



To The Chairman, Hon Simon O'Brien MLC
Standing Committee on Environment and Public Affairs
Parliament House
PERTH WA 6000

4th September 2013

Dear Hon Simon O'Brien MLC,

Petition No. 12- Specific Dog Breed Restrictions

This letter is my official submission to support my petition; to abolish the restrictions on certain dog breeds in the laws of Western Australia. I would like to firstly take this opportunity to thank all members of the committee for researching into this topic. I have not contacted the Parliamentary Commissioner (Ombudsman) with a submission of my complaint.

The current dog breed restrictions, as well as the proposed breed bans in WA laws restrict the sale, ownership, and breeding of dogs listed. It also gives the community a 'false' sense of security as many assume that all "dangerous" dogs are being dealt with by the law. Currently there are five breeds of dog that are listed as restricted and considered automatically "dangerous" only due to their parentage or appearance, without any investigation into the history nor the temperament of that particular animal. Under this current set of WA's breed restrictions, there has been no data to suggest a successful reduction in dog attacks, nor have similar laws across the world proven to reduce dog attacks in any community situations. Recent attacks in WA prove that any breed of dog can cause great harm to humans- Dog attacks are not breed specific.

The current and proposed restrictions on certain dog breeds is not supported by animal industry professionals, nor is it supported by renowned animal welfare organisations or rescue groups including the RSPCA, the Australian Veterinary Association, and Pets Australia. These organisations have published many statements online to publically announce their recommendations and advice for revised and more successful Dog Ownership Laws to suit Australia's needs. We would like to see the government implement the advice given by these qualified and experienced animal industry professionals, by replacing the dog breed restrictions with science-based ownership regulations for all dog owners.

We, the people who have so far signed the petition, support a science-based dog ownership system implementing similar laws as such in Calgary in Canada that deems individual dogs as "dangerous" on the basis of their temperament and past actions, and not due to the dogs appearance or breed. The 'Calgary Model' also ensures safety in the community around all breeds of dogs, and has successfully reduced dog attacks in their community by regulating all dog owners and implementing a dog-safety education program for the entire community, especially for school children. We the undersigned feel that the restrictions on dog breeds not only is an unfair, unethical law, but is completely unjustified as these laws have not solved dog attack issues in WA. We want the dog breed restrictions abolished in WA laws and replaced with

a science-based system that ensures all people of the community, especially dog owners are being properly educated about dog-safety.

It has been proven through science and statistics that the current dog breeds listed are not more prone to attacking people than non-restricted dog breeds. In fact, all breeds of domesticated dogs (NB: Dingoes are not domesticated dogs) are the same species of animal, *Canis familiaris*, and all dog breeds can be raised and recognised as good canine citizens in the community. Any dog can be a danger to society unless it has been properly trained, socialised and under the control of a responsible dog owner, according to animal behaviour science-based studies. WA needs laws to ensure all breeds of dogs are raised and controlled in a responsible manner, to ensure that all dogs are safely living within our community, and especially around our children.

As dog attacks are a big concern with in the community, we need WA laws to implement a reasonable and proven strategy to preventing dog attacks from occurring in the first place. We want to laws to be fair for all dog breed owners, and we want all people with in the community to feel safer by having dogs deemed "dangerous" accurately according to science, and have government funded education programs in schools for kids and dog-safety education seminars available in all local communities.

We want all responsible dog owners to reserve the right to own any dog breed they choose, so long as they comply with ownership regulations, irrespective of the dog's breed or appearance.

Thank you once again for your interest in my petition.

I invite you to contact the companion animal industry professionals in WA and Australia and utilise their advice in terms of how to structure the Dog laws in WA to ensure safety for all.

Kind Regards,

Ashleigh P Leece