



BACKGROUND PAPER RESTRICTED BREEDS AND BREED SPECIFIC LEGISLATION

Please read in conjunction with AWLA Policy Statement on restricted breeds.

1. As a general principle, the temperament of a dog is not determined by its nominal breed.
2. The analysis and literature review of the most recent research in the area of breed attribution and dog behaviour conducted by the Australian Veterinary Association, 'Dangerous Dogs: a sensible solution- Policy and model legislative framework' [August 2012] provides substantiation for the view that the reasons dogs become dangerous to people are related to heredity, early experience, poor socialisation, health and inadvertent provocation.
3. Decisions about the fate of a dog on the basis of breed have the potential to result in unnecessary deaths of dogs and genuinely dangerous dogs remaining unidentified because:
 - It is often difficult to be certain of the breed of a dog on appearance alone,
 - DNA testing is currently unable to conclusively identify an individual dog as a member of a certain breed,
 - It is unclear how cross-breed dogs should be treated if the criterion is breed alone, and
 - Risk behaviours may be overlooked or ignored until it is too late if a dog is apparently of a breed that has a reputation for placidity.
4. Historically, there have been numerous breeds identified as dangerous or likely to be anti-social, which now enjoy a good reputation and are relied upon in service roles. This is consistent with the explanation that 'dog owners who desire this kind of dog will simply substitute another breed of dog of similar size, strength and perception of aggressive tendencies'. [AVA, August 2012] In other words, aggressive tendencies in dogs can be encouraged through selective husbandry and the treatment of a dog of any breed, in exactly the same way as placid and co-operative behaviours.