



Animal welfare by the experts -
those who keep, care for and breed animals”
www.animalcareaustralia.org.au

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VICTORIA BRACES FOR ANIMAL WELFARE CRISIS

Australia’s peak animal welfare body warns of an impending welfare crisis as authorities scramble to patch past mistakes.

Melbourne, VICTORIA, (30 June 2021) A well-meaning attempt to end puppy and kitten farming in Victoria, has instead forced the closure of experienced, ethical and high welfare dog and cat breeders, and ended a number of rare breed bloodlines in Australia. Rather than ending puppy farming, as promised, the legislation has supported a growing network of unregistered and unregulated backyard breeders in numbers greater than the original problem. Recently, a taskforce was announced, heavily focussed on creating a new rehoming industry with no efforts to educate pet owners to minimise the need for rehoming.

As a result, a large number of puppies and kittens are being sold at record prices, without proper health checks, handling, training, or socialisation. All for a quick buck. Many of these animals are soon surrendered or abandoned as their behavioural and health issues overwhelm their new owners, or they grow up to be a different breed or size than what was advertised.

“Limits on how many animals each household is permitted to keep, means that experienced people who once took in these unwanted animals to be retrained, rehabilitated and rehomed now must choose between keeping their own family pets or helping one in need.” Says Michael Donnelly, President of [Animal Care Australia](http://www.animalcareaustralia.org.au). “They can no longer do both, preventing the most experienced and appropriate people in animal care from assisting when they are needed most.”

Rescue groups are not regulated or mandated to have any training, qualifications or licences to operate. The lack of competency means many rescued pets are rehomed without proper retraining, health assessments or ongoing support, leading to further surrenders and abandonment of unsuitable and unhealthy animals.

“The lack of experienced animal welfare experts involved in the development and implementation of these policies is leading Victoria to an inevitable animal welfare crisis” Mr Donnelly said. “Throwing

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more funds after the horse has bolted will only cause unnecessary suffering of thousands of dogs and cats across Victoria building a shelter industry, and would be better invested in long term solutions that should have been implemented from the start.”

This is where Victoria currently finds itself – in a downward spiral of dumped, unwanted dogs and cats - that are difficult to rehome – with the experts not permitted to assist, and nowhere to keep them. Animal Rights is not the same as Animal Welfare, and the two should not be provided the same powers to make decisions about legislation affecting animal welfare. It’s time to address the real issues here and repair the failing animal welfare system in Victoria, before it is too late.

The Andrews Government has supported a series of poor decisions over the past 4 years in relation to animal welfare, followed by further band aid attempts to cover the problems, that have only made things worse:

2016: Animal rights groups pressure the Andrews government to introduce anti puppy farm legislation.

2017: The [Domestic Animals Amendment \(Puppy Farms and Pet Shops\) Act 2017](#) is introduced disregarding the input of welfare and industry experts. Focussed only on limiting the number of breeding animals a person can own, and disregarding welfare standards or conditions, commercial breeders are closed overnight, and many registered, ethical breeders cannot meet the new requirements without compromising on animal health and genetic diversity.

2018: The [Pet Exchange Register](#) is introduced to trace the sales of dogs and cats. No industry or welfare experts are involved in the roll out.

2019/2020: The reduction of high welfare breeders leads to an increase in opportunistic, unscrupulous backyard breeders looking to make a quick buck with whatever breeding animals they can find.

2020: The [Animal Welfare Funds Grants Program](#) is launched to provide \$10.5 million of funding to help the industry adjust to the welfare reforms by financially supporting shelters and rescues. This grants program excludes all breeders, including higher welfare breeders, to grow a Shelter Industry.

2021: The [Taskforce on Rehoming Pets](#) is established, again without any relevant expertise, as the latest attempt to correct the failings of the “anti-puppy farm” legislation. The taskforce aims to fix the increasing numbers of surrendered and abandoned animals by introducing more regulations to prop up an already failing system, while doing nothing to educate the buyers and breeders of animals on their responsibilities as pet owners.

Animal Care Australia is the Peak Animal Welfare Body representing the keepers and breeders of pet and companion animals in Australia.

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If you would like more information about this topic, please call Michael Donnelly on 0400 323 843 or email president@animalcareaustralia.org.au

