

MEDIA RELEASE

13 June, 2014

COMPANION BIRD WELFARE

Companion Bird Breeders and Bird Groups **BREACH** Victorian Bird Welfare & Code of Practice for the Housing of Caged Birds



Image 1: In Melbourne, Breeding Pair of Parrots crammed in small boxes



Image 2: In Melbourne, Eclectus Parrot selling at \$4000 sits in small cage unable to walk and fly- seeds thrown on box floor amongst the bird's faeces

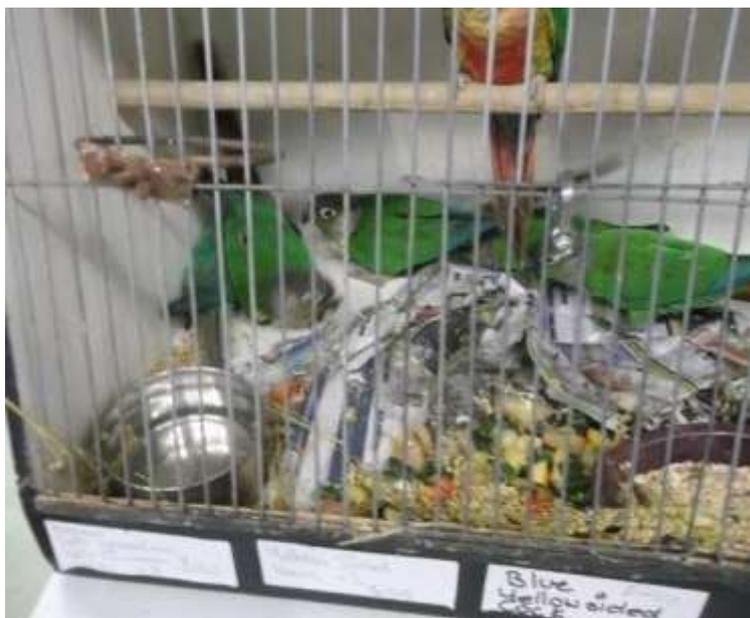


Image 3: In Melbourne, Parrots for sale- cage base dirty with food thrown on wet paper whilst birds hide from fear in corner



Image 4: Parrots for sale in Kolkata, India

In Melbourne, the Mornington Peninsula Aviculturist Society held their annual Bird Sale & Expo at Skye, on Sunday 25 May 2014. <http://www.morningtonpeninsulaaviculturalsociety.com/Bird%20sale%20flyer%2025%20May%202014.pdf>. Bird Sales are conducted weekly at various venues around Victoria (and Australia), where companion/ captive bird breeders and existing and potential companion bird owners go to buy, trade and sell birds.

But the event on Sunday looked more like a street market in the back streets of China/ Indonesia/ India.

‘The birds’ screeching could be heard from outside the building and the fear in the birds’ body behaviour and eyes was physically obvious:

- Most of the birds were physically and emotionally distressed and ill.
- All 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 even- flying was not an option for any bird.
- There were bright lights and people hovering over the birds constantly- no privacy or quiet for the birds
- The boxes/cages were filthy and some rusty. In most cases, bird food was placed under the bird's perch and on the ground, where the bird's faeces would be also’.

There was a large sign (see pic below) at the expo stating: *Entry to the Birds Sale is subject to compliance with the VAC (Victorian Apicultural Council) Code of Practice. VAC Official Stewards failed to fix the welfare issues and ban stallholders from selling their birds. ‘The expo should have been cancelled by the Official Stewards due to the bird welfare breaches’.*

The Victorian Department of Environment and Primary Industries has a *Code of Practice for the Housing of Caged Birds* (<http://www.depi.vic.gov.au/pets/other-pets/birds/code-of-practice-for-the-housing-of-caged-birds>) and *Your Bird's Welfare Needs* (www.depi.vic.gov.au/pets/other-pets/birds/your-birds-welfare-needs) clearly states the legal requirements and conditions captive/ companion birds are expected to live in. These terms and conditions were not met by any of the participants at the bird expo.

‘Birds are highly 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’.

According to PETA US: ‘.... ‘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.’

According to the RSPCA: ‘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. A portable cage stand permits the birds to be repositioned for their comfort. Appropriate perches of varying size must be provided as well as well-secured food and water troughs. 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’.

In a report published by the **AIC- Australian Institute of Crime, by Samantha Bricknell:**

- ‘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.
- 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. Legislative ambiguities, coupled with an over-complex regulatory system, have been cited as possible facilitators of the illegal activity.

- Aviculture in Australia, which spans small, backyard aviaries to large breeding operations involving hundreds of birds.
- Examples of organised criminal activity are limited but it does occur. For example, 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 (ACBPS 2004b). Thousands of birds and eggs, both native and exotic, were seized, with one offender employed with a WA authority responsible for the regulation of that state's aviculture industry. Corruption in regulatory agencies has been cited before.but no charges were laid (Senate Standing Committee on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport 1998).
- On occasion, raids are undertaken. 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.
- Between 2002–03 and 2006–07, over 26,500 wildlife and wildlife products were seized by Australian authorities. Most of these seizures were described as 'minor' as they did not lead to formal investigation or prosecution.

URGENTLY REQUIRED:

- **Ban Australian Birds Sales and Expos**
- **Government Review of Welfare Standards for Captive Caged Birds**
- **Government Review of Breeders' Welfare Standards for Private and Commercial Exhibition Shows and Sales**

For further information and further photos, contact:



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References:

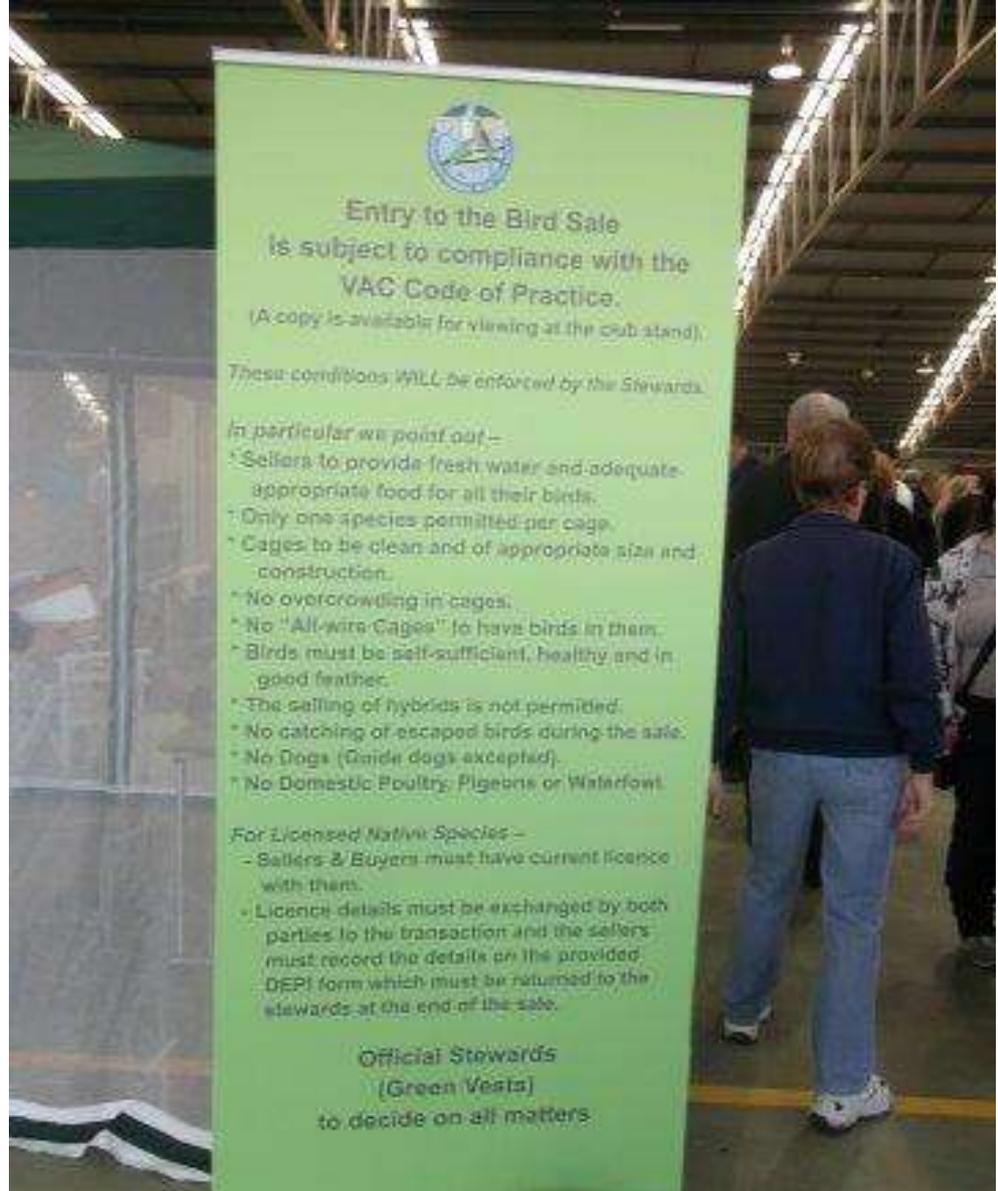
Animals Australia: http://www.animalsaustralia.org/issues/caged_birds.php

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)

Image 5: VAC Code of Practice sign at Show



Below- Image 6: At Melbourne, Parrots for sale in small rusty cage boxes

