

12/02/2018

Dear CCBFA NSW affiliate clubs

RE: HOBBYISTS ARE NOT PET SHOPS – CALL TO ACTION

Please be clear - this Pet Shop matter could easily see the end of private aviculture in NSW.

Summary of the issue

We are fortunate to have detected this matter prior to the changes becoming enforceable under the Protection of Cruelty to Animals Act 1979 and associated regulations (POCTA).

There are two legally enforceable codes of practice of relevance to bird keepers referenced under POCTA, a general code for pet shops and a specific code for birds. The NSW government has been working on changes to the general pet shop code, including removing all exemptions for club (and other) events and redefining the term pet shop to essentially include anyone trading animals of all types. In effect, everyone who breeds animals will become a pet shop.

Compliance with the general code for pet shops is clearly ridiculous for all avicultural hobbyists. The code requires the person in charge to be TAFE certified, it includes a total of 21 written procedures together with an exhaustive list of other registers, directories, training manuals, guarantees, rosters, signage, cage size minimums, etc. All of this is legally required and can be inspected by compliance officers at any time. Hobbyists cannot hope to comply, and in any case the bulk of the pet shop code is irrelevant in terms of improving avian animal welfare outcomes.

If this goes through, private aviculture is dead, and the days of retail bird shops are numbered.

What has happened to date

Nobody from the avicultural community was advised the pet shop code would be revised – no consultation, no communication, nothing. We were alerted unofficially that a review of the pet shop code was underway, we obtained the draft documents and began examining the matter in mid-January 2018. We did not believe what we were reading and immediately sought confirmation from senior management at the NSW Department of Primary Industries (DPI). Shockingly, they confirmed our worst fears. The review process has fed down from the various task force and parliamentary inquiries centred on puppy farms – for some inexplicable reason (we have suspicions) all animal breeders have been implicated. According to senior DPI officers, they saw no need to involve other species (apart from dogs and cats) in their “targeted consultation”. We were subsequently invited to make a formal submission and have recently done so – copy enclosed.

The Minister for Primary Industries in NSW is responsible for POCTA and other related legislation overseen by DPI. Currently the Minister is Niall Blair, a Nationals member in the NSW legislative council (upper house). As soon as the severity of the issue was clear we contacted the Minister’s office forthwith. To her credit, the Minister’s Senior Advisor (Ag) rapidly convened a meeting with senior DPI Animal Welfare staff travelling to Sydney from Orange. The meeting, attended by Bob Barnes (NFSA) and Sam Davis (CCBFA Vice President), was productive and there is no doubt the breadth of avicultural interests and the potential dire consequences for all are now well understood. Sam requested a simple assurance to CCBFA from the Minister – that avicultural hobbyists would NOT be classified as pet shops. Unfortunately, this assurance has not been granted – most disappointing – particularly from a National Party Minister – and so the battle begins...

Call to action

This is likely to be a long drawn out campaign requiring endurance and ongoing publicity, marketing, letters, etc. We need an organised professional campaign and we need everyone who values bird keeping making their voice heard (and keep making it heard).

How do we do this? At the CCBFA meeting on Wed 7/2/18 all delegates voted in favour of the following motions.

- **Motion 1**

All NSW CCBFA affiliate clubs to urgently contact all members to have them meet with, write to, and/or email their local state MP. CCBFA will provide a series of appropriate statements to be modified to suit individuals.

- **Motion 2**

CCBFA committee to appoint a publicity/marketing team to advise, design and implement a public awareness campaign.

- **Motion 3**

Pet stores selling (or with an interest in selling) birds are encouraged to form a network and appoint a representative to our existing CCBFA led expert bird group.

The first requires a concerted effort from all clubs to motivate members to get the message through to their local state MPs. Some appropriate statements accompany this letter - we must make our voices heard so start phoning, writing, emailing MPs now. The second is building a team to manage the campaign - this is happening now with lots of great ideas forming. And third, formation of a representative network of bird selling Pet Shops is underway.

We are currently gathering together people to assist with all the above. Please consider the skills of your members - do we have media professionals, graphic designers, video production experts, etc. in our midst? Do you or your members have direct contact to local state MPs? Discuss the issue with your local pet store - do they understand? Please let us know what your club has to offer.

We are the avian animal welfare experts. We will insist on our standards. Standards that improve avian animal welfare outcomes NOT standards that fill filing cabinets with bureaucratic paperwork.

CCBFA is actively in ongoing communication with all relevant stakeholders, including the Pet Industry Association of Australia (PIAA), RSPCA NSW, various other affected animal groups and of course the DPI and Minister's office. However, we cannot hope to do it alone - we need every aviculturist and every bird lover to actively support this effort.

We have and will continue to communicate with clubs via email and with all of aviculture via our Facebook page www.facebook.com/CCBFA.

Sincerely,

Ron Robertson

Ron Robertson
Secretary/Treasurer
Canary and Cage Bird Federation of Australia Inc.