

NEWS

Lawyers come to animals' aid

PET PROTECTION
WORDS: LUKE ROYES

ANIMAL owners who fall foul of the RSPCA, Queensland now have some formidable legal representatives at their disposal.

More than 130 Brisbane legal professionals have signed on to represent the victims of cruelty and neglect that come to the attention of the RSPCA, joining the constantly expanding membership of Brisbane Lawyers Educating and Advocating for Tougher Sentences (BLEATS).

City solicitor Tracy-Lynne Geysen is credited with establishing BLEATS in 2007 after she heard about the death of a dog hanged from a tree.

"I think slowly but surely the penalties are getting closer to community expectations and the work BLEATS has done has contributed to that," she said.

In August, Ms Geysen's firm, TLG Lawyers, launched what is believed to be Australia's first animal law firm, taking custody, dangerous dog declaration and compensation disputes to the courtroom.

In May, RSPCA Queensland launched its Justice for Animals campaign, asking people to use their signature to show support for tougher sentences in animal cruelty and neglect cases.

It was handed over to Ms Geysen yesterday with 13,000 signatures.

In the past financial year, 11,718 cruelty complaints were investigated and 8822 animals were rescued, a figure on a par with previous years.

RSPCA senior inspector Tracey Jackson said, while difficult to calculate, it's estimated the work of BLEATS saved them at least \$500,000 in court fees.

■ Visit www.bleats.com.au or www.rspcaqld.org.au

CITY NEWS

Seized puppies need care



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PLEASE HELP: RSPCA animal behaviourist Fiona Blake with one of the seized dogs at the Fairfield shelter. **Picture: Renae Droop**



THE RSPCA is asking generous animal lovers to help care for 240 dogs, many of them pregnant, seized from desperate conditions in a puppy mill.

The animals arrived at the society's Fairfield shelter after they were seized in the largest ever seizure of animals by Biosecurity Queensland at Wondai.

Deputy chief veterinary officer Dr Rick Symons said the raid followed a series of visits to the property by Biosecurity Queensland officers.

"The decision to remove the dogs was taken with the welfare needs of the animals in mind," he said.

The shelter also needs volunteers.

■ Visit www.city-news.com.au to see a complete list of what is needed to care for the dogs and puppies.