Owner letter template

Dear……..

I am writing to you as a concerned dog owner regarding the Domestic Animals Amendment (Puppy Farms and Pet Shops) Bill 2016, which was tabled for a second reading in the Victorian State Parliament last week. Whilst I applaud the intent of the amendment, which is to improve the welfare of breeding animals and of puppies and kittens bred and sold by breeders, I believe that as it stands it will have some serious negative effects.

I chose to purchase a pedigree dog because I wanted to know that my companion was bred and raised in an environment where his health, nutrition and socialisation were of the highest quality and suitable for preparing a puppy for life in a family home, and that his/her parents were healthy, physically sound and had predictable characteristics typical of their breed that would suit my lifestyle.

I did my research not only on the types of breed that I believed was the best for me and my family, but a breeder that I felt was responsible. While I wanted to see the conditions my puppy was raised in and the way the breeder kept his/her dogs, I also wanted to have ongoing support from the breeder of my puppy. I also wished to participate in showing and other dog sports (name any sport applicable), and wanted a dog that was suitable for those activities.(omit this sentence if not applicable) As a result, I chose a DOGS Victoria registered breeder rather than a shelter or purchasing from a pet shop.

My breeder is a small hobby breeder, involved in his/her breed solely for enjoyment, showing his/her dogs and working to improve the breed here in Australia. When he/she explained to me the cost involved in keeping his/her dogs healthy and happy, health testing the parents of my puppy and the cost of breeding and raising a litter, it was very clear that he/she is not running a business with the intent of making a profit.

Under the amendment currently under consideration, my dog’s breeder will have to register as a Domestic Animal Business (DAB) in order to continue as a breeder. I have read the code of practice for breeders which fall under the definition of a Domestic Animal Business published by Agriculture Victoria. It is clear that this document was written with professional, profit-making establishments with many dogs being used only as breeding stock in mind, not for small hobby breeders who keep a few show or sport dogs mainly as pets and breed only quite rarely.

I have also read several DAB application forms from councils across Victoria, and it seems that whilst they are all different, they are all designed for use by businesses such as large “puppy farm” style breeders, dog training and boarding facilities and pet shops, and not home-based hobby breeders. Some of them seem to have quite restrictive extra land, business or other planning requirements which would be impossible to meet for someone who breeds and raises their puppies at home.

I am therefore very concerned that applying these unsuitable regulations to all breeders as a blanket rule, as is the specific intent of the current amendment, will have a negative effect on all breeders, not just the puppy farmers and other unethical breeders. It is obvious that these requirements will force many or most hobby breeders to stop breeding altogether.

It is concerning that, rather than reducing the number of dogs being bred and housed in runs, this amendment may in fact force those breeders who remain to place their dogs in isolated, concrete kennels and for litters to be raised in purpose built whelping rooms rather than in the homes of breeders. Carefully bred and well raised pedigree puppies may become all but impossible to purchase in Victoria. Such an outcome would exclude many thousands of people like me from the great social and health benefits of owning a dog that suits our needs, which would be a poor result.

I would respectfully ask that you consider this amendment with these points in mind, and rather than passing it as it currently stands, put it into Parliamentary review so that all of the ramifications can be identified and addressed. In this it is vital that all stakeholders are consulted in the review of the amendment and this has to include ethical breeders of dogs and cats or their representatives.

We were told by this Government that it was the commercial puppy farmers and uneducated backyard breeders that were supposed to be targeted by these changes. However, by including small, registered hobby breeders in this ill-suited, “one size fits all” set of rules is not only detrimental to dog owners such as myself, but for the welfare of dogs more broadly.

Regards…….