



The World League for Protection of Animals Inc

Working for the rights and wellbeing of animals, both native and non-native, since 1935

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15 June 2015

The Hon Adam Marshall MP and Committee
Joint Select Committee on Companion Animals Breeding Practices in NSW
Parliament of New South Wales
Macquarie Street
Sydney NSW 2000

Dear Committee,

The World League for Protection of Animals Inc (WLP) is pleased for the opportunity to make this submission to NSW Parliamentary Inquiry into Companion Animals Breeding Practices in NSW. We confine ourselves to making brief points to your Terms of Reference further to introducing the perspective we offer as the oldest no-kill animal rights charity in Australia.

WLP is a self-funded, donation-based Membership Association of some 500 members and we are a non-profit registered charity registered in NSW. Our work is aimed at working with the broader public and we do so in a way that does not profit in any way from animals. WLP deals with the primary prevention of animal cruelty and also our work in **campaigning and rescue** aims at the alleviation of distress, the treatment of injury and disease, the fertility control of both owned and unowned companion animals and the rehoming of unowned or abandoned companion animals. We are also a charity that works for the welfare and right to life of native animal species.

To give the Committee an idea of our hands-on expertise in companion animal management, in the last financial year WLP achieved the following outcomes:

- Cared for 100 rescued animals (usually cats and dogs) in our Adoption Program at any one time via Foster Caring.
- Staffed an Adoption Centre 7 days per week to ensure all animals could be rehomed. Rehomed animals are also followed up in their new homes, are desexed, and **all aspects of the Companion Animals Act are complied with.**
- Conducted 29 Adoption Open House events in a row, and continued these events for 9 months of the year to rehome >400 abandoned or unowned companion animals (usually cats) diverting them away from pounds and kill shelters.

- Intervened in 19 locations to desex colonies of unowned cats and rescued and homed their kittens (with property owners, real estate agents, Councils and rangers, other members of the community contact us for help).
- Rehomed >400 rescued / surrendered dogs, puppies, rabbits, guinea pigs and cats and kittens with follow up support to adoptive parents.
- Conducted community education through shopping centres, markets, our Adoption Centre and at community forums.
- We have an 'open door' intake for rehoming where we do not discriminate against any cat in need of rehoming so long as they are well at the point of rehoming and the home must be suitable to their needs and not be animal hoarding.
- Attended the Federation of Animal Welfare Sciences Conference in York, UK.

We therefore have vast experience within the industry in dealing with the burden of care and the very rewarding rehoming of companion animals in this State. Indeed, we pride ourselves on excellence and perseverance in rehoming rescued companion animals. We have no need to ever kill an animal in our care, unless there is end stage disease detected by our veterinarians. Accordingly we make the following points with regard to your specific terms of reference.

a) The current situation in NSW in comparison with other jurisdictions:

WLPA believes that existing regulation in NSW regarding breeders is weak and that this review is overdue.

WLPA believes that in general, NSW does poorly with regard to legislating to require the desexing of companion animals by pet owners. Furthermore, NSW does poorly in resourcing the management of companion animal fertility where pet owners cannot afford to provide this themselves. Currently the fee to desex for example, in the Eastern Suburbs of Sydney is \$370 which is viewed by many as unaffordable. Thus, the problem of oversupply of companion cats and dogs stems from a failure to require desexing in the Companion Animals' Act in general, and from a failure to properly regulate breeders in their breeding of both dogs and cats. The problem of oversupply is so for both cats and dogs.

Our conclusions in making these points are drawn from:

- 1) our extensive contact with a network of over 30 participating vets and from our close contact with them and other shelters, charities and pounds where we are aware of appalling rates of euthanasia of healthy and socialised cats and dogs;
- 2) we are aware of the inhumane killing of thousands of unowned colony cats in these facilities;
- 3) we are aware of generally poor exchange between shelters in the saving of more lives of rehomeable cats and dogs; and
- 4) we are informed by our own Committee of Management Members' experience, a group of culturally diverse individuals aware of the overseas comparisons, and from our research, that Australia lags behind France, England, Italy and many other particularly European countries, where governments resource the desexing of companion animals.

b) Proposals to limit the number of animals allowed to be kept by breeders.

WLPA is opposed to any breeding that resembles puppy mills, puppy farms or any situation of overcrowded or otherwise the unsanitary housing of cats or dogs or any other companion animal species.

WLPA supports legislative and regulatory reform aimed at limiting the number of animals allowed to be kept by breeders. We understand that the literature reports that 8 cats is an appropriate number to be cared for by one person and that similar evidence is available for the care of dogs.

c) Calls to implement a breeders' licencing system

World League for Protection of Animals (WLPA) agrees that the existing guidelines for the care and housing of animals kept by shelters and breeders are insufficient to police the care quality provided by breeders, especially of dogs. WLPA supports a licencing system for the breeding of dogs and cats.

The definition of a 'breeder' needs to be clarified. It should include the idea of 'back yard breeders', especially in relation to owned, undesexed cats. These pet owners are ordinary citizens who would not identify as 'breeders', with an undesexed female cat on their property. In due course, that cat will have kittens. Frequently, this is the start of whole colonies of unowned, unwanted, undesexed, unidentified and unmanaged cats leading to the formation of wild cats, a predicament that is entirely preventable.

These citizens differ from breeders in so far as they do not seek to profit off the animals. However, they cause untold suffering to undesexed cats and their kittens. They also do not microchip nor provide veterinarian treatment, and thus do not comply with existing legislation. These are the members of the public WLPA frequently deal with. They are also people who frequently advertise kittens as 'free to a good home' if they participate at all in trying to find homes. Many do not advertise at all and expect unfunded charities to rescue and rehome these animals such as the work performed by WLPA. This giving away of cats for free leads to the perpetration of the cycle of overpopulation of unowned and badly managed cats.

Solution: "Dob in a back yard breeder hotline" and campaign is required to change community attitudes toward the timely desexing of all cats, both owned and unowned. It needs to be established to help police the failure of these breeders from compliance with microchipping and other aspects of the Companion Animals Act. These individuals can be reached with warnings through Gum Tree and Pet Rescue and the websites of animals rights charities and press so that broad awareness of the requirements at law are understood and followed. Should funding be provided, this organisation would be interested in providing this service as it is close to the education we provide by phone on a daily basis already. The paid advertisements and staffing would make this an effective campaign.

d) **The implications of banning the sale of dogs and cat in pet shops matter**

WLPA believes that breeders should not supply animals to pet stores at all.

WLPA believes that the adoption of **rescued animals** in pet food stores (otherwise known as pet shops) is highly appropriate and effective and should be supported. Our own experience of a partnership with such stores, including PetStock in Artarmon, Camperdown and Kingsford, and private pet stores in the Central Coast, Broadway and Birkenhead Point (now also owned by PetStock) has proved successful. We have found success in both rehoming and educating adoptive parents about responsible pet ownership. The public seeks out and supports the adoption of rescued animals in these settings.

e) **Any other related matter**

More must do more to rehome rescued animals and to stop the oversupply of animals so there are fewer to rehome. Some suggested ways forward are as follows:

There is currently a lack of education to the general community, especially in languages other than English, to inform this culturally diverse society of responsibilities and the rationale **for desexing**, especially cats before 5 months of age when they come on heat. This is a responsibility of governments who wish to implement responsible companion animal ownership to European standards.

With the exception of City of Sydney, currently, local Councils resource the killing ('disposing') of cats and dogs through pounds (as 'waste management') rather than **resource rehoming. A perverse culture of killing is the result and there is no incentive nor support available to no-kill charities like our own.** By contrast, City of Sydney supports festivals and special events with a focus on rehoming. We expect all Councils to offer some alternative approaches to resource rehoming including through smaller, grass roots no-kill registered charities.

The public are now aware that a humane approach is possible. WLPA conducts Operation Humane Alternative as a pound diversion initiative to prevent the public from sending animals to pounds via humane surrender instead. Our Adoption Open House events called Operation Humane Alternative, are a highly successful initiative, yet remains unfunded.

Existing requirements to microchip under the Companion Animals Act are poorly policed. People advertising on Gum Tree of unchipped animals should be cautioned or prosecuted under existing legislation. However charities should not be burdened by having to specify the chip number (as is the case on Pet Rescue site) as this makes advertising the animals too time consuming to do.

There is a random approach by Councils to partner and fund the desexing work done by charities for low income households and recipients of welfare. WLPA can not obtain Council support to desex in any jurisdiction because we work across Sydney and some Councils already fund another charity to do that work in the jurisdiction. The help should be extended to any bonafide rescue charity performing rescue work in the jurisdiction.

We are aware that one existing large animal welfare charity with significant millions of dollars available, has never offered funds nor grants to smaller no kill groups. A small investment in 'no-kill' by funding capacity building of the smaller charities can save lives. We are aware from the public that this same charity frequently has no animals to rehome because they have been killed. A small-grants round of funding to no-kill groups is urgently required.

The contact person for this submission is Halina Thompson (President) on 0407 456 683 or email: admin@wlpa.org.