

Government response to the Parliamentary Inquiry into Restricted Breed Dog Legislation

September 2016

The Parliamentary Inquiry into restricted breed dog legislation was established in 2015. The resulting report was published in March 2016 and contained 31 recommendations. The Victorian Government's response to this report has now been tabled in Parliament.

Restricted Breed Dog legislation

Restricted breed dogs are defined as dogs that fit the Approved Standard for Restricted Breed Dogs in Victoria. These include pure or cross bred American Pit Bull Terriers (or Pit Bull Terriers), Perro de Presa Canarios (or Presa Canario), Dogo Argentinos, Japanese Tosas, or Fila Brasileiros.

Currently, the only restricted breed dogs that can be kept are those that were in Victoria before 1 September 2010 and were registered (as any breed) with the local council before 30 September 2011.

Councils across Victoria can seize unregistered restricted breed dogs. Where dogs are deemed by the council to meet the standard, they can be declared as a restricted breed.

Owners of restricted breed dogs must comply with a range of requirements, relating to housing, microchipping, desexing, and identifying their dogs. Restricted breed dogs must also be muzzled and leashed when being exercised off the property. For more information on the requirements for keeping a restricted breed dog please visit www.vic.gov.au/pets.

The Parliamentary Inquiry

The Parliamentary Inquiry into the legislative and regulatory framework relating to restricted breed dogs was established in 2015.

The Economy and Infrastructure Committee undertook a detailed investigation into the management of different breeds of dog, and into dog attacks, their causes and prevention strategies.

The Inquiry received 502 written submissions and heard from 16 organisations and individuals at public hearings. Evidence was given by dog attack victims, dog owners, breed experts, local councils, schools and kindergartens and organisations such as the RSPCA and the Australian Veterinary Association.

Recommendations

The Committee's resulting report was published in March 2016 and contained 31 recommendations. As well as suggesting reforms to the restricted breed dog legislation, the Inquiry made a number of recommendations about responsible pet ownership, dangerous dogs and greyhounds. A full copy of the report can be accessed online at www.parliament.vic.gov.au

Government response

The government's response to this report has now been tabled in Parliament. The response sets out the measures the government proposes to introduce to support regulatory reform. The government accepts the need to change Victoria's restricted breed dog legislation.

Acting upon a key recommendation from the Inquiry, the government will remove the ban on registering restricted breed dogs, such as Pit Bulls by amending the *Domestic Animals Act 1994*. There is currently a moratorium on euthanising restricted breed dogs and the legislative amendment will be implemented before the moratorium expires. However, all other requirements relating to the restrictions on the keeping of restricted breed dogs will be maintained.

The government has agreed, or agreed in principle, to 25 of the Committee's recommendations. The recommendations on greyhounds will be considered as part of the greyhound welfare reform work that is currently underway.

A full copy of the government's response can be obtained online at www.vic.gov.au/pets, by emailing pet.welfare@ecodev.vic.gov.au or by calling 136 186.

The Victorian Government acknowledges the important contributions made by the large number of stakeholders who participated in the Inquiry, including members of the general public, veterinary groups, animal welfare organisations, local councils and academics.

The government appreciates the need for balance between supporting the benefits of dog ownership and protecting the community from dangerous dogs and irresponsible dog owners. It also shares the Committee's concern about the particular vulnerability of children in relation to dog attacks.

Timeframes

The ban on registering restricted breed dogs will be removed in 2017.

The government will work towards implementing accepted recommendations as soon as possible. However, some of them will take time.

Meanwhile, the government is committed to implementing its election commitment to reform the dog breeding and pet shop industries as a matter of priority.

For more information

Visit www.vic.gov.au/pets or call 136 186.

Authorised by the Department of Economic Development, Jobs, Transport and Resources

1 Spring Street Melbourne Victoria 3000

Telephone (03) 9651 9999

© Copyright State of Victoria,

Department of Economic Development, Jobs, Transport and Resources 2016

Except for any logos, emblems, trademarks, artwork and photography this document is made available under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 3.0 Australia license.

This document is also available in an accessible format at economicdevelopment.vic.gov.au

ISBN 978-1-925532-50-0 (pdf/online)