



**National Council of
Women of New Zealand**

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Wahine O Aotearoa

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20 June 2003

S03.47

**Submission to the Local Government and Environment Select Committee
on the Local Government Law Reform Bill (No 2) and
Supplementary Order Paper No 79**

The National Council of Women of New Zealand (NCWNZ) is an umbrella organisation representing 42 nationally organised societies. It has 34 branches throughout the country attended by representatives of those societies and some 150 other societies. The Council's function is to serve women, the family and the community at local, national and international levels through research, study, discussion and action.

NCWNZ thanks you for the opportunity to comment on this Bill. Unfortunately the timing of the document did not allow us to undertake full consultation with our branch members throughout the country. Members of the Social Issues Standing Committee and other interested parties have contributed to our response.

Introduction

NCWNZ members as concerned citizens generally agree with the content of this Bill and especially the new clauses contained in the SOP. Our members are concerned with the growing number of serious attacks by dogs, and the keeping of dogs for fighting purposes.

Specific Clauses

Clause 3

Our members agree that there is a need for the Territorial Authorities to adopt a policy on dogs that will include a new public safety criteria. There needs to be clearly defined areas where dogs are banned, other areas where they may be on a leash, and some areas where they may exercise freely under supervision.

Clause 7

We agree that people who are irresponsible with regard to dog ownership should become disqualified from owning a dog for five years, and then only if they can prove that they are going to conform to regulations such as registration, micro-chipping and fencing property.

Clause 11 & Clause 31

Our members strongly agree with the ban on the importation of dangerous breeds and types of dogs, including embryos and semen, as listed in Schedule 4. We also agree with the provision to enable further breeds or types of dogs to be added to Schedule 4 by Order in Council. All dogs currently of these breeds and types already in New Zealand should always be muzzled in public.

Clause 14 & Clause 29

We agree that Territorial Authorities be enabled to classify a dog as potentially dangerous if it is considered to pose a threat to any person, stock and protected wildlife because of the dog's behaviour or any characteristics typically associated with the dog's breed or type. And that it becomes an offence to allow potentially dangerous dogs to be at large unmuzzled.



**Clause 15**

While agreeing in principle to this clause we see that it is going to be the responsible dog owner who is going to be affected by having to not only register their dog but also pay vet fees for micro-chipping. Under the present Act there is still a great many unregistered dogs and these tend to be the ones that cause the most problems, but when they are picked up their owners cannot be traced.

Clause 17 & Clause 22

Although we see the need for and agree with the broader parameters allowing the seizure and impounding of unregistered and out of control dogs we wonder who is going to carry this out. Either Territorial Authorities will have to employ more rangers or 'not for profit' organisations like SPCA will be called upon to do this work. In either case, no doubt the extra costs will be met from dog registration fees, and therefore responsible dog owners will bear even further costs.

Clause 23

We agree that in the interests of public safety dogs should have to be kept within a securely contained portion of the owner's property. As this is not required to be implemented until July 2006 it will give owners time to prepare for this. We also propose that the number of dogs per household be restricted to two.

Increased Fines

We agree that there needs to be a deterrent feature in any penalty imposed, so the new fine rates are reasonable. Most agreed that the imprisonment for owners, whose dogs had made a serious injury attack, is also reasonable although some felt that three years was a little long.

Conclusion

The legislation is really for the 10% of dog owners who are irresponsible. On its own it is not going to stop vicious attacks by dogs therefore we see the need to educate, through schools and media and other promotions, responsible dog ownership and what is required to keep a dog. As part of this, people who do not own dogs, especially children, should be taught the right way to approach and handle dogs, both known and unknown to them. It has also been suggested by our members that when someone has been classified as the owner of a potentially dangerous dog, they should be required to take their dog to obedience training, thus giving the owner the skills to be a more responsible dog owner.

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National President

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Convener, Social Issues Standing Committee