

STATEMENT REGARDING BACKYARD BREEDING AND BREEDER LICENSING

The following is attributable to Mr Tim Vasudeva, chief executive officer at RSPCA South Australia in relation to the segment aired this evening on Today Tonight Adelaide relating to the issue of “backyard” puppy breeders:

“RSPCA South Australia currently has a matter involving Mr Gary Taylor before the courts. As such, we’re not currently able to comment on that matter specifically.

“With respect to the issue of “backyard” breeders more broadly, we continue to hold the view that while “easy money” continues to be a motivating factor in the breeding and sale of puppies there will always be people who will want to take advantage of vulnerable animals for their own financial gain.

“As such, we believe the best way to proactively protect the welfare of breeding dogs is to remove the opportunity for accessible and material financial gain from the sale of puppies.

“Currently, anyone is able to breed and sell puppies. The many avenues in which puppies can be sold also provide the opportunity for anonymity on the part of the breeder and no verifiable access to information as to the care provided, or not provided, to the breeding parents. Pet shops generally do not divulge the source of their puppies and the online sale of puppies through breeder websites and trading websites like Gumtree do not give purchasers of puppies any opportunity to ensure they are not inadvertently supporting poor welfare standards or breeding practices.

“RSPCA South Australia inspectors are doing what they can within the current laws to tackle backyard breeders, however the current legislative system provides a reactive rather than a proactive process for dealing with welfare issues relating to dog breeding.

“In the view of RSPCA South Australia, breeder licencing would address most of the issues

we have with puppy farms and poor welfare standards in breeding practices. RSPCA South Australia believes anyone who chooses to make an income from breeding puppies or kittens should be accountable for the welfare of breeding animals and their offspring.

“We believe it should be made illegal for anyone to breed and/or sell a puppy or kitten without a licence. A licence should only be able to be obtained following an inspection from an animal welfare officer, combined with the right to conduct follow up inspections. The licence fee would be minimal. The intention is to stamp out puppy farms and breeders with poor standards, not those who provide appropriate care for their animals.

“As it would be an independent user-pays system, it will not fall to taxpayers to fund the inspection regime.

“Purchasers of puppies and kittens deserve reassurance that they are not inadvertently supporting cruel breeding practices. While anyone adopting from a shelter or rescue group can be assured of that, there is currently no genuine traceability to the parent animals for puppies purchased from pet shops, online or from backyard breeders.

“RSPCA South Australia are currently working with one hand tied behind our backs as we just do not know where many of these breeders are.

“Both NSW and SA are currently considering the introduction of breeder licensing. In the lead-up to the state election, the Labor Party committed to the introduction of a new code of practice which would target backyard breeders.

“A select committee into companion animals handed down 12 recommendations to improve companion animal welfare last year. One of those recommendations was the introduction of breeder licensing legislation.

“While the Labor proposal is a good start, RSPCA South Australia would like to see all of the 12 recommendations passed into law by this State government. If all 12 recommendations were introduced, South Australia would become a national leader on companion animal welfare issues.

“If you are concerned about the living conditions at a property breeding dogs, please make a report to our animal cruelty line on 1300 4 777 22.

“If you would like to see the 12 recommendations of the select committee introduced, please contact your local MP.

“Our advice is do not buy from backyard breeders, online sellers of pets or pet shops unless they are rehoming genuine rescue animals. Across our three shelters and foster care network we have 1,800 animals in our care, many of whom are currently looking for loving homes.

“All animals who are available for adoption from RSPCA South Australia come vaccinated, microchipped, desexed, vet and behaviour checked.

“We strongly encourage people choose the adoption option when they are looking for a pet.”

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