified Veterinarian as necessary and suitable in consultation with the owner and/or breeder.

## **Central Registry**

I have no problem with this idea except it really will not help you achieve your aims – to Stop Puppy Farming. You have no way of dealing with those people know and this only tightens up the controls over those of us who are already compliant.

I request that you:

- write in exemptions for Dogs West breeders to NOT have to register with their local Government as a breeder. We are already meeting the requirements of our Association and as you rightly recognises – we are the Gold Standard.
- Please make allowances for our members to place dogs out on breeders terms/agreements.
- Please do not use the terminology 'Registered Breeders' for anyone other than Dogs West Breeders
- Please be very aware that other registries are popping up. They are virtual registries with no physical address or presence –anywhere, let alone in this state. Dogs West and the Working Dog Registry should be the only registries you recognise for this legislation.
- Please make all Shelters, Rescues, Fosters register all transitioning pets, identifying from where they sourced those dogs.

## **Mandatory standards.**

We have established our breeding program on a properly accredited and licensed kennel property. Our dogs do not cause a nuisance, they are under control. Their housing has been approved by the Local Government. It is well maintained, kept clean, and has been renovated over the years to remain a safe and well run facility.

Our property value is in the vicinity of \$750 – 850k. Please keep in mind that many other people have invested in property to be able to breed dogs with peace of mind. We have fitted our properties out to ensure the best outcome for our dogs and our breeding program.

There is not one size that fits all in this area. If you are too prescriptive you could really mess this up. Please use common sense when writing this. Please keep it simple, so people know when they are getting it wrong but please do not tell us how do what we know how to do and do not tell us how to do it right when you have not done it yourself.

Your lack of consultation in this space is astounding.

I would be pleased to see something that said:

- Dogs shall be well fed on good quality food
- Dogs coats shall be clean and maintained (no matting, no prickles etc)
- Dogs shall have access to fresh water
- Dogs shall have access to shelter
- Dogs needs shall be considered in the heat of summer and the cold of winter and their wellbeing must not be compromised by any form or neglect (examples: walking on hot pavement, left in hot cars, left out in the rain without anywhere to go that is warm and dry)
- Dogs must be provided with adequate Veterinary attention
- Dogs must all be vaccinated, regularly wormed and not bothered by pests (flies, fleas, ticks etc)
- Dogs should not have puppies (as per Dogs West Code of Ethics)
- Dogs must have behavioural issues dealt with by training as soon as practicable

- Dogs must be exercised daily
- Dogs shall not undergo medical procedures that cause harm

# Appendix A

Wait, Wait, Don't Spay (or Neuter) ME!

Is a vasectomy or ovary sparing spay right for my dog?

Your decision to spay or neuter your pet must be made on a case-by-case basis. This decision should be made between you and your veterinarian, taking into consideration your pet's age, breed, sex, health status, intended use, household environment and temperament. While there are health benefits to spaying and neutering, the benefits must be weighed against the health benefits of retaining the sex hormones achieved by leaving your pet intact (not neutered or spayed). These advantages and disadvantages pertain not only to the canine athlete or performance dog, but to all dogs regardless of lifestyle. Each patient must be considered individually – we do not have a one-size-fits-all answer for whether it is best to remove or not remove the gonads (testes or ovaries) for your pet.

If you have determined you do not plan to breed your dog, male or female, you are now faced with other decisions.

1. Do I have another option besides a neuter or spay? What is a vasectomy? What is an ovary sparing spay?
2. If you chose surgery, at what age should you “alter” your pet?
3. Should you opt for a traditional neuter or spay?
4. What are the advantages of retaining the testes or ovaries?

Please feel free to discuss this information and ask for advice on asking these decisions with our doctors at Veterinary Village.

1. What is a vasectomy? What is an ovary sparing spay?

A vasectomy is a surgical procedure where a portion of the vas deferens, the tube that carries sperm from the testicle where they are formed, to the outside to fertilize the female, is removed. By doing this, even if the male dog mates with a female, the mating will not be a fertile one. The testicles remain in the scrotum and continue to produce testosterone. The male will still be interested in and can mate with females, may still lift his leg to mark territory, is still prone to benign prostatic hypertrophy, and could develop a testicular tumor, perianal tumor, or perineal hernia.

An ovary sparing spay is when one or both ovaries are left in the abdomen, near the kidneys, but the uterus and cervix are removed. Because the uterus is removed, the female will not be able to become pregnant, even if a mating occurs. The female will still have heat cycles and be attractive to male dogs. She will have little to no bloody vaginal discharge during her heat cycles.

2. If you chose surgery, at what age should you “alter” your pet?

If you opt for a non-traditional approach, the vasectomy or ovary sparing spay, when you leave the testes or ovaries but interrupt the reproductive tract to prevent fertility, you may consider doing this at any age. Because the male or female sex organs are left to function, your dog will still have his or her hormones. Research has shown that there can be positive effects of the sex steroid hormones. The sex steroids are hormones produced by the ovaries and testes, and are only present in intact males and females. For canine athletes, Dr. Christine Zink recommends waiting until after 14 months



of age (the age at which the growth plates have closed) for males and females to be neutered or spayed.

### 3. Should you opt for a traditional neuter or spay? At what age?

If you opt for a traditional neuter or spay, the age at which this is done is important. Removing the testes or ovaries interrupt the hormonal axis of the sex hormones with the pituitary and other organs. There are age-related conditions to consider when making this decision. Since gonadectomy prior to puberty or sexual maturity may make the risks of some diseases higher in certain breeds or individuals, the option to leave your pet intact should be available to you. If you opt to leave the gonads, the testes or ovaries, this can be done at any age, as young as 8 weeks of age. If you opt to remove the gonads, testes or ovaries, the age should be decided in a conversation with you and your veterinarian. Many times, we recommend waiting until at least 6 months of age, or older, usually past puberty, due to health and behavioral advantages.

### 4. What are the advantages of retaining the testes or ovaries?

The advantages of remaining intact include:

#### Health Advantages

1. Lower incidence of hemangiosarcoma (cancer usually found in the spleen or heart) in males and females.
2. Lower incidence of osteosarcoma (bone cancer) in intact male and females.
3. Lower risk of transitional cell carcinoma (bladder cancer) in intact male and females.
4. Lower risk of prostatic adenocarcinoma (prostate cancer) in intact male dogs compared to neutered male dogs.
5. Lower incidence of obesity in intact male and female dogs, which may be due at least partly to increased metabolic rate.
6. Lower incidence of urinary incontinence in intact females (equivocal if females are spayed after 5 months but before their first heat).
7. Lower incidence of urinary tract infection in intact females.
8. Lower incidence of autoimmune thyroiditis and hypothyroidism in intact male and females.
9. A reduced incidence of cranial cruciate rupture in intact male and females.
10. A reduced incidence of hip dysplasia in male and female dogs that are not neutered or spayed before 5 months of age.
11. Anesthesia and surgery are not appropriate for some patients with high risk medical conditions.
12. Lower incidence of adverse reactions to vaccines in intact males and females.
13. Evidence of increased lifespan in females left intact past puberty. David J. Waters, associate director of Purdue University's Center on Aging and the Life Course and a professor in the Department of Clinical Sciences. "Taking away ovaries during the first 4 years of life completely erased the female survival advantage. We found that female Rottweilers that kept their ovaries for at least 6 years were 4 times more likely to reach exceptional longevity compared to females who had the shortest lifetime ovary exposure."

#### Behavioral Advantages

1. Less aggression towards people and animals in intact females.
2. A decreased incidence of cognitive dysfunction in intact male and females.
3. Less fearfulness, noise phobias and undesirable sexual behaviors in intact males and females.

The sex hormones, by communicating with a number of other growth-related hormones, promote

the closure of the growth plates at puberty, so the bones of dogs or bitches neutered or spayed before puberty continue to grow. Dogs that have been spayed or neutered well before puberty can frequently be identified by their longer limbs, lighter bone structure, narrow chests and narrow skulls. This abnormal growth frequently results in significant alterations in body proportions and particularly the lengths (and therefore weights) of certain bones relative to others. This is related to increased orthopedic conditions in dogs neutered or spayed prior to puberty. In addition, sex hormones are critical for achieving peak bone density.

#### 5. What are the disadvantages of retaining the testes or ovaries?

##### Health Disadvantages

1. Increased risk of mammary (breast) cancer in intact females. This increased risk of mammary (breast) cancer occurs with each subsequent cycle and the benefit of spaying does not disappear until the animal reaches old age. Mammary cancer is one of the most common types of cancer in small animals. Mammary neoplasia is malignant under 50% of the time in dogs, but few dogs die from breast cancer due to low metastatic rates and early detection and treatment.
2. Increased risk of ovarian cancer in intact females. The incidence and mortality risk for ovarian cancer are very low.
3. Increased risk of testicular cancer in intact males. The incidence for testicular cancer is common but malignancy and mortality are very low.
4. An increased risk of pyometra in intact female dogs and this risk increases with increasing age. Varies by breed – review this with your veterinarian.
5. Risk of unwanted pregnancies if an OSS or vasectomy is not performed.
6. An increased risk of prostatitis, benign prostatic hyperplasia, prostatic cysts and squamous metaplasia of the prostate in intact male dogs.
7. An increased incidence of perineal and inguinal hernia and perineal adenoma in intact male dogs.

##### Behavioral Disadvantages

1. Inter-dog aggression may be due to competition for available territory or availability of cycling animals.
2. Increased risk of wandering and being hit by a car in intact dogs.
3. Increased incidence of urinary marking in intact males.
4. Ongoing sexual behaviors, including heat cycles in females who have had an ovary sparing spay.

##### Summary:

Dr. Villalobos, a well-respected veterinary oncologist states, "It is earth shattering to consider that some of the cancers we have been battling may have been enhanced by early neutering instead of the reverse." Based on the research available, it is clear there are a number of health benefits of the sex steroid hormones. This benefit varies with age, sex, and breed. Therefore, although surgically altering your dog to be unable to breed is the responsible choice for most dogs, it is in the best interest of each individual patient for its veterinarian to assess the risks and benefits of gonadectomy (removing the testes or ovaries versus vasectomy or ovary sparing spay) and to have your veterinarian advise you on what is appropriate for each individual pet at each stage of its life.