

## **Bill Before Parliament Will Effect Us All if it Becomes Law!**

### **“Amend the Bill” Campaign!!**

By now many of you will be aware that there is a Bill before the Legislative Assembly (Lower House) of the Victorian Parliament to make major changes to the Domestic Animals Act. This 96 page Bill is titled:

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

For the unwary, such a title might lead us to think that this is all great news and indeed much of the Bill is the result of the active lobbying from animal welfare agencies and organisations to shut down unethical breeding. So why all the fuss about what, at face value, is great news, and action on an election commitment?

As it stands, this Bill goes well beyond it's intended target, the target being to dealing with unethical so called “puppy farms” raising animals in poor conditions, unregistered backyard breeders and the sale of puppies from these sources in pet stores and over the internet. The issue of significance to pure breed dog people in Victoria is that this Bill also removes a major exemption currently given to members of applicable organizations such as Dogs Victoria (DV). Currently DV members are exempt from needing to register as a Domestic Animal Business unless they have 10 or more dogs. This Bill also dramatically changes the rules as applied to Domestic Animal Businesses such that anyone with even just a single fertile bitch who wishes to have just a single litter must be registered as a Domestic Animal Business (DAB). Such registration involves town planning applications for a huge number of breeders, and many councils are already stating they will not be granting any DAB's in their municipality.

This Bill threatens to wipe out a huge number of pure breed dog breeders in Victoria due to their inability to obtain a DAB (either due to council restrictions or the associated high costs). Whilst this Bill only applies to Victorian State law, other states are looking at their own legislation and will no doubt be watching what transpires with this Bill.

Those who are Dogs Victoria members with Dogs Victoria (DV) registered dogs will still be entitled to keep their dogs entire (including in municipalities where mandatory desexing rules apply) and still be entitled to reduced council fees.

This Bill has gone through two readings of the lower house of the Victorian parliament. It has been developed without consultation with Dogs Victoria in relation to the removal of the exemption that Dogs Victoria members currently receive. If it passes through both Houses of Parliament (Legislative Assembly and Legislative Council), it is set to pass into State law in Victoria in April 2017. Below is a table of some of the amendments in the Bill and how they impact the pure breed dog people in particular:

### **Amendment**

**Anyone owning 1 or more fertile female dogs with which they have 1 or more litters will be required to register as a Domestic Animal Business.**

- *Not possible to apply in many municipalities.*
- *Requires a town planning permit in many other localities, ie board on property, local objections, local lobbyists etc*
- *Not possible if you don't own your property, eg renting*
- *Costly to apply*

**Anyone with 6 or more dogs must build concrete kennel facilities for the dogs that are compliant with the Code of Practice for the Operation of Breeding and Rearing Businesses 2014 in order to be registered as a DAB**

- *Must have such facilities regardless of size of dog and regardless of any in-house arrangements that keep the dogs housed inside the home.*
- *Quotes sought by some DV members for such facilities have ranged between \$45,000-200,000*
- *Cannot breed any dogs until compliant*
- *May need to reduce numbers to 5 dogs or less if unable to build such facilities*

**Absolute limit on the number of fertile female dogs kept on a premises to 10 by the year 2020**

- *Whilst this affects relatively few Dogs Victoria breeders, there are those that do have more than one breed and those that have rare breeds who are especially impacted by this rule*
- *Those with 10 fertile females or more cannot keep any new dogs from April 2017 until their numbers are less than 10 or they will be unable to register as a DAB.*
- *Those with more than 10 dogs fertile female dogs have to reduce to 10 by some means by 10th April 2020 or they will be unable to register as a DAB*
- *Anyone who applies for a DAB once this law is in place must comply with the limit of 10 fertile females immediately*

**When a litter reaches 8 weeks old, the pups as a group are counted as one adult dog in your overall numbers.**

- *If you have the maximum number of dogs as applies to your dog permit for your property (males plus females) and you have a litter, you are in breach of your permit to hold pups from that litter beyond 8 weeks of age. No exceptions are listed for sick pups or new home preparations etc.*
- *If you don't have the mother then the litter counts as an extra dog from 6 weeks of age.*

Whilst some breeders do already have a DAB and others may be able to apply, and build kennel set ups where they own more than 6 dogs, for a large proportion of Dogs Victoria breeders this is simply not possible. Most have their dogs in their homes where they are loved and cared for as family members and where their occasional litters are raised with great care. They spend a lot of \$\$ testing their breeding dogs to do their best at producing puppies that fit the breed standard and are healthy dogs of sound temperament. The cost of tests together with breeding and rearing a litter often do little more than cover costs, let alone the cost of owning the dogs.

Yet this bill has applied a set of rules designed for commercial breeders to everyone!!

If this bill passes in it's current form:

- it will make it near impossible to purchase a pure bred puppy after April 2017 as only those with a DAB will be able to have a litter
- there will be a massive reduction in gene pool among the breeders that remain who would be faced with having to import either dogs or semen from interstate or overseas to maintain diversity.
- there will be a massive undersupply of puppies for those wanting one
- puppy farmers will relocate interstate (one large one has already bought interstate)

Some core things to consider:

- Only 17% of Dogs in Australia are bred by ANKC breeders (Dogs Vic is our state's ANKC organisation)
- The other 83% are bred by puppy farms and unregistered breeders
- Of the ANKC registered breeders who had a litter in 2014, 54% only had one litter that year
- An estimated 149,000 puppies were sold via Gumtree in 2015 (approx. 1/3 of puppy sales)
- Of the dogs that were received by the RSPCA across Australia, 78.48% were reunited with owners or rehomed, 14.52% were euthanased (a total of 6,765 dogs). Of these 6,765 euthanased dogs, all but 55 (10 from Vic) were put down for infectious, medical, behavioural or legal reasons, with behavioural being the single largest reason at nearly 70% (RSPCA 2014-1015 financial year).
- A NSW Parliamentary Inquiry found that the number of animals kept by a breeder is not in itself a factor that determines the welfare of breeding animals. Examples of good and poor animal welfare in breeding operations suggest the size of the facility is not a factor
- If the current Laws were properly enforced, there may be no need for further legislative changes. This alone would stem the supply of dogs to our shelters.
- Small breeders having a litter every 1-2 years, raising them in their home, doing all of the required health testing, and working hard to ensure that their puppies never, ever end up in a shelter, will be the ones forced out of breeding.
- Costs to buy a puppy will increase dramatically and obtaining a dog at all will be difficult if this law passes.

**WILL YOU BE ABLE TO BUY YOUR NEXT AIREDALE TERRIER IN VICTORIA?**

This article only touches briefly on this very large and complex matter and the urgent campaign by Dogs Victoria and it's members to "Amend the Bill" before it passes

through Parliament. There is a lot of good aspects to the Bill but it is far from right and the stated “unintended consequences” are dramatic and far reaching. Dogs Victoria, as Victoria’s main state dog body who were involved with the writing of the original Domestic Animals Act, should never have been excluded from consultation on the major amendments to this Bill.

So what has happened over the last fortnight in the fast moving matter to address this issue and where is this matter at as of Tuesday 25th October?

Two urgent meetings have been held with DV members over the last week. About 500 members attended each meeting. Government staff attended the first meeting and fielded feedback and questions from the floor. A massive effort has been made by DV members to engage with their local MP’s both personally and via letter. Many have approached councils, businesses associated with the pet industry and vets. The Australian Veterinary Association have also spoken out that this Bill is significantly flawed. Campaigning has been strong enough to help open door to the Minister’s office such that Dogs Victoria (DV) have now been able to discuss this with the Minister in person.

As of Mon 26<sup>th</sup> October, DV were advised that the matter was now to go before a Parliamentary Committee Inquiry, largely pushed for by the Opposition and Independents. This is good as stakeholders, including DOGS Victoria, will be able to highlight concerns over the likely impact of the Bill. The Committee will make their recommendations on the Bill to Parliament on 6 December 2016. The process means submissions will be called for (you need to register if you intend to lodge a submission). If you wish to receive updates on the progress of the Government inquiry you can register via this link: <http://www.parliament.vic.gov.au/eic/inquiries/inquiry/445>

So what can you do to help???

Visit Dogs Victoria’s new website that is being launched on Friday 28th October.

<http://www.purebreddogs.org.au/>

This extra website (beyond the main Dogs Victoria website) is one specifically set up to promote pure breeds and to address the problems of this Bill before Parliament.

- Sign the petition on this website
- Download information fliers to hand to people
- Keep up to date via material on this website
- If you are on Facebook, like and watch the Dogs Victoria page
- Keep abreast of the facts and talk to people. Stick to the core, we are about breeding responsibly. The new website will help with information on dealing with those sticky questions.
- Write to your MP and Local councillor

- Talk to the businesses that support your dog's needs and your vets – hopefully they too will write letters.
- If you are a member of Dogs Victoria, attend the AGM and support efforts and measures to ensure our organisation's committee to revise our regulations and codes of ethics to maintain the highest standards into the future.
- If you wish to read the Bill and accompanying notes and speak go to: <http://www.parliament.vic.gov.au/static/www.legislation.vic.gov.au-bills.html>

We are not commercial puppy farmers.

We love our dogs.

Society needs our responsible caring breeders.

We need to maintain the pressure to **“AMEND THE BILL”**.