

Comments on the Proposed POCTA Standards and Guidelines for Breeding dogs and cats 2017 and Animals in Pet Shops.

Opening Comment

Dogs New South Wales (NSW) welcomes the invitation to make a written submission on the *Consultation Draft of the Proposed POCTA Standards and Guidelines for Breeding Dogs and Cats 2017 and Animals in Pet Shops*.

Dogs NSW represents the interests of over 9,000 members who are pedigree dog owners and/or breeders across the state, and is responsible for the promotion and preservation of healthy pedigree dogs in New South Wales. We are also part of a national kennel club federation, represented by the Australian National Kennel Council (ANKC), which all other state and territory kennel associations are affiliated to and which acts as a co-ordinating body here and internationally. Through our affiliation with the ANKC, Dogs NSW is the only internationally recognised kennel club in NSW.

Dogs NSW members participate in a wide range of dog sports, public events and community activities under the banner of promoting responsible dog ownership. This extends to our expectation of our member breeders as well, supported by strict codes of practice, ethics and regulations. It is specifically in relation to our breeder members, and the future of pedigree dog breeds, that we wish to address the points made in the consultation draft paper on proposed POCTA standards and guidelines for the breeding of dogs and cats.

We note that the impetus for the draft standards and guidelines has come from the recommendations made by the 2015 Joint Select Committee on Companion Animal Breeding Practices, with Action item 59.16 in the Committee's report specifically stating a perceived need for breeders to be trained and qualified in NSW. We understand that Animal Welfare Advisory Council (AWAC) (a non-statutory committee with the purpose of providing the NSW Government with advice on animal welfare matters) was tasked with the review of the Committee's recommendations and asked to provide advice to the Minister for Primary Industries on appropriate requirements for qualifications and standards for breeders.

In determining their advice, the AWAC Chair stated that "*We approached our task with a strong desire to deliver a comprehensive report with robust, yet practical recommendations to expose and remove the rogue and unscrupulous puppy factory operators, while not overburdening the majority of good breeders across the state.*"¹

However, Dogs NSW strongly contends that the draft requirements that have been developed go far beyond what should be required in terms of regulatory overreach, with most of recommendations having little relevance to improved welfare outcomes. We also note that the NSW Government did not support Recommendation 7² of the AWAC report, noting that it would place both a regulatory and cost burden on small business and volunteer organisations and risk their viable operation.

¹ *Report into the Inquiry into companion animal breeding practices in New South Wales / Joint Select Committee on Companion Animal Breeding Practices in New South Wales.* [Sydney, N.S.W.]: The Committee, 2015. (pg. v)

² **Recommendation 7** of AWAC Report calls for relevant animal welfare codes of practice should be updated to require that at least one staff member working in a pet shop, breeding establishment, pound or animal shelter must hold a *Certificate II - Animal Studies* qualification.

Dogs NSW's notes that the Discussion paper specifically seeks feedback from sector and interest groups on the draft Breeding standards and Guidelines, citing as examples matters around staff responsibilities, quality management systems, animal housing, animal health, transfer of ownership, breeding and rearing and humane destruction. However, Dogs NSW is primarily concerned with the assumption that these Standards and Guidelines should apply to all breeders of domestic animals, regardless of size, purpose and frequency. Clearly, to assume a small (recreational) registered Dogs NSW breeder, with under 3 breeding females and who may produce a litter once or twice every 1-3 years is the same as a large scale commercial puppy breeding operation, with some 100+ breeding females and producing over 1000 pups annually, is erroneous, particularly in relation to what is required for each type of breeder in terms of appropriate animal management practices that produce best welfare outcomes. Yet it appears that the proposed Standards and Guidelines do make this assumption.

As such, Dogs NSW is unable to support the proposed Standards and Guidelines in their application to registered Dogs NSW breeders. Our concerns may be summarised as follows:

- The Chair's Forward of the *Joint Select Committee on Companion Animal Breeding Report (2015)* stated the hope that the committee's "...recommendations lead to early and effective improvements in animal welfare, a drastic decline in instances of unacceptable breeding practices, and a renewed culture of respect for the wellbeing of our dogs and cats." ³ Dogs NSW contends that the proposed Standards and Guidelines are **not fit for purpose** in that they do not target improved welfare outcomes in a measurable or defined way. Furthermore, many of these proposed provisions may instead produce a result that is the **direct opposite** to what was intended in the Report on Companion Animal Breeding Practices;
- The Standards and Guidelines for breeding are overly prescriptive and meeting these would require substantial resourcing and financial support. As such, the only breeders that would be able to comply with these would be the large commercial breeding facilities – small breeders (e.g. a single person or family unit) would be unable to perform the requirements of staffing, training, paperwork, quality control etc. In short, these Standards and Guidelines would effectively eradicate non-commercial, small registered breeders and legitimise mass-producing puppy farms.
- Breeder regulations in most other States and Territories provide recognition of the varying levels of dog breeding. The proposed Standards and Guidelines are unique in that they do not make this distinction, nor is there any recognition of the contribution of small hobby breeders who provide well socialized puppies as family pets.
- We note that the Standards and Guidelines for Breeding Dogs and Cats appear to closely mirror the *Victorian Code of Practice for the Operation of Breeding and Rearing Businesses (2014)* which specifically applies to registered Domestic Animal Business (DABs), and for the purposes of breeding, commercial breeders. It does NOT apply to Dogs Victoria breeders, breeders of working dogs or other small breeders (with between 1 and 3 fertile females). We therefore question why these Standards and Guidelines are to apply to ALL NSW breeders, including small, hobby breeders (defined as recreational or micro breeders in Victoria), when a full Victorian Government inquiry found their application to non-commercial breeders in that state excessive and unwarranted.

³ Inquiry into companion animal breeding practices in New South Wales / Joint Select Committee on Companion Animal Breeding Practices in New South Wales. [Sydney, N.S.W.] 2015. Pg. 9.

- The demise of small registered breeders will also impact breed rescue groups and clubs (often undertaken by Dogs NSW affiliated breed clubs) thus placing more pressure on already burdened community rescue and foster groups and Council pounds and shelters.
- Fewer Dogs NSW breeders will also eliminate the health testing regimes undertaken by breed societies and individual breeders, as large commercial breeders are focused primarily on profit not interested in the eradication of health problems or supporting “blue sky” research.

Impact of the Standards and Guidelines on Dogs NSW breeder members

Dogs NSW has made clear that we strongly believe that, should the Standards and Guidelines be introduced, small scale, Dogs NSW breeders will be unable to meet the exhaustive "commercial" requirements, thus pushing the breeding of dogs and cats directly towards the large commercial enterprises. The likely impacts are noted below:

- *Reduction of Pedigree Breeds:*

The focus of commercial breeders is to supply the pet market with what is fashionable at that time, and as such most focus on mixed breeds (marketing these as “designer breeds”). Dogs NSW breeders are the only group of breeders who focus on breed preservation, ensuring that healthy, well socialised and “fit for purpose” pedigree puppies and dogs are available, not only as canine companions in loving pet homes, but for service industries and utility work as well. Detection dogs, security dogs, pet therapy, assistance and service dogs – these are just a few jobs that require specific characteristics that are best seen in selected breed types, and dedicated Dogs NSW breeders with these breeds will invest both time and money in ensuring their dogs are able to perform such roles.

- *The demise of Dogs NSW flagship events and sports*

A reduction of registered Dogs NSW breeders will see the end of Dogs NSW sanctioned events, such as the Sydney Royal Dog Section, and the myriad of dog’s sports across this State, which are overwhelmingly run and supported by Dogs NSW members. This includes events that are held in regional and rural areas of NSW, such as at local agricultural shows, and which provide real economic boosts to these communities.

- *Compliance monitoring by Dogs NSW and welfare standards would be negatively impacted*

Our members are required to abide by a very comprehensive and enforceable Code of Ethics that sets far higher and more appropriate standards for the health and welfare of dogs than those outlined in the POCTA proposals. Dogs NSW employs an Animal Welfare & Community Liaison Officer to physically gauge the activities and ensure compliance of our members regarding the Animal Welfare Code of Practice and Dogs NSW enforceable Code of Ethics. Dogs NSW also conducts a comprehensive breeders’ education program for all members which is mandatory to a breeder’s prefix being approved. All members making application for a breeder’s prefix must complete the education program, achieve a pass mark of 75% in a theory examination and undergo a kennel inspection as conducted by our Animal Welfare & Community Liaison Officer.

While we have already stated that inappropriate and unnecessary regulatory sanctions on the breeding of purebred pedigreed dogs shall render the hobby unviable, their adoption would impact on the ability of Dogs NSW to employ staff to ensure our members understand and meet these standards, thus placing more strain on local government and other statutory bodies in terms of monitoring welfare.

Specific Areas of Concern in the Proposed Breeding Dogs and Cats Standards and Guidelines 2017 and Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (Animals in Pet Shops) Standards 2017

Dogs NSW's wishes to raise specific concerns in relation to both the proposed Breeding of Dogs and Cats Standards and Guidelines (2017) and the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (Animals in Pet Shops) Standards 2017. We would also like to preface our response with the observation that there is significant cross over in the requirements between both sets of Standards and Guidelines. Consequently, many are inappropriate when applied in the alternative situation. Instances of these cross overs are noted where most problematic.

4 Interpretation - (Animals in Pet Shops)

pet shop means any premises used for the conduct of animal trade for which an animal is kept for the purposes of sale, and includes:

- (a) a shop,
- (b) booth or stall at a market, and
- (c) premises used for residential purposes and any associated structures.

Response: This clause will in fact render every household or animal welfare situation to be deemed as a PET SHOP. Dogs NSW believes such a broad interpretation is not only impractical in terms of the application of these Standards and Guidelines, but sees those charged with ensuring compliance of these regulations burdened with an impossible task. Changing the zoning of a residential property could be beyond the scope of the Act.

Part 1 Preliminary

4 Interpretation (page 5)

Response:

- **Definitions** now called **Interpretations** – which are now much expanded. While this is a seemingly minor change, a definition is clear description of an entity or meaning, while an interpretation appears to be more subjective. Dogs NSW would like further information on why this change has been made.

breeding means the business of breeding of cats or dogs for fee or reward. (page 6)

Response:

This is a highly problematic definition, as it appears to link the breeding of cats or dogs for a fee or reward with a business (commercial activity). As noted, the overwhelming majority of Dogs NSW breeders are small hobby breeders, and do not qualify as commercial or a business under Federal Tax office definitions. Yet, in combination with the interpretation of a Pet Shop (as noted above) it may be interpreted as all breeders, who sell from their homes, for fee or reward are a commercial operation. This is irrespective of whether the breeder breeds one litter or 100.

RECOMMENDATION:

That the definition of a Commercial Breeding Facility be considered as follows:

- Commercial breeding facility being over 10 breeding bitches, with a breeding bitch (fertile female) considered to be an entire female between the ages of 1 and 8 years.

dog housing means any enclosure used to contain a dog and includes a cage, run, or module within a facility, premises or any room forming part of premises. (page 5)

Response:

This is a very open definition and has been altered to include “any enclosure used to contain a dog and includes a cage, run or module within a facility, premises or any room forming part of a premises”.

RECOMMENDATION:

That there be a specific definition of an enclosure - currently one exists for an exercise enclosure. The reason for this relates to Housing (Part 4) where there is a *minimum height* for all enclosures – where there is no differentiation between an exercise or holding/housing enclosure. Dogs NSW requires further clarification.

facility means any place, premises or thing used for accommodation or shelter of animals for the purpose of breeding or rearing dogs or cats, or where puppies or kittens are housed as a result of breeding, and includes a vehicle used for the transportation of animals. (page 5)

person in charge of a facility, includes:

- (a) the proprietor of the business that conducts the animal trade of breeding cats or dogs at the facility,
- (b) each person concerned with the management of the facility, and
- (c) any person performing the role of the manager of the facility. (page 7)

staff or *staff member* means a person who works in a facility including the person in charge of a facility, employees or volunteers, whether working full-time or part-time and whether working for fee or reward or not. (page 8)

Response:

This section automatically results in the residence of a hobby breeder becoming a “facility”. In that context:

- the resident becomes a “proprietor” and under Part 2, must have a Cert 2 and encouraged to gain a Cert 3 or 4.
- any family members/partners/others who live with the resident become “staff” and as such under Part 2 & 3 must receive ongoing training and after 2 years must hold as a minimum qualification a current Cert II.

Dogs NSW considers this definition to be highly inappropriate and not applicable to hobby breeders in a residential situation. We contend that such a definition is a total regulatory over reach.

RECOMMENDATION:

That these sections be prefaced as applying to a Commercial Breeding facility ONLY.

Part 2. Responsibilities and Competency of Staff

5 Responsibilities and competency of staff. (page 9)

5.3(b) from the date that is 2 years after the commencement of these Standards, holds as a minimum qualification, a current Certificate II in Animal Studies or higher formal qualification, or equivalent competencies that have been formally assessed by a registered training organisation. (page 9)

Response:

Dogs NSW contends that this section is written entirely with commercial establishments in mind. It is therefore both impractical and unreasonable to expect Dogs NSW's small hobby breeders, who may only breed occasionally, to invest in such qualifications, noting that they have already undergone study and examination to qualify as a Dogs NSW has breeder. In addition, Dogs NSW notes that:

- This a major area of concern for all breeders, placing a time limit of 2 years on a 'staff' member successfully obtaining one of the nominated qualifications. This is an unreasonable requirement of small hobby breeders, noting that there will be a number who, while extremely knowledgeable in terms of their knowledge and skills, may not be academically suited to formal study and assessment (particularly for older breeders, who may not have completed secondary studies).
- Certificate 2- Covers very basic animal handling and care as well as basic nursing. It does not have content related to dog breeding and related issues. Dogs NSW contends that such a course and is inferior in comparison to Dogs NSW's members education breeder course, which does cover such content in detail.
- Cert 3 and 4 only cover minimal issues involved with breeding.

RECOMMENDATION:

That the section relating to *Responsibilities and Competencies of Staff* applies to Commercial Breeding Facility staff ONLY. Furthermore, we note that the entire proposed Breeding dogs and Cat Standards and Guidelines 2017 and the Animals in Pet Shops; Parts 2 &3- have been organised around the requirement requiring of Certificate 2 in Animal Studies. Dogs NSW recommends that these provisions should apply should ideally progress to a Cert 3 and 4 for Senior position holder.

(5.4) A staff member must **not** carry out an activity in any of the animal welfare matters for breeding cats and dogs unless:

- (c) the staff member has received proper and adequate on-the-job training in, and has experience of, that area, or
- (d) the staff member is supervised by another staff member who has received proper and adequate on-the-job training in, and has experience of, that area. (page 9.)

Response:

This places significant constraints on who can and cannot carry out any activity listed under 5.5. Dogs NSW also has concerns over the definition of what constitutes "proper and adequate on the job training" – we content that this is a very subjective definition, potentially rendering anyone liable under this restriction.

RECOMMENDATION:

That what constitutes "proper and adequate on the job training" be described, and that this section applies only to Commercial Breeding Facility staff ONLY.

(5.5) In this clause, *animal welfare matters for breeding cats and dogs* means:

- (a) the care and welfare of dogs and cats,
- (b) methods of identifying dogs and cats,
- (c) providing food and water to dogs and cats,
- (d) administering first aid or other treatments to dogs and cats under veterinary supervision or advice to dogs and cats,
- (e) cleaning and proper hygiene in the facility,
- (f) dog and cat behaviour and social or psychological needs of dogs and cats, abnormal behaviours and deterioration of psychological health of dogs and cats, and the protection of dogs and cats from distress or injury caused by other dogs and cats or interference by the public,
- (g) procedures for receiving a dog or a cat into, and selling a dog or cat from the facility,
- (h) housing dogs and cats,
- (i) handling and controlling dogs and cats,
- (j) the provision of socialisation and environmental enrichment for dogs and cats,
- (k) moving, transporting and capturing dogs and cats,
- (l) identifying signs of health and ill health, both physical and psychological, in dogs and cats, including identifying when prompt veterinary care is required,
- (m) procedures for the care of sick and injured dogs and cats,
- (n) special requirements for pregnant, nursing, old or young dogs and cats,
- (o) disease and parasite prevention and control,
- (p) procedures for managing emergencies in the facility, and (q) record keeping in the facility. (page10)

Response:

Dogs NSW also contends that this section is applicable to animal welfare in large animal holding facilities/establishments (boarding kennels etc). It is both unreasonable and excessive to require small/hobby breeders, such as Dogs NSW registered breeders or breeders of working dogs, to adhere to these measures as welfare requirements (e.g. procedures for transport or when receiving an animal into the 'facility'). It also assumes that the facility is handling significant numbers of breeding animals, and is impractical when applied to a situation where there are few animals that are largely pets in a residential situation or working dogs on a farm.

RECOMMENDATION:

That these provisions apply to animals in a Commercial Breeding Facility ONLY.

Part 3 Quality management systems

8 Directory of information about dogs and cats

The person in charge of a facility must maintain an electronic register in which the following current information about all dogs and cats within the facility is recorded (the *Animal Directory*):

- (a) microchip number and other permanent identification details of the dog or cat, such as tattoo information,
- (b) any other unique identification details allocated by the facility to a dog or cat,
- (c) the name, address and telephone number of the lessee of a dog or cat,
- (d) for leased dogs or cats, the name and contact telephone number of the veterinary practitioner who normally attends the animal,

- (e) type (species) and breed of the dog or cat,
- (f) gender of the dog or cat and whether neutered (if known),
- (g) colour and identifying features of, or marks on, the dog or cat,
- (h) vaccination status (if known) of the dog or cat,
- (i) date of arrival of the dog or cat at the facility,

Response:

Dogs NSW contends that this section is applicable to animal welfare in large animal holding facilities/establishments (boarding kennels etc), and it is unreasonable and excessive to require small/hobby breeders, such as Dogs NSW registered breeders or breeders of working dogs, to meet these requirements. We also question the requirement for an electronic registry only, noting that many breeders have hard copy documentation.

RECOMMENDATION:

We note that there is a view that authorities wish to improve traceability, and in that context, we question what this data will achieve in respect to improved welfare outcomes, given that Dogs NSW members' dogs are already traceable through mandatory microchipping and pedigree registration. We therefore recommend that these measures apply to non-Dogs NSW breeders ONLY. We also recommend that other forms of documentation (such as a dog "passport" booklet) be accepted for non-electronically based breeders.

11 Production of information

For the purposes of section 24G of the Act, the Training Register and the Animal Directory are registers that staff must produce on request by an inspector to do so. (page 12)

Response:

This is not a practical or reasonable requirement for non-commercial breeders.

RECOMMENDATION:

That these provisions apply to animals in a Commercial Breeding Facility ONLY.

12 Written operating procedures (page 13)

- (1) The person in charge of a facility must have in place written procedures for each of the subjects described in Table 1.
- (2) The person in charge of a facility must regularly review the written procedures to ensure that the written procedures continue to adequately address the subjects described in Table 1.
- (3) The person in charge of the facility must obtain advice from a veterinary practitioner:
 - (a) when developing the written procedures, and
 - (b) when amending the written procedures.
- (4) The person in charge of a facility must ensure the facility is managed in accordance with the written procedures.
- (5) The person in charge of a facility must ensure:
 - (a) staff are provided with the written procedures,
 - (b) staff acknowledge, in writing, that they have been provided with the written procedures.

- (6) A staff member must:
- (a) read the written procedures, and
 - (b) sign a document stating they have read and understood the written procedures, and
 - (c) follow the written procedures.

Description of written procedure.

- 1.** Procedures relating to general management of dogs and cats
 - 1.1 Procedure for the safe feeding and general care of dogs and cats, including puppies and kittens
 - 1.2 Procedure for providing a complete and balanced diet for dogs and cats, including puppies and kittens
 - 1.3 Procedure for cleaning and grooming dogs and cats
 - 1.4 Procedure for providing exercise, enrichment and socialisation to dogs and cats
 - 1.5 Procedure for the safe and humane handling of dogs or cats that pose a risk to the safety of other dogs and cats, including behavioural and disease risks
 - 1.6 Procedure for appropriate humane methods of capturing and transporting dogs or cats
- 2.** Procedures relating to the health and well-being of dogs and cats
 - 2.1 Procedure for assessing when a dog or cat needs veterinary treatment, including when showing signs of abnormal physical or psychological well-being
 - 2.2 Procedure for the care of ill, injured or distressed dogs and cats
 - 2.3 Procedure for disease and parasite prevention and control
- 3.** Procedures relating to breeding dogs and cats.
 - 3.1 Procedures for the care of pregnant bitches and queens.
 - 3.2 Procedures for whelping and kitting
 - 3.3 Procedures for lactating bitches and queens and weaning puppies and kittens
- 4.** Procedures relating to the administration of the facility
 - 4.1 Procedure for receiving dogs and cats into the facility including a procedure for the identification of individual dogs and cats
 - 4.2 Procedure for transfer of ownership of dogs and cats from the facility, including procedures for ensuring prospective buyers are matched to suitable dogs and cats, and for information to be provided to new owners about the care of dogs or cats being sold
 - 4.3 Procedure for record keeping, including procedures for recording:
 - (a) the details of individual dogs and cats specified in clause 8,
 - (b) for each dog and cat under veterinary treatment, details of:
 - (i) medication regimes,
 - (ii) administration of medications, and
 - (iii) storage of medications.
- 5.** Procedures relating to maintenance of the facility
 - 5.1 Procedure for responses to emergencies such as fire, flood, power failure, extreme climatic events, hazardous spills or leaks, including an evacuation plan for safe exit from the facility (Emergency management plan)
 - 5.2 Procedure for implementing biosecurity measures, including management of disease outbreaks.
 - 5.3 Procedure for the humane control of pests such as flies, mosquitoes and wild rodents
 - 5.4 Procedure for reporting any facility maintenance issues requiring attention
 - 5.5 Procedure for cleaning dog and cat housing, yards and other facilities

6. Procedure where an isolation facility is at a facility

6.1 Procedure for managing an isolation facility at a facility including.

Response:

The Guidelines Interpretations state that **written procedures** mean the procedures developed under these Standards that are in place for **the Pet Shop**. This is not a practical or reasonable requirement for non-commercial breeders.

Furthermore, to apply a regime of such regulatory procedures to a non-commercial, small hobby/recreation breeder is excessive in the extreme. Dogs NSW notes that this section requires over **20 different procedures** to be written up and available to staff (and presumably inspectors), including the person in charge of the facility who must read and **sign** that they have read, understood and will follow the written procedures. Dogs NSW contends that these provisions are unreasonable and unwarranted for small registered breeder with only one or a few dogs.

RECOMMENDATION: That these provisions apply to animals in a Commercial Breeding Facility ONLY.

Part 4 Dog and cat housing standards

Response

The word **enclosure** is widely used within the Standards and Guidelines and can refer to either a holding pen, kennel house, indoor holding or an outside yard. It would be of value to have the word defined more clearly in the definition section.

Leaving aside the difficulties around definitions, Dogs NSW notes that requirements around “Enclosures” (cited in Table 2) and, minimum heights, are problematic. While it is preferred that these standards only apply to animals in a Commercial Breeding Facility, we wish to highlight the fact that many pet owners and breeders employ the use of **night kennels/crates** to house their dogs in at night, thus reducing the risk of disturbance to neighbours or wildlife. Should these standards be applied to all dog owners and breeders, these practices should be considered - noting also that during the day, these kennels/crates are not in use.

RECOMMENDATION:

That these provisions apply to animals in a Commercial Breeding Facility ONLY.

Provision be made for NIGHT HOLDING ENCLOSURE that is an area where dogs are enclosed at night to prevent disturbance and for protection of wildlife also at part 13.4.

Division 1 Construction and maintenance standards for dog and cat housing

13 Construction standards for dog and cat housing. (page 15)

Response:

The requirements laid out in these provisions are suited to those establishments with large numbers of animals to house – for example, boarding kennels or commercial breeding facilities. To comply with these provisions would require significant financial investment and construction, assuming that the breeder has the ability to do so in the first instance. Dogs NSW contends that these requirements are both unreasonable and excessive when applied to small breeders, who are the overwhelming majority of Dogs NSW members. We also note that in residential situations, it may not be possible for breeders to construct these kinds of animal housing due to a lack of space and local planning laws restrictions.

We also note that under *Guidelines 13 (4) Noise from barking dogs* (see point 2 and 3 of this subsection), there is emphasis on ensuring that the housing of dogs avoids unnecessary arousal and limits external stimulation. We believe that this reinforces the need for the ability to have night kennelling/crates for dogs.

RECOMMENDATION:

That these provisions apply to animals in a Commercial Breeding Facility ONLY.

14 Lighting of dog and cat housing

15 Ventilation of dog and cat housing

16 Temperature of dog and cat housing

Response:

Dogs NSW contends that as sections 14-16 of the Standards are the same as the requirements for Pet Shops they intended for commercial establishments with high density of animals. These are not suited to non-commercial hobby/recreational breeders, particularly those in a residential environment.

In particular, we wish to highlight Standard 16.4 *Temperature of any room must not exceed 30°C and must not fall below 15°C*. Dogs NSW contends it is unreasonable to require residential homes to ensure that their dwelling is constantly within this range. Temperatures in colder areas often drop below 10°C with little or no trouble to most dogs or cats provided there is a small nest area (especially with cats).

Similarly, temperatures in summer may often exceed 30 degrees, and provided there is water, ventilation and shade, most animals experience minimal discomfort. Dogs NSW contends also that certain types of animals' experience stress from heat or cold more than others (e.g. while working dogs may tolerate extreme conditions, brachycephalic or heavily coated breeds should avoid over-exercising on higher temperature days. Similarly, very young puppies and kittens and aged cats and dogs require far better temperature control over all.) This section fails to differentiate in terms of the welfare requirements of different animals.

Dogs NSW notices that this section appears to be drawn from the Pet Shop requirements and we question the basis of the research that has led to its adoption within the breeding standards.

RECOMMENDATION:

That these provisions apply to animals in a Commercial Breeding Facility ONLY.

17 Minimum housing requirements for dogs

- (1) The person in charge of a facility must ensure that dog housing:
 - (a) provides sufficient space to allow dogs: (i) to walk around freely without obstruction, and (ii) to sleep, and eat away from areas where they urinate and defecate,
 - (b) allows a dog to make normal postural adjustments and assume a comfortable position when lying down with limbs extended and when eating, drinking, sitting, urinating and defecating,
 - (c) allows a dog to hold its tail erect when in a normal standing position, and
 - (d) complies with the minimum sizes set out in Table 2 below.
- (2) In Table 2, *minimum floor area* includes the area allocated to bedding.
- (3) The minimum requirements set out in Table 2 do not remove the requirement that dogs are provided with sufficient space to rest, stand, stretch, or move freely, as appropriate to the species.
- (4) The person in charge of a facility must ensure dividing partitions between dog housing must be solid, impervious and be of a minimum height of 120cm.
- (5) The minimum sizes set out in Table 2 do not apply to dogs under veterinary care for a disease or injury.

Response:

While this section remains unchanged from the current Codes, it is one area that we would strongly recommend thoughtful revision as there are ongoing **major issues** with this table. In particular, the stated **minimum height** of fences is set at 180cm (6 ft.) (be they indoor or outdoor) irrespective of the size and type of dog. Such a blanket approach is impractical for Toy and Small breeds and is an area that creates the most contention when there is an inspection. Dogs NSW is aware of instances where this provision is being applied arbitrary and beyond the realms that common sense dictates.

RECOMMEND: We strongly recommend the adoption of following height divisions for breeders and owners that requires such fencing:

- **Toy to Small breeds < 30 cm (12") height at the shoulder – minimum fence height 100cm.**
- **Small to Medium breeds >30cm - <40cm (16") height at the shoulder - minimum fence height 100cm**
- **Medium to Giant >60cm (24") at height at shoulder – minimum fence height 150cm.**
- **Pen height 60cm (24") – minimum 180cm**
- **Are proposed minimums, not maximums, some breeders may have higher fencing for certain breeds, especially for outdoor areas.**

Table 2 Minimum sizes for dog enclosures Dogs	Min floor Area* (m²)	Min Height (cm)	Min width (cm)
Puppies (+/- bitch)	3.5	180	120
1 dog, <40cm height at shoulder	1.5	180	90
2 dogs, <40cm height at shoulder	2.5	180	90
Socially compatible groups of dogs, <40cm height at shoulder, housed in backyard or house	1.5 per animal	-	-
1 dog, 40-60cm height at shoulder	2.4	180	90
2 dogs, 40-60cm height at shoulder	3.6	180	90
Socially compatible groups of dogs, 40-60cm height at shoulder, housed in backyard or house	2.4 per animal	-	-
1 dog, >60cm height at shoulder	3.5	180	120
2 dogs, >60cm height at shoulder	5.2	180	120
Socially compatible groups of dogs, >60cm height at shoulder, housed in backyard or house	3.5 per animal	-	-

19 Exercise enclosures for dogs

The person in charge of a facility must ensure that free-running or off-lead exercise enclosures for dogs are:

- (a) a minimum size of 10 metres by 4 metres, and
- (b) fenced to:
 - (i) prevent a dog escaping,
 - (ii) prevent a dog being injured, and
 - (iii) prevent the protrusion of the head or limb of a dog through to the outside of the exercise enclosure or between exercise enclosures.

Response:

19. (a) *minimum* size of 10 metres by 4 metres for off lead and free running areas does not take into consideration smaller residential spaces, nor the size of type of dog.

This is not a practical or reasonable requirement for non-commercial breeders.

RECOMMENDATION:

That these provisions apply to animals in a Commercial Breeding Facility ONLY.

20 Dog and cat treatment room

AND

21 Isolation facilities

Response:

This provision is identical to the draft requirements for a Pet Shop, and as such is intended for commercial establishments with large numbers of animals. It also does not consider the tendencies of different breeds to prefer different types of sleeping areas.

This is not a practical or reasonable requirement for non-commercial breeders.

RECOMMENDATION:

That these provisions apply to animals in a Commercial Breeding Facility ONLY.

Division 2 Management of dog and cat housing

22 Group housing

Staff must ensure that no more than four compatible dogs or six compatible cats are kept in any housing, unless they are a litter of puppies or kittens, with or without a lactating mother, and where the minimum cage size conforms to the minimum requirements.

Response:

Dogs NSW contends that the allocation of no more than four dogs or six cats is an arbitrary number and asks that what verified research evidence exists to justify this requirement. We contend that such a provision does not consider the size, breed or temperament of the animals concerned, but appears to be a measure designed to limit overcrowding in puppy mill environments.

RECOMMENDATION:

That these provisions apply to animals in a Commercial Breeding Facility ONLY.

23 Special dog and cat housing requirements

(1) Staff must ensure that the following dogs and cats are housed individually in a quiet, warm and dry area that is separated from other dogs and cats:

- (a) a dog or a cat about to give birth,
- (b) a dog or a cat in season, where it is not the intention to breed,
- (c) a dog or cat with dependent young,
- (d) a dog or a cat that is aggressive or has other behavioural needs, and
- (e) a sick or injured dog or cat.

(2) The person in charge of a facility must ensure that dogs and cats are not distressed by the presence of other dogs and cats.

(3) If an animal may be distressed by the presence of other cats or dogs, that animal must be separated from other cats and dogs, to prevent visual and minimise or reduce olfactory contact with other cats and dogs.

Response:

This is not a practical or reasonable requirement for non-commercial breeders.

RECOMMENDATION:

That these provisions apply to animals in a Commercial Breeding Facility ONLY.

Division 3 Security of dog and cat housing

26 Design of dog and cat housing for security purposes, 27 Barriers between dog or cat and exterior of facility, 28 Emergency management

Response:

This is not a practical or reasonable requirement for non-commercial breeders.

RECOMMENDATION:

That these provisions apply to animals in a Commercial Breeding Facility ONLY.

Part 5 Management of dog and cat care

29 General standards for the care of dogs and cats

(2) The person in charge of the facility must ensure that staff exercise dogs for at least 20 minutes daily, whether on or off lead, except under the written advice of a veterinary practitioner.

29.12 Must ensure that every puppy or kitten receives at least 5 minutes direct handling daily from 1 week of age.

Response:

This is clearly intended as a standard for a facility with large numbers of animals, and not a small hobby/recreational breeder in a residential setting. We would suggest that the following changes be made in terms of welfare for animals who are confined with minimal interaction or limited space, as may occur in a commercial breeding facility.

RECOMMENDATION:

That these provisions apply to animals in a Commercial Breeding Facility ONLY.

That exercise and interaction with fit adult dogs should be a minimum of 30 minutes twice per day.

We recommend that 29.12 be amended to 3 weeks of age as some bitches become very stressed by people handling their puppies. By 3 weeks of age puppies can see and hear and are far more responsive to handling and bitches are much more relaxed with this interaction.

30 Food and water requirements

(3) Cats must not be fed a purely vegetarian diet.

RECOMMENDATION:

Dogs and Cats must not be fed a purely vegetarian diet.

(4) Staff must offer food to dogs and cats that are less than four months of age a minimum of three times a day from three weeks of age.

Response:

The frequency of feeding is of concern, particularly for giant breeds.

RECOMMEND: this is reduced to 3 months of age and be consistent with recommended dietary intakes that consider age, breed and health.

RECOMMEND: that the following is added:

Puppies over 4 months of age can reduce to once or twice daily feeding in larger breeds. Smaller individuals/breeds may need to stay on 2-3 x daily for several months.

(5) Staff must offer food to dogs and cats that are more than four months of age a minimum of two times a day.

RECOMMEND: Amend to read:

- Most larger dog breeds can be fed once a day from 8-9 months of age. Very small animals, sick and elderly dogs, require more frequent feeding. Older kittens and adult cats usually are fed twice daily. Lactating bitches and queens require to be fed a minimum of 2-3 x daily.

31 Cleanliness and hygiene requirements

Response:

This section broadly applies to commercial facilities and is not applicable to hobby breeders in a residential situation.

RECOMMENDATION:

That these provisions apply to animals in a Commercial Breeding Facility ONLY.

32 Requirements when transporting dogs or cats

3. (c) every two hours, provide all dogs and cats with an opportunity to drink water, eat, stretch, urinate and defecate.

Response:

This section should apply only to the transport of animals from commercial breeding facilities or similar. In that context, Dogs NSW makes the following recommended changes in relation to the provision that “every 2 hours, provide all dogs and cats with an opportunity to drink water, eat, stretch, urinate and defecate. “

- it may not be appropriate to remove cats from their traveling crates unless there is a safe place to do so.
- Similarly, with dogs, disturbing them every 2 hours, especially if moving them from air-conditioned environment into very hot conditions outside can be catastrophic for some brachycephalic animals.

RECOMMEND: Time be moved out to 4 hours minimum for dogs, cats could be longer or not mentioned in this section.

Part 6 Health standards for dogs and cats

33 Monitoring health status of dogs and cats 34 Arrangements with veterinary practitioner

35 Veterinary treatment of dogs and cats 36 Vaccination

Response:

These standards are suited to commercial establishments with large numbers of animals. Standards 33 to 36 inclusively are identical to the requirements for Pet Shops.

This is not a practical or reasonable requirement for non-commercial breeders.

RECOMMENDATION: That these provisions apply to animals in a Commercial Breeding Facility ONLY.

Part 7 Transfer of ownership of dogs and cats

Response:

The entire section of Part 7 is largely identical to the requirements for Pet Shops. As such these provisions are impractical and inappropriate for non-commercial breeders to be required to adhere to.

RECOMMENDATION: That these provisions apply to animals in a Commercial Breeding Facility ONLY.

39 Requirements for dogs and cats to be sold

(4) The person in charge of a facility must ensure that no dog or cat suspected of being sick, injured or physically or psychologically diseased is sold, unless a veterinary practitioner gives their written consent to the sale.

Response:

Dogs NSW has numerous concerns associated with Section 39. While it is accepted that a breeder should not knowingly sell or gift an animal that is not completely healthy without full disclosure of that animal's condition, this section appears to go further and could potentially make the breeder liable for unknown conditions (i.e. *must ensure* is a definitive statement). This is particularly problematic in terms of psychological issues, noting that a breeder who sells a puppy or kitten no longer has control over that animal's care or environment, and thus should not be held liable for any behavioural problems that cannot be traced directly and unconditionally back to the breeder's care. We also believe that time limits should apply, and there be stronger provisions for breeders to seek independent diagnosis on an animal that has been deemed to be unwell, diseased or has other issues.

RECOMMENDATION: That while breeders should be required to provide full disclosure to the new owners of an animal they have bred, there should be limitations around time a health disclosure applies, and the breeder be entitled to due process and appeal mechanisms should an issue arise.

39.2

Aggressive, pregnant, unweaned or poorly socialised dogs and cats or animals with known vices such as excessive barking, fence jumping (dogs) should not be made available for sale without obtaining veterinary advice first.

Response:

This provision deals almost entirely with behavioural issues, and as such is highly problematic for reasons already noted. Indeed, an issue such as excessive barking or fence jumping may be behaviours arising due to the animal's new environment and/or poor management practices of the new owner.

Dogs that are KNOWN to have such issues, or be pregnant or unweaned, should be included as part of the general disclosure provisions.

RECOMMENDATION: This section be deleted

40 Guarantee and returns

- (1) In this clause, the *guarantee* means the assurance given by the proprietor of the facility that if within three days of the date of delivery of a dog or cat to the purchaser, the dog or cat is not acceptable to the purchaser for any reason, the breeder will take the dog or cat back and refund 50% of the purchase price of the animal.
- (2) (4) If a dog or cat dies or is euthanised because of a physical defect or disease that is traceable to the point of sale and is verified by a veterinary practitioner, the person in charge of the facility must refund the purchase price or offer a replacement animal with the same guarantee.

- (3) (5) If a dog or cat dies or is euthanised and the reason for death or euthanasia is because of a confirmed heritable defect, the parents and any offspring from those parents still held by the facility must be managed for that heritable defect, under the direction of a veterinary practitioner
- (4) (4) If a dog or cat dies or is euthanised because of a physical defect or disease that is traceable to the point of sale and is verified by a veterinary practitioner, the person in charge of the facility must refund the purchase price or offer a replacement animal with the same guarantee.
- (5) (5) If a dog or cat dies or is euthanised and the reason for death or euthanasia is because of a confirmed heritable defect, the parents and any offspring from those parents still held by the facility must be managed for that heritable defect, under the direction of a veterinary practitioner.

Response:

Dogs NSW contends that many provisions of Section 40 present are inconsistent with parts of NSW Consumer Laws. In particular:

- *There are no applicable time limits contained and hence no protection for the breeder.*
- *No provision for the breeder to seek an independent veterinary opinion on a diagnosis presented by the owner*
- *No provisions for the breeder to be informed prior to the euthanasia of an animal that they have bred that may be subject to a refund due to an allegation of heredity disease. This denies the Breeder the opportunity to further investigate such allegations.*
- *Other problems around procedural fairness and natural justice.*

RECOMMENDATION: That these issues be addressed with a revision of this section, starting with a 6-month time limit on claims of breeder responsibility for health apply (as with Standard 3.6 of The Pet Shop Standards).

42 Information and advice to new owners

- (1) At the time of sale of a dog or cat, the person in charge of the facility must ensure staff offer the new owner accurate written information about the care of the dog or cat, at no charge in accordance with the relevant written procedure.
- (2) Information required to be provided to new owners includes, but is not limited to:
- (a) general care requirements of the species, including appropriate diet and feeding regimes,
 - (b) usual life span of breeds or species,
 - (c) minimum requirements for humane shelter and accommodation,
 - (d) minimum requirements for the security of the dog or cat,
 - (e) minimum requirements for social contact with humans and other animals of the same species,
 - (f) minimum requirements for disease and parasite control/prevention,
 - (g) how to identify and appropriately manage common physical and psychological diseases,
 - (h) procedures for seeking emergency treatment for the dog or cat, and the value of establishing a relationship with a veterinary practitioner, or animal behaviourist or other experienced persons,
 - (i) the estimated costs associated with providing food and shelter for the dog or cat,
 - (j) routine veterinary treatment which may be required for the animal,
- Note:** Routine veterinary treatment includes vaccination or parasite control.
- (k) maximum time a dog or cat can be left unattended,

(l) the expected behaviours of the species or breed,

Note: Expected behaviours for a species or breed may include digging or scratching.

(m) information about the legal requirements for pet ownership, and the penalties for non-compliance,

(n) the need for ongoing vaccinations,

(o) the desirability and advantages of desexing dogs and cats,

(p) minimum requirements for exercise,

(q) costs associated with registering the dog or cat,

(r) other information which is reasonable that the purchaser must be made aware of.

Response:

Dogs NSW considers the requirements of Standard 42 to be excessive. While we agree that it is important for breeders to provide support and information to the new owner of an animal they have bred, there are practical limitations to consider – for example, Dogs NSW contends it is unreasonable to expect a breeder to have in depth knowledge of common physical and psychological diseases, or to inform the buyer of all legal requirements of pet ownership and associated penalties, noting that these would require an in depth understanding of local laws for the new owner’s area. We would recommend that this kind of information would be better developed in consultation with government and Dogs NSW, with breeders being able to supplement with appropriate breed specific information.

RECOMMENDATION: This whole section be considerably reduced to the basics that could be achievable by an individual, and/or consideration be given to the creation of a general new puppy buyer information book, in association with Dogs NSW, that allows breeders to also supplement with breed specific information.

Part 8 Breeding and rearing

43 Special requirements for mating dogs and cats

The person in charge of the facility must ensure:

(a) bitches and queens are not mated during their first oestrous cycle,

RECOMMENDATION:

Amend to: 43 (a) bitches and queens should not be mated during their first oestrus cycle. With addition of - Bitches, especially in the larger breeds, should not be mated under 12 months of age.

(e) breeding mates are not be closely related,

Note: Examples of closely related animals are father and daughter, brother and sister, grandfather and granddaughter

Response: While Dogs NSW breeders are not permitted first generation mating's, there is no evidence to show that second or third generation mating's result in negative welfare outcomes, and may be unavoidable with numerically restricted breeds. We also note that in most cross bred populations (i.e. non-Dogs NSW breeders), no records are kept, nor are these required to be kept under this legislation apart from the names and microchip numbers of the parents. As a result, there would be no generational data to prove whether cross breeders (primarily the focus of commercial and back yard breeders) would comply with this provision.

RECOMMENDATION:

It is our **strong preference** that (e) be replaced with:

First degree inbreeding – father/daughter, mother/son, full brother and sister should not occur.

RECOMMENDATION:

It is our **strong preference** that the following be added- ***That all commercial enterprises are required to maintain generational data to cover this concern.***

(f) an animal known or suspected of having a heritable disease or defect is not used for breeding, and

Response:

Health testing is a priority for all Dogs NSW breeder members, and we have embedded this in the rules and regulations of the organisation. We actively work to minimise known inherited diseases and support research – through financial grants - into new areas of disease control and discovery. Dogs NSW breeders also lead the way in genetic screening and many are involved in the establishment of DNA banks. As such, we understand that all animals (including humans) carry a minimum of 7 genetic defects. This does not mean that a disease will develop, indeed most defects have nil health impacts. However, it does demonstrate the importance of research and testing, and is in stark contrast to the practices of commercial cross breed breeders who are not required to health test, nor generally display any desire to do so.

RECOMMENDATION

It is our **strong recommendation** that (f) is replaced with:

Where an animal is known or suspected of having an inherited disease or defect, every effort is made to minimise the disease or defect in the progeny/offspring. Severely affected individuals should not be bred from.

We also strongly recommend that the following section from the Guidelines be adopted into the Standards:

(1) Breeding practices should ensure that both breeding dogs and cats and the offspring they produce are as physically and psychologically healthy as possible. Dog and cat breeders have a responsibility to ensure that their breeding dogs and cats maintain the best quality of life as possible, and litters should only be produced with a reasonable expectation of finding homes where they are both wanted and appreciated, and are offered a similarly good quality of life.

(2) Where a heritable disease is recognised in a breed and where there are screening procedures or a test for that disease in the case of a stud cat or dog or bitch or queen should:

- (a) have a current official evaluation or test result for the dog or cat for such hereditary disease;**
- (b) provide the official evaluation or test result to the owners where the dog or cat is to be mated to an animal not owned by the breeding facility;**
- (c) provide the official evaluation or test result of both the sire and dam to the new owners of any puppy or kitten;**
- (d) endeavour to ensure that the genetic make-up of both sire and dam will not result in an increase in the frequency or severity of known inherited disorders.**

RE (3) Breeding practices should avoid breeding exaggerated features that compromise welfare, for example marked brachycephaly that causes breathing distress.

FOR NOTING: OVER – REACHING AND IMPOSSIBLE TO MONITOR IN A CONSISTENT MANNER

Response:

ANKC regulations prohibit registered breeders – including Dogs NSW breeders – from purposefully breeding excessive or extreme physical traits that result in negative health outcomes. That said, we have concerns in relation to this provision due to the subjective interpretation of what constitutes ‘exaggerated features that compromise welfare’. We also note that there is current anti-brachycephalic breed campaign which targets Dogs NSW breeders, despite a lack of evidence that the animals bred by Dogs NSW breeder members are those which present with the extreme problems and require veterinary assistance. We are concerned that such a provision could lead to the ultimate prohibition and even extinction of loved breeds, who have long histories and are generally healthy overall.

RECOMMENDATION: Dogs NSW considers this provision to be an extremely subjective and dangerous statement that could be enforced by agents with no real knowledge of a breed. Of the utmost concern is the danger of this section of the guidelines being enforced to subjugate the breeding of breeds thereby enforcing their extinction. We recommend it be deleted, noting that any health issues should be adequately covered in other sections.

44 Frequency of breeding

(2) If a bitch or queen is five years of age and has not reached six litters, the person in charge of a facility must ensure that the bitch or queen is examined by a veterinarian to ensure the animal’s suitability for continued breeding

(3) The person in charge of a facility must arrange for a bitch or queen to be desexed when the bitch or queen has had six litters.

Response:

Dogs NSW recommendations on sections 44- 49 are based on our own codes and regulations for registered breeders. We strongly believe that these standards should be met by all breeders, regardless of whether they are large commercial establishments or small hobby breeders or back yard breeders.

RECOMMENDATION: Noting that we wish to ensure that no bitch be bred with under the age of 12 months, Dogs NSW recommends that 44. (2) Be increased to listed age of 6 years, to reduce the pressure on the female as we consider 5 years too short a period should a bitch produce the maximum of 6 litters in her lifetime.

We also recommend that 44. (3) be amended to: *Must arrange for the bitch or queen to be desexed as soon as breeding has stopped, or after a maximum of 6 litters.*

45 Special requirements for pregnant dogs and cats

The person in charge of the facility must ensure mother dogs in the latter stages of pregnancy are provided with additional access to water and a balanced and complete diet at frequent intervals, in accordance with the relevant written procedure.

RECOMMENDATION: That the words “bitches and queens” be added as follows:

The person in charge of the facility must ensure bitches and queens in the latter stages of pregnancy are provided with additional access to water and a balanced and complete diet at frequent intervals, in accordance with the relevant written procedure.

46 Special requirements for birthing

(6) The person in charge of a facility must ensure that after birth is complete, a bitch or queen and her litter are monitored **6 hourly** until the puppies or kittens are feeding and maternal acceptance has been firmly established.

RECOMMENDATION:

Increase the monitoring intervals to 2 hourly.

(7) Dogs and cats that are separated from the remaining breeding population must be provided with additional **attention and socialisation to animal carers**.

RECOMMENDATION:

That 46.7 be reworded as follows - must be provided with additional care and socialisation.

47 Special requirements for lactating bitches and queens

(c) kittens and puppies are not separated from their litter or their lactating mother until they are eight weeks of age to facilitate socialisation, except in the best interests of the puppy or kitten, or their mother.

RECOMMENDATION:

We are aware that in certain cases (e.g. with large litters and the nutritional strain on the bitch is extreme) there may be a need to separate pups from their lactating mother earlier. Dogs NSW therefore recommends that in 47. (c) the time be reduced to 6 weeks, and that the second part be reworded to read ...*except where it is in the best interest of the puppies or kittens, or for their mother.*

49 Weaning puppies and kittens

The person in charge of the facility must ensure:

(c) puppies and kittens are weighed weekly and individual weights recorded in the Animal Directory, in order to monitor that puppies and kittens are achieving a steady weight gain every week, and

(d) all breeding females must have a general health check by a veterinary practitioner within 8 weeks post-partum.

RECOMMENDATION: That an extra point be added after 49 (c)

49.(d) Puppies and kittens should be regularly wormed from 2-3 weeks of age with the appropriate wormer for round and hookworm, given at the correct weight dosage according to the manufacturers recommendations. They should be wormed at least every 2 weeks until 6-8 weeks of age.

49. (e) Formerly point (d) change to:

Any lactating bitch or queen that is failing to cope with her litter should receive immediate veterinary attention.

Part 9 Humane destruction

50 Separate area required for humane destruction

51 Method of humane destruction

52 Who may perform humane destruction

53 Humane destruction recommended by veterinary practitioner.

Response:

This section is appropriate for Commercial enterprises only, and that many provisions would be difficult to comply with in remote country areas were veterinary help is not readily available.

Dogs NSW also has many concerns with the sequence of event outlined in Part 9 Humane Destruction and we strongly object to the use of the word *destruction*, and recommend that it be replaced with *euthanasia*.

RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended that this section apply commercial breeding facilities ONLY.

The word destruction should NOT be used and replaced with Euthanasia.

Rearrange the sequence of events as follows: i.e. Give the reason in the first instance.

53, 52, 51, 50