

DOG ACT — AMENDMENTS

710. Mr P. ABETZ to the Minister for Local Government:

Could the minister please advise the house when the changes to the Dog Act will come into effect and what benefits Western Australians can expect from these changes that have taken so long?

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Thank you very much, member for Girrawheen. I am hearing something about paws! Member for Southern River, please repeat the question.

Mr P. ABETZ: Could the minister please advise the house when the changes to the Dog Act will come into effect and what benefits Western Australians can expect from these changes that have taken so long?

Mr A.J. SIMPSON replied:

It is a great opportunity to update the house on the passing of the dog laws last week. It has been a long time coming. It has taken 37 years to finally get the new Dog Act into Western Australia.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Members!

Mr A.J. SIMPSON: It is almost as good as getting the cat laws passed!

The most important thing about the Dog Act is that it will go a long way to resolving a number of issues in our community. The legislation will go a long way to protecting the community. It acknowledges dangerous dogs in the community and protects the community from those dangerous dogs. To update the house, this is the first time that dogs will have to be microchipped. As at 1 November 2013, all new dogs will have to be microchipped and existing dog owners will have another two years until 2015 to have their dogs microchipped. It might not sound like much to get the microchipping done, but it will give local governments some data on where the dogs are and how many there are. This legislation is similar to the cat legislation, which goes down the same road to identify that.

Several members interjected.

Mr A.J. SIMPSON: One of the serious things in our community is that 5 000 cats each year, or 100 cats a week, are put down.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Members!

Point of Order

Mr P. ABETZ: I asked the question because I have kennels in my electorate. I would like to hear the answer. I have not heard more than two words.

The SPEAKER: Members! We have had a bit of fun with this question. Can we have some silence.

Questions without Notice Resumed

Mr A.J. SIMPSON: The legislation goes a long way to resolving a number of issues. It will give us some clear data on the number of dogs. We will also be able to protect the community from dangerous dogs and dogs of restricted breeds. Most importantly, under this legislation the community will be protected from these dogs. Members would have seen on the front page of *The Weekend West* two Saturdays ago an article that stated that an average of three children a week are admitted to Princess Margaret Hospital for Children with dog bites.

Ms J.M. Freeman interjected.

Mr A.J. SIMPSON: Yes, correct; it was the ones that were not their pets. Now we will be able to protect the community. The legislation provides a mechanism to protect the community. After 37 years in the making, we will finally get some real hard data. Under the Cat Act, we will be able to track the number of cats in the community from 1 November. All members in the house would agree that putting down 5 000 cats a year is not a good outcome for anybody. Desexing, microchipping and registering cats will go a long way towards regulating an industry that is not regulated.

I thank the opposition for its support of the Dog Amendment Bill when it went through Parliament last week after a long wait of 37 years. Local governments will have the opportunity to implement their own cat laws and to get information through the microchipping of dogs so that the industry can be regulated.