



Letter sent to Vets and Rabbit Rescues 2023

Dear Kelly,

I am writing regarding legislative change for pet rabbits in Victoria. The Parliament of Victoria is being asked to put pet rabbits under the Domestic Animal Act as part of Animal Welfare reforms. We ask for your support for this initiative to address the large number of animals being breed in backyards and abandoned or surrendered across the state. The Hon Georgie Purcell has taken this matter to the Victorian Parliament and to the relevant minister on behalf of animal rescue and those that work with pet rabbits.

A letter is attached which explains this initiative, as well as a brief legislative change form that we ask you to please complete and return to admin@rabbitrunaway.org.au by July 31st 2023. We appreciate your support in addressing a long overdue animal welfare reform for pet rabbits.

Sincerely,

Dr Judi Inglis
President

Rabbit Runway Orphanage
House Rabbit Society (Australian Chapter)
19 Stanley St, Olinda 3788
Ph: (03) 9751 1229
Email: info@rabbitrunaway.org.au

"The greatness of a nation and its moral progress can be judged by the way its animals are treated." Mahatma Gandhi

Dear... (Vets, Rescue Organisations)

Rabbits are the 3rd most popular pet in Victoria; however, they are not included under the Domestic Animal Act. This removes any obligation from state authorities to take in and rehome abandoned pet rabbits. I am writing today to gain your support for legislation that aims to control the backyard breeding and sale of pet rabbits. As animal advocates, I am sure that you share my concern for the welfare of the pet rabbits.

The backyard breeding and sale of pet rabbits has become a major concern in recent years. Backyard breeding falls into two categories:

1. While there are many responsible breeders who prioritize the health and wellbeing of their rabbits, there are also some who do not. These persons prioritize profits over the welfare of their animals, leading to inbreeding, poor health, and inadequate living conditions. These businesses often operate illegally with no council permits or membership of legitimate breeding associations. These are persons we see putting baby animals into bags at markets, selling pet rabbits as food for snakes or human consumption.
2. The second category are the inexperienced or naive individual who has purchased a rabbit online or from a pet shop. These persons are unaware of the temperament, sex or breeding cycle of the pet rabbits when purchased and inadvertently find themselves with litters. Unable or unwilling to spend

money on the animals to desex them, or to deal with the breeding problem they have created, the animals are let loose or dumped at rescue.

Many of the rabbits that end up in rescue organizations need medical attention and care. Rescues are ill equipped financially and physically to deal with 20 to 40 animals arriving at once, in many cases pushing the rescue over their permit numbers or leading to euthanasia of the animals.

I am urging you to support legislation that would regulate the backyard breeding and sale of pet rabbits. Such regulation would allow councils to investigate backyard breeders, to stop this cycle of uncontrolled breeding and abandonment culminating in adding to the feral rabbit problem or certain death for the pet rabbit.

Proposed Legislation would ensure that rabbits are bred and sold in a humane and responsible manner. I believe that you, as experts in the field of animal care, can play an important role in advocating for this legislation. Your support can help to raise awareness of this issue and encourage lawmakers to take action to protect the welfare of our furry friends.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I look forward to your support in this important endeavour. Please sign the attached form and send it back by email or post.

Sincerely,

Dr Judi Inglis (PhD, MTMg)

President: Rabbit Runaway Orphanage

19 Stanley St, Olinda 3788

info@rabbitrunaway.org.au

Ph: 03 9751 1229

SUPPORT FOR LEGISLATIVE CHANGE

I, the undersigned, support legislative change to address the growing animal welfare issue and community problem of the UNCONTROLLED BREEDING AND ABANDONMENT OF THE PET RABBIT.

It is our responsibility, to safeguard the welfare of these animals and to ensure that they are being bred and sold in a responsible way.

There were eight responses to support Legislative Change, and all were positive, six of these responded with comments. There were 4 rabbit rescues, 1 council pound facility, 3 specialist rabbit vets. Another council pound facility was inconclusive and had not responded at this time.

Rabbit Rescue

1. Kelly's Rabbit Warren – signed and comment
2. Bluey & Alice Rabbit Refuge – signed and comment
3. Second Chance Animal Rescue – signed and comment
4. Nelly's Ark – signed

Council Pound Facility

5. Animal Aid Coldstream – signed and comment

Specialist Rabbit Vets working with Rescue Rabbits

6. Dr Brendan Carmel BVSc, MVS MANZCVS (Unusual Pet s& Wildlife) -signed and comment
7. Dr Tristan Rich BVSc MANZCVS (Unusual Pets & Wildlife) – signed and comment
8. La Trobe Veterinary Hospital Group – signed

[Rescue, Council Pound Facility & Rabbit Vet Responses - positive](#)

21/7/2023 Kelly's Rabbit Warren

Signed and comment

Kelly's Rabbit Warren Rescue is based in Bendigo. We run as a foster care network with a mission to educate the public on rabbit welfare and create awareness about the current rabbit crisis. Local pet stores are selling rabbits to be gifted away to people as disposable gift ware and the people that end up receiving these 'gifts' don't know how to care for them and we are often contacted to take them in, if we don't, they end up on the local streets to fend for themselves or in local bushland as the local pound are not obligated to take them in.

20/7/2023 Bluey & Alice Rabbit Refuge

signed and comment

As a rabbit specific rescue, we see the poor understanding of rabbit needs both by the public & many general veterinarians.

Having Rabbits reclassified as a companion animal will help them become more like cats & dogs in the training of vets & also stop them being sold in pet-shops. Hopefully it will also help reduce backyard breeding as they are the main suppliers to these pet-shops. Easter is a horrendous time for our

rescues, with baby rabbits pushed on social media as a perfect pet for the children. They aren't & when parents finally realise this, it's the small self-funded & run rescues that deal with the fall out. When we are full, they are often just released!

This change may also bring about better conditions required for rabbits kept as a pet instead of the hideous conditions currently seen as acceptable, along with proper veterinary care. Please help us help rabbits become better understood & loved as a family pet as they should be.

13/7/2023 Second Chance Animal rescue

Signed and comment

We receive over 25 calls a week asking about pet rabbit rescue. We do not have the permits or facilities so we often have to turn people away if we know that rabbit rescues are overwhelmed. We have received calls from rescues asking not to refer them as they are at capacity. It's heartbreaking to not be able to assist. Something needs to be done to assist.

10/7/2023 Animal Aid Coldstream

We fully support the submission from Rabbit Runaway. Animal Aid has experienced a significant increase in the volume of incoming rabbits over the past 5 years due to over breeding and poor purchasing choices.

**17/7/2023 Dr Brendan Carmel BVSc, MVS MANZCVS (Unusual Pets & Wildlife)
Warranwood Veterinary Clinic & International Expert**

Signed & Comment

Legislation to address the animal welfare issues of pet rabbits in Victoria is long overdue. Veterinary clinics in Victoria see a large number of abandoned and unwell rabbits as a result of unwanted or inappropriate breeding, many of which require prolonged medical care or are euthanised.

Regulation of the sale and breeding of pet rabbits will be a major step forward in providing adequate welfare for this species, and encouraging responsible care of rabbits.

**Dr Tristan Rich BVSc MANZCVS (Unusual Pets & Wildlife)
Lort Smith Animal Hospital**

Signed & comment

Rabbits are sentient beings that deserve the same legislative protection afforded to dogs and cats.

In my work as an unusual pet veterinarian, I regularly see firsthand the welfare repercussions of uncontrolled breeding and abandonment of pet rabbits.

Responses - Inconclusive

21/7/2023 Whittlesea Animal Facility

Hi Judi,
I have forwarded this to Ben.
Thank you
Kerrie Cormack
