



Media release

The Hon Peter Walsh MP

Minister for Agriculture and Food Security
Minister for Water

Sunday 10 April 2011

Greater protection for cats and dogs in pounds

The Victorian Coalition Government has moved to abolish the limit on the number of days dogs and cats can be held at animal shelters or pounds before they have to be removed or euthanised.

Minister for Agriculture and Food Security Peter Walsh made the announcement while visiting the Lost Dogs' Home in North Melbourne today.

Mr Walsh said the time limit was removed as part of proposed revisions to Victoria's *Code of Practice for the Management of Dogs and Cats in Shelters and Pounds*.

"Under the current code of practice, the maximum time any animal for sale can be held at a shelter or pound is 28 days," Mr Walsh said.

"After that animals must be put down or removed permanently from the facility."

Mr Walsh said the previous Labor Government had ignored community concerns about the 28-day time limit.

"Despite a shift in community expectations, the code has not been revised since it was first introduced 14 years ago," Mr Walsh said.

"We have made these changes in consultation with key groups including the Lost Dogs' Home, the RSPCA, Animal Aid, the Cat Protection Society, Animal Welfare Science Centre and a number of local councils.

"The code has now been released for public comment to give the community a genuine opportunity to have a say."

Mr Walsh said the revisions also proposed to clarify requirements that any animal leaving a shelter must be micro-chipped, wormed, desexed and vaccinated.

"These changes provide greater clarity and more options for re-homing and protecting the welfare of animals by requiring them to be vaccinated and micro-chipped," Mr Walsh said.

Graeme Smith, who this week celebrated 25 years managing the Lost Dogs' Home, welcomed the opportunity to discuss the agreed minimum standards for the accommodation, management and care appropriate to the needs of dogs and cats housed in shelters and pounds.

"I am excited by the opportunity for vigorous discussion, both on an industry-based and public level, of the mandates by which animal shelters and pounds in Victoria are currently run," Mr Smith said.

"The long-term implications of a review of this nature have the potential to be immensely important."

Other proposed major changes to the code include:

- a requirement for a health management plan to be developed for the enterprise by a veterinarian;
- the number of staff required at shelters and pounds to be increased from one for every 50 animals to one for every 40 animals;
- a new section specifically relating to fostering of animals (and foster carers);
- changes to appropriate options upon admission of cats or dogs to pounds or shelters;
- a new requirement for puppies and kittens to be inspected more frequently; and
- a new section with specific consideration of animals housed long-term - specifically relating to their exercise and socialisation.

Mr Walsh said the community had until April 29 to make submissions in writing to the Department of Primary Industries.

To obtain a copy of the proposed code and find out how you can make comment go to www.dpi.vic.gov.au/sandpcode

Media contact: Stephanie Ryan 0488 441 820