

17th July 2026
Hon Michaela Settle
Minister for Agriculture
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Media Statement: Keeping Puppy Protection Laws Up To Date

Animal Care Australia is a national incorporated association established to consult with government in advocating for real animal welfare by those who keep, breed and care for animals. Our goal is to promote and encourage high standards in all interactions with the animals in our care.

Animal Care Australia encourages continued development of animal welfare standards and Codes of Practice for animal husbandry, breeding, training, sale, and sporting exhibitions for a wide range of animal species, including pets, companion animals, animals used for educational or entertainment purposes or kept for conservation.

Where is the evidence?

Today's announcement by the Victorian Government proposes another review of commercial dog breeding laws in the name of improving animal welfare.

Everyone involved in animal welfare wants the same outcome—healthier dogs, responsible breeding and fewer animals entering shelters and pounds.

But before introducing another round of restrictions, Victorians deserve to know one thing:

Did the last Puppy Farm reforms actually achieve what they promised?

When the **Domestic Animals Amendment (Puppy Farms and Pet Shops) Bill 2016** was debated in the Victorian Parliament on **14 December 2017**, this exact question was asked.

Jeff Bourman MLC challenged the Government, asking:

"How will the government actually in five years say, 'Yes, this has increased animal welfare by X or Y'?"

(Victorian Legislative Council Hansard, 14 December 2017, p. 6943).

It was a fair question.

How would success be measured?

Minister for Agriculture Jaala Pulford replied:

"I am happy to commit to providing an update to the Parliament perhaps 12 months after the operation of the bill to provide further detail on that."

When Mr Bourman asked whether prosecutions would become the measure of success, the Minister responded:

"I would have thought that a measurable outcome would be having puppies not in shops. If the legislation is successful tonight, then that will be a measurable improvement for animal welfare."

Perhaps even more significant was another statement made by the Minister during the same debate:

"There is... a distinct lack of scientific review on the question of scale... there is... no evidence that says a very big breeding establishment provides better animal welfare outcomes and there is no evidence that says a smaller one does."

That statement is just as relevant today as it was in 2017.

The Pet Exchange Register was introduced for a reason

One of the key reforms introduced by the legislation was the **Pet Exchange Register**.

During the parliamentary debate, the Minister explained that the Register, combined with compulsory breeder identification and microchipping, would significantly improve traceability by allowing puppies advertised for sale to be traced back to the breeder.

That wasn't simply another administrative requirement.

It was introduced so Government would finally have the information needed to understand where dogs were being bred, monitor compliance and make future policy decisions based on evidence rather than assumption.

So, nearly eight years later...

Before introducing further restrictions on registered breeders, it is reasonable to ask:

- Where is the update that was promised to Parliament?
- What measurable improvements in animal welfare have resulted from the 2017 reforms?
- What has the Pet Exchange Register revealed?
- How many dogs entering Victorian shelters and pounds originated from registered commercial breeders?
- How many came from small-scale backyard breeders operating from family homes?
- How many were accidental litters?
- How many originated interstate?
- How many were owner surrenders unrelated to breeding?
- How many breeders with over 10 fertile females have been granted ministerial approval for a commercial breeders licence?

These are not unreasonable questions.

They are exactly the types of outcomes Parliament expected would be measurable when these reforms were introduced.

Responsible breeders are not the whole picture

Today we continue to hear concerns about increasing numbers of dogs entering shelters and pounds.

Yet no publicly released evidence has demonstrated that registered, regulated breeders are responsible for the majority of these animals.

At the same time, many welfare investigations continue to involve breeding undertaken in family homes, repeated breeding of one or two dogs with little oversight, or the production of fashionable crossbreeds and designer puppies that cannot ultimately be sold or responsibly placed.

If that is where the greatest welfare risk exists, then that is where education, compliance and enforcement should be directed.

Likewise, if the Pet Exchange Register demonstrates that registered breeders are contributing significantly to shelter admissions, then the industry should work collaboratively with Government to address those issues.

But policy should follow evidence—not assumptions.

Let's release the data

The Victorian Government has invested considerable time and resources into developing the Pet Exchange Register.

If nearly eight years of data has now been collected, it should be released publicly.

Not because anyone wants to avoid regulation.

But because good legislation should always be transparent, accountable and evidence-based.

The Government itself acknowledged in Parliament that there was "**no evidence**" that breeding scale alone determined welfare outcomes.

So before introducing another round of legislative reform, let's first evaluate whether the previous reforms achieved their objectives and where today's welfare issues are actually arising.

Animal welfare deserves more than good intentions.

It deserves measurable outcomes.

It deserves transparency.

It deserves evidence.

I encourage the Victorian Government to publicly release the data collected through the Pet Exchange Register, report against the measurable outcomes discussed during the 2017 Parliamentary debate, and ensure any future reforms are driven by evidence that will genuinely improve animal welfare for dogs across Victoria.

Should you require further details please do not hesitate to reach out as we would be happy to meet with you, and further discuss this matter.

Kind regards,

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About Animal Care Australia

As a nationally recognised animal welfare organisation, Animal Care Australia encourages continued development of animal welfare standards and Codes of Practice for animal husbandry, breeding, training, sale, and sporting exhibitions for a wide range of animal species, including pets, animals used for educational or entertainment purposes or kept for conservation, and in particular native birds, reptiles, and mammals.

Animal Care Australia was founded in early 2018 to establish an organisation run solely by volunteers to lobby for real animal welfare. With extreme animal rights and animal liberationist ideologies influencing government legislation, regulation, and policy at our expense and to the detriment of our animals and pets, it has become necessary to provide government with a balancing voice.

By uniting the broad spectrum of animal groups, collectively we offer an experienced, sensible approach to animal welfare.

By educating our members and the public about the importance of treating animals with kindness and respect for their needs and promoting the humane treatment of animals to improve animal welfare outcomes, Animal Care Australia is in the unique position of lobbying and advocating for all animals within our care.

Animal Care Australia provides priority to the following:

- advocating for stronger welfare outcomes
- advocating to increase education of the public in animal welfare and best care techniques
- educate the public on handling their animals with kindness & respect and the importance of their needs
- educate the public in the differences between animal welfare and animal rights