

Media Release

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Minister for Regional Development
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VICTORIANS IN FAVOUR OF NEW ANIMAL WELFARE ACT

Victorians support modernising the Animal Welfare Act, with consultation on the Andrews Labor Government reforms showing widespread backing for key proposals that will further strengthen animal welfare provisions.

Public and industry feedback was sought on key proposals for a new Act to replace the *Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1986* (the POCTA Act). The proposals aim to improve existing provisions under the POCTA Act and support Victoria's reputation for high standards of animal welfare.

An engagement report outlining the consultation findings was released today, which summarised feedback from more than 1,200 individuals and organisations.

There was broad support for shifting the current focus of the POCTA Act from responding to cruelty after it has occurred, to a more proactive and preventative approach.

Another priority was to set minimum standards of care for animals, with many survey respondents advocating the establishment of clear benchmarks around the treatment of animals.

Animal sentience will be recognised for the first time in Victoria's animal welfare laws and the consultation allowed agricultural, animal welfare, recreational and other organisations to provide their views on this reform.

Views were also sought on a simplified and flexible legislative framework. Fishing, hunting, pest control, agriculture and other currently lawful activities will continue to be permitted under a new Act.

The consultation addressed improving the management of seized animals and supporting options that reduce the amount of time an animal is held while legal proceedings take place, such as transferring ownership.

Feedback received from the consultation will inform work to develop draft legislation for a new animal welfare Act, with an exposure draft to be released in 2022.

The community will again have an opportunity to provide their feedback before a Bill is introduced to Parliament. This timeframe provides for the robust development and legal drafting of this important new Act.

To view the full consultation summary report, visit engage.vic.gov.au.

Quotes attributable to Minister for Agriculture Mary-Anne Thomas

"The POCTA Act has supported Victoria's reputation for fostering a high standard of animal welfare for more than 30 years – and there is widespread support for strengthening it."

"It is time for a new and improved laws that reflects the needs of our modern agricultural industries and the expectation of the public."

"Modernising Victoria's animal protection legislation will help safeguard animal welfare while enabling our valuable food and fibre industries to function responsible and productively."