



LETTER TO COUNCILS 2023

From: Rabbit Runaway Orphanage <admin@rabbitrunaway.org.au>
Sent: Wednesday, July 5, 2023 1:49:10 PM
To: Cr Fiona Stevens <Cr.Fiona.Stevens@mitchellshire.vic.gov.au>
Subject: Legislative Change for Pet Rabbits

Dear,

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 in animal welfare.

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,

Jodie Smit
Coordinator Legal Change
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

1. 11/7/2023 GLEN EIRA COUNCIL

To: Cr. Jim Magee <JMagee@gleneira.vic.gov.au>
Subject: Legislative Change for Pet Rabbits

Dear Jodie,

Thank you for your email of 4 July 2023 about legislative change for pet rabbits.

Council has a [Domestic Animal Management Plan 2022-2025](#) that complies with the legislative requirements of the Domestic Animals Act 1994 (the Act).

In regards for your request regarding legislative change to the Act for pet rabbits, I suggest you contact your local MP about gaining their support as the Act is State Government legislation.

You may also wish to contact Agriculture Victoria directly as the appropriate body to initiate change <https://agriculture.vic.gov.au/about/contact-us>.

Thank you for raising your concerns.

Yours sincerely,

CR JIM MAGEE
MAYOR

2. 10/7/2023 YARRA RANGES COUNCIL

8700871 - Legislative Change for Pet Rabbits - Cr Child

Dear Jodie

On behalf of Cr Child, thank you for taking the time to contact Council regarding the Legislative Change for pet rabbits in Victoria.

Your email has been forwarded on to our Manager for Community Wellbeing for review and a more detailed response. Once we hear back we will be in touch with an update.

Please take care and we will be in touch shortly.

Kind Regards

Ally

3. 10/7/2023 CITY OF MELBOURNE

RE: Legislative Changes for Pet Rabbits (ref. 1121432)

Dear Jodie,

Thank you for taking the time to write to the Lord Mayor of Melbourne, Sally Capp. Your correspondence has been brought to the Lord Mayor's attention and to ensure we provide you with the most accurate information, your enquiry has been provided to the Animal Management Team for further advice.

The case reference number for your request is 1121432.

We appreciate your patience while this matter is looked into. We will endeavour to respond as

soon as possible.

Thank you again for writing to the Lord Mayor, we deeply value all feedback from the community which helps us create a vibrant city for everyone.

Kind regards,

Sharon

4. 5/7/2023 Mitchell Shire Council

Morning Jodie,

Can you please provide me with the letter that explains the initiative and the legislative change form.

Council certainly supports any initiative that improves animal welfare.

Regards

Adam Evans

5. 9/7/2023 Monash Shire

Dear Jodie

Thank you for your email, I have forwarded to council officers for some advice and hope to come back to you shortly when I have some more information.

Kind regards

Tina

Tina Samardzija

Mayor

Councillor, Mulgrave Ward

6. 9/7/2023 Cardinia Shire

Dear Jodie,

Thank you for your email and I will forward in to the relevant council department for their consideration.

Mayor Cr Tammy Radford

7. 7/7/2023 Nillumbik Shire

Hi Jodie,

Thanks for your email. The proposed reform certainly makes sense on the surface.

I've asked our Domestic Animal Management team for their advice on this and I'll get back to you 😊

Kind regards, Ben Ramcharan

Cr Ben Ramcharan
Mayor

8. 7/7/2023 Merri-Bek City Council

Hi Jodie

Thank you for emailing me about this.

I've sent this through to our advocacy lead at Council for us to discuss.

Kind regards

Angelica

Mayor Cr Angelica Panopoulos

9. 4/7/2023 Glen Eira Council

Dear Jodie,

Thank you for your email.

This email acknowledges receipt of your enquiry to the City of Glen Eira's Councillor/s. If appropriate, Councillors will refer your concerns to Council Officers for investigation.

Councillors will aim to respond to your concerns within 5-10 business days. If your request requires more detailed investigation, Council will send you an update and let you know when you can expect to receive a complete response.

If you have questions in the meantime please feel free to contact us again at this email.

Warm regards,

Alexandra Fry

Councillor Business Officer

10. 27/7/2023 Surfcoast Shire

Hi Jodie,

Thanks for your email regarding seeking legislative change for pet rabbits.

From the perspective of the Surf Coast Shire, there is legislation under the Preventions of Cruelty to Animals Act, 1986, that has some controls applicable to rabbits. On this basis, we do not support a change to the Domestic Animals Act at this point in time.

More detailed information would need to be considered to build greater knowledge and information about the extent of the problem.

Warm Regards

Mayor, Cr Liz Pattison

11. 2/8/2023 City of Greater Geelong

Good morning Jodie,

Thank you for your email to Mayor Sullivan dated 4 July which has been forwarded to me for consideration and response.

Unfortunately, the City of Greater Geelong will not be signing the attached legislative change form as requested. We have concerns regarding the ongoing petition initiated by Rabbit Runway Orphanage on Change.org advocating for rabbits to be included under the Domestic Animals Act 1994 in Victoria. While we understand the passion driving this cause, we believe it is essential to consider the potential challenges and implications associated with such a decision.

Since 2014, the petition has been diligently presented during each review to have pet rabbits protected under animal welfare laws. Whilst we appreciate the efforts taken by Rabbit Runway Orphanage and the Animal Justice Party to raise this matter in the Victorian Parliament and with the Minister for Agriculture during the current review, we believe that including rabbits under the Domestic Animals Act may present certain challenges and concerns as outlined below:

1. **Cost and Resources:** The inclusion would necessitate significant financial resources to manage and enforce the regulations. This includes measures for the registration, licensing, inspections and potentially handling of stray or abandoned rabbits.
2. **Impact on Rabbit Owners:** For responsible rabbit owners, additional regulations may impose a financial burden and administrative obligations, potentially leading to a decrease in rabbit ownership.
3. **Potential Negative Consequences:** While the intention is to protect rabbits, the unintended consequences of such a decision should be carefully evaluated. There may be a rise in illegal rabbit breeding and ownership, as well as a strain on animal shelters due to an increase in the surrendering or abandonment of rabbits.
4. **Expert consultation:** It is crucial to seek input of veterinary experts, animal welfare organisations, and other stakeholders to thoroughly evaluate the impact of including rabbits under the Domestic Animals Act in Victoria.

We respect the commitment and dedication of Rabbit Runway Legacy and its supports in advocating for this cause, however we believe it is essential to consider a balanced approach that addresses the welfare of rabbits while also considering the practicality of implementing new regulations.

Kind regards,

Alistair Miller
Manager

Health & Local Laws, Community Service Delivery

12. 1/8/2023 Greater Bendigo

Dear Dr Inglis,
Legislative changes regarding rabbits under the Domestic Animals Act 1994

Thank you for your recent letter in which you request support for legislative changes regarding rabbits under the Domestic Animals Act 1994

The Local Laws team has investigated and reviewed your request as President of the Rabbit Runaway Orphanage, for legislative change to the *Domestic Animals Act 1994* (the Act) to address backyard breeding of rabbits and the associated impacts on rabbit rescue organisations.

Currently the Act does not regulate or otherwise enforce any requirements associated with rabbits.

Unfortunately, there has been no details supplied of these proposed amendments and the City of Greater Bendigo (the City) has no opportunity to properly assess the impact of the proposed changes on service delivery or the broader community before providing a response.

The City view potential impacts from these changes could include:

- Increased Compliance burden for Council
- Community backlash from perceived overregulation and costs associated with compliance (microchipping etc.)
- A move from no regulation of rabbits to substantial regulation including the requirement for rabbits to be microchipped without a graduated process as was undertaken for dogs and cats
- Requesting increased regulation without demonstrating the impact of proposed legislation and broad based public support for the changes.

As such the City of Greater Bendigo cannot endorse the support of proposed changes to legislation at this time.

Your sincerely,

STACY WILLIAMS

DIRECTOR, HEALTHY COMMUNITIES AND ENVIRONMENTS