



## Domestic Animals Amendment (Puppy Farms and Pet Shops) Bill 2016

The Australian Veterinary Association (AVA) congratulates the Victorian government for its genuine desire to address community concerns about puppy farms.

The association will be giving evidence to the parliamentary inquiry that outlines how this Bill could be improved, and might genuinely deliver animal welfare improvements without creating unintended consequences.

This is important because the horrors of puppy farming inflict suffering on animals and they go on to suffer during their life as pets. At the same time, research has shown the benefit of pets to the health of people and communities. It's in the public interest to regulate breeding, while also allowing people to enjoy the benefits of having a pet.

Best-practice policy in relation to the regulation of dog and cat breeding is outlined in the AVA's [policy on puppy farming](#). There are four key components:

1. Good quality **welfare standards** for breeders
2. **Inspections** of facilities and **enforcement** of standards
3. A centralised **licensing** system for all dog and cat breeders, run by the state government
4. Consumer **education** so that people only buy from licensed breeders.

This model is designed to:

- Identify and shut down bad operators, using puppy microchip details to trace to source
- Discourage underground breeding
- Eliminate loopholes
- Allow people to access a suitable, healthy pet at a reasonable price.

There is no evidence that capping a breeder to 10 fertile females will improve animal welfare. Animal welfare is not dictated by a number. There should be **no exemptions** from these requirements so that the welfare of all puppies and kittens can be protected, whether they're bred deliberately or accidentally.

Victoria already has high quality animal welfare codes of practice for breeders but compliance and enforcement is an issue. Additional resources would allow for inspections and action against breeders who don't meet these standards, whether they own just one breeding dog or many. This should **not** be the responsibility of local government, and a dedicated compliance unit should be established within a state government department.

The other current major gaps in Victoria are the lack of a robust statewide breeder licensing system, and consumer education about the system's safeguards.

For animal welfare and consumer protection, closing the current gaps in Victoria's current regulation is preferable to the alternative approach outlined in the Bill.

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