



DOGS NSW Statement on RSPCA Breeder Audits

For several years, DOGS NSW, through its Media and Government Legislation Committee (MGL), have been seeking relief for its breeder members, from the activities of RSPCA Inspectors who, in the opinion of DOGS NSW, are interpreting sections of the Animal Welfare Code of Practice – Breeding Dogs and cats in a manner that was not contemplated when DOGS NSW were involved in the preparation of the COP.

On 12th March 2018, the committee met with Steve Coleman RSPCA NSW CEO and Andrew Clachers LLB, the Chief Operating Officer and Company Secretary to discuss the operations of the RSPCA Inspectorate, in particular the refusal to give reasons for visits, their interpretation of POCTA Standards and Guidelines, their attitude to our members and the lack of Biosecurity Protocols when entering our members' premises. The RSPCA representatives refuted all of the committee's assertions, despite being shown a Statutory Declaration from a member that clearly indicated that the Inspector, who conducted the audit, demanded compliance with her interpretation of the COP. As there was no avenue of appeal against an Inspectors Audit, the RSPCA Representatives were able to walk away from the meeting without any commitment to take action on the complaint. The only concession was an agreement for the DOGS NSW Animal Welfare & Community Liaison Officer (AWCLO) to make contact with the then Deputy Chief Inspector Scott Meyers. The committee continued to receive reports of Inspectors making up the rules as they went along, however, due to fears of retribution, the breeders concerned were not prepared to make written statements, so the committee did not have any documentation to reapproach the RSPCA.

In late 2020, the announcement was made that the New South Wales Government had set up a Task Force to crack down on mass dog breeders, the MGL Committee feared that DOGS NSW breeders would be the first to be audited, as they openly advertised their puppies and advertising was stated to be the methodology that the RSPCA would be using to identify breeders. Despite the negative outcome of the 2018 meeting with the RSPCA, the committee resolved to seek another meeting with them to ask again for a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) and their Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) and a commitment to review the Inspectorates interpretation of POCTA. To ensure that the RSPCA would take us seriously the committee asked the NSW Chief Animal Welfare Officer, Dr Kim Filmer to convene the meeting. The RSPCA Representative at the meeting was their Chief Inspector Scott Myers. Once again we were disappointed with the response we received, as we were informed that there was no need for an MOU and the only concession made by the RSPCA was that they would consider audit complaints from breeders if they were in writing.

On behalf of DOGS NSW, the MGL Committee are pursuing governmental, legal and media opportunities to resolve the confusion and distress being caused to our members by the current audit regime. We will be stressing that DOGS NSW breeders are not what Minister Marshall describes as "these cowboys, these grubs that are operating these puppy factories in contravention of the law and also exploiting animals for their own commercial profit", rather what RSPCA CEO Steve Coleman regards as "the breeders across the state who are doing the right thing and who care very deeply for the animals they work with."

However, to achieve any result with the DPI or RSPCA, DOGS NSW needs written feedback from breeders who have been audited, to support any claim that they are targeting Dogs NSW breeders. We need to know numbers, and need to know if any requirements of the audit were inconsistent with the COP. Without this information we will be trying to prosecute our case with one hand tied behind our back. We will continue working on our members' behalf, but need the information that only you can give.

