

AUSTRALIAN FEDERATION FOR LIVESTOCK WORKING DOGS

The Hon. Jaala Pulford MLC
Minister for Agriculture
Level 16
8 Nicholson Street
East Melbourne
Victoria, 3002

Dear Jaala

Re: Domestic Animals Amendment (Puppy farms and pet Shops) Bill 2016

I am writing to you on behalf of the Australian Federation for Livestock Working Dogs regarding the Domestic Animals Amendment (Puppy farms and pet shops) Bill 2016 which was tabled for a second reading in the Victorian state parliament.

The Federation for Livestock Working Dogs has representatives from seventeen state organisations that are involved in either the breeding and registration or trialling of livestock working dogs throughout Australia. This covers a total membership of over three thousand five hundred members. Some of these groups come from Victoria. The Victorian Farmers Federation livestock section is very supportive of the Federation for Livestock Working Dogs as they are an integral part of the farming industry.

The Domestic Animals Amendment (Puppy farms and pet shops) Bill 2016, if passed, will have a detrimental effect on livestock working dogs in Victoria. There has been no consultation whatsoever with those involved with livestock working dogs in the formulation of the above amendment bill.

Livestock working dogs and their handlers make an enormous contribution to the agricultural income of Australia, and the increased efficiency of livestock movements, provided by well bred dogs, puts the minimum of stress on the animals they move. A study done by the Sydney University estimated the average number of working dogs per farm was three and the medium value was \$40,000.00 per working dog. An earlier survey in Queensland found the medium number of working dogs per property was five to seven, with one property having fifteen dogs. One Queensland property owner said each dog saved sixty thousand dollars per annum.

The same study by Sydney University showed that the success rate of livestock working dog pups (ie those graduating to be effective workers) is at least twice that of other working dogs such as guide dogs, police dogs, sniffer dogs, etc. This reflects hundreds of years of careful selection by farmers and committed livestock working dog breeders, who test and train their dogs over months or years from puppyhood to maturity in the working environment. Dogs may not prove their worth for breeding until they are quite old. For this reason, few farmers sterilise their dogs.

Some farmers breed their own replacement stock dogs, some buy from knowledgeable specialists. All rely on accurate selection on performance, developed and demonstrated in a farm environment. This would simply not be possible if the breeding of livestock dogs were to be removed from the many farmers and enthusiastic breeders who have done it so successfully to date.

The existing system maintains a broad gene pool, essential for continued improvement, and it avoids the inbreeding that has caused health and welfare issues in many pure breeds.

An educated source of reliable information
on behalf of all Australian Livestock Working Dogs, their handlers and breeders.

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It would be absolute folly, and damaging to livestock welfare, to destroy this proven system of breeding livestock working dogs.

With this in mind we ask that livestock working dogs be exempt from this legislation or at least that we be consulted on the Bill. As regulations placed on livestock working dog breeders, by those with little understanding of, or consideration for, the circumstances in which they keep, work, select and breed their dogs, could prove disastrous to the maintenance of the necessary genetic diversity and ongoing availability of dogs to farmers.

Yours sincerely



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