

## ***MEDIA RELEASE***

### **BIRD GROUPS BREACH CODE OF PRACTICE**

Mornington Peninsula Aviculturist Society Companion Bird Breeders, Traders, Exhibitors and Experts, breached the Victorian Bird Welfare & Code of Practice for the Housing of Caged Birds at their annual Bird Sale & Expo at Skye on 25 May 2014. The event resembled a street market in the back streets of China, Indonesia or India.

- Most of the birds were physically and emotionally distressed and ill.
- Most birds were housed in small boxes/ cages which fit the bird exactly- many of the larger birds could not walk comfortably or stretch their wings - flying was not an option for any bird.
- There were bright lights and people hovering over the birds constantly resulting in distressed birds.
- The boxes/cages were mostly filthy and bird food was placed on the ground mixing with the bird's faeces.

The Expo sign stated: *Entry to the Birds Sale is subject to compliance with the VAC (Victorian Apicultural Council) Code of Practice. VAC Official Stewards failed to ban almost all stallholders from selling their birds. The Victorian Department of Environment and Primary Industries has a Code of Practice for the Housing of Caged Birds and Your Bird's Welfare Needs clearly states the legal requirements and conditions captive/ companion birds are expected to live in.*

**Birds are extremely intelligent with high level psychological and physical requirements. They must be treated respectfully and with empathy by their carers.**

**Animals Australia states:** "According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, there are more birds kept as companions in Australia than all dogs and cats put together.....We convince ourselves that the bird doesn't suffer as it knows no other life and was bred in captivity, yet we know that behaviours inherent to each species cannot be 'bred out', and that their ability to undertake them provides quality of life. For our own kind, being caged equates to imprisonment -- it is no different for any other species that shares this world with us."

**PETA states:** "There are now enormous bird factories where breeders warehouse thousands of parrots and other exotic birds and remove their offspring in order to sell them to pet stores. These birds are frequently confined to dirty, dimly lit cages, where they are unable to fully stretch their wings."

**RSPCA states:** "The cage should be positioned in a well-lit, sunny area where the birds will have frequent human contact and in which it will be safe to be released to exercise. The food and water receptacles should not be positioned beneath bird perches and any accidental contamination of the food and water by bird droppings must be removed immediately it is noticed."

*Below are extracts from a report published by the [Australian Institute of Crime](#) by [Samantha Bricknell](#):*

- Aviculture in Australia spans small, backyard aviaries to large breeding operations.

- The illegal trade also occurs within Australia's borders but information on this aspect of the trade is particularly sketchy. .... and particularly birds are again the object of the trade, with collectors, fanciers and aviculturists the main culprits.
- In 2004, a combined Commonwealth and state agency operation detected an extensive bird trafficking ring, with illegal aviaries based in four states (New South Wales, Victoria, Queensland and Western Australia), and links into southern Africa and southeast Asia (Corruption in regulatory agencies has been cited before. ....but no charges were laid..
- Two high-profile raids included the targeting of Chinese medicine retailers in Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane, where medicines sold were found to contain parts from at least three CITES-listed species and aviaries in four states, suspected of laundering wild caught birds and trafficking of native and exotic avian species.
- It is believed that the extensive bird breeding industry in Australia involves some co-mixing of captured wild birds and captive-bred birds, alongside inter-country smuggling activity.

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## **CALL FOR URGENT ACTION BY THE GOVERNMENT**

- 1. Government Review of Welfare Standards for Captive Caged Birds**
  - 2. Government Review of Breeders' Welfare Standards for Private and Commercial Exhibition Shows and Sales**
  - 3. Ban Australian Birds Sales and Expos until a formal monitoring process is in place by DEPI**
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### References:

Animals Australia: [http://www.animalsaustralia.org/issues/caged\\_birds.php](http://www.animalsaustralia.org/issues/caged_birds.php)

PETA: <http://www.peta.org/issues/companion-animal-issues/cruel-practices/caging-birds/>

RSPCA: <http://rspcavic.org/health-and-behaviour/birds/bird-care>

Australian Institute of Crime: <http://www.aic.gov.au/documents/2/1/1/%7B211B5EB9-E888-4D26-AED4-1D4E76646E4B%7Drpp109.pdf> (2010)

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