

PARLIAMENTARY AND PUBLIC-INTEREST NOTICE

Pet Food in Australia: A 35-Year Public-Interest Failure

Why the April 2026 decision did not answer the real questions

Prepared by: Tom Lonsdale, veterinarian

Purpose: Notice to all Australian Federal MPs and Senators

Status: Public-interest allegations and documented questions requiring independent investigation

Executive notice

After 35 years of warnings and evidence, Parliament is now on notice of serious unresolved allegations concerning preventable animal suffering, consumer deception, institutional capture and environmental cost. The Agriculture Ministers' decision of 24 April 2026 did not establish that commercial pet foods are safe. It addressed a narrow incident-regulation question and left the foundational public-interest case uninvestigated.

The case Parliament must confront

Since 1991, veterinarians Tom Lonsdale and Breck Muir have repeatedly warned governments and veterinary institutions about the junk pet-food, veterinary and professed animal-welfare alliance. *Multi-Billion-Dollar Pet Food Fraud* assembles the resulting clinical, historical, professional and parliamentary record. [1] The issue is not confined to contaminated batches. It concerns the design and legitimacy of the everyday feeding system.

1. **Foreseeable animal cruelty:** The record describes widespread dental and periodontal suffering, associated systemic disease and repeated treatment of preventable consequences, while the foundational dietary comparison remains unperformed.
2. **Alleged multi-billion-dollar consumer fraud:** Owners buy products represented as complete, balanced, wholesome and scientifically validated, then pay again for dental procedures, diagnostics, medicines and treatment. Whether those representations are misleading has never received the investigation warranted by their scale.
3. **Abuse of process and environmental cost:** The safety review did not cost chronic disease, industrial processing, packaging and transport, pharmaceutical consequences or lost opportunities to use feral and other natural resources. Those omissions preclude any credible assessment of the system's total public cost.
4. **A profound policy contradiction:** Humans are encouraged to favour natural, minimally processed food, while industrial pet food formulations are normalised through veterinary education and widely promoted and sold through veterinary clinics. The commercial relationships underpinning that contradiction require examination.

AGSOC: the latest act of closure

Ministers agreed that regulation was 'not warranted at this time, based on available evidence'. [2] Yet the analysis principally counted acute serious incidents reported through a voluntary, veterinarian-only system acknowledged to suffer severe under-reporting and an inability to determine trends. [3] The wider questions above were not examined. Reports completed in 2021 and 2023 were not exposed to public scrutiny before the decision. [4][5]

THE EFFECT | The decision now gives official imprimatur to existing arrangements and risks killing off the safety question for years—even though the principal allegations were never investigated. AGSOC is evidence of the larger failure; it must not be allowed to define its boundaries.

REGULATORY CAPTURE, GOVERNMENT AND PARLIAMENTARY ACTION

Apparent regulatory capture must be investigated

The available record describes interlocking commercial and professional relationships connecting dominant manufacturers—including Mars, Nestlé and Colgate-Palmolive—with veterinary education, research, clinical practice, professional communications and animal-welfare institutions. Aligned interests and repeated institutional deference create at least a serious appearance and risk of regulatory capture. This is not, by itself, proof of unlawful collusion; it is a compelling reason for an inquiry able to obtain documents and examine witnesses. [1][6]

A contradiction at the highest level: Government and Mars

In October 2024 the Prime Minister and the Minister for Climate Change and Energy announced more than \$17 million in ARENA support for renewable-energy infrastructure at Mars Petcare’s Wodonga factory. The Prime Minister’s media release identified it as Australia’s largest pet-food manufacturing site and named Pedigree and Whiskas. [7] Support for renewable technology may have merit. The governance question is whether longstanding animal-welfare, consumer and institutional allegations were considered before Mars was treated as an uncontroversial government partner.

Correspondence published by Tom Lonsdale records repeated notices to government and the subsequent referral of the matter back to the Department of Agriculture—the very administrative system whose conduct and capture were being challenged. [8] Mars’s reach across food, veterinary care, diagnostics, research and education makes it a necessary starting point for investigation, not a corporation to be prejudged without due process. [6]

Questions Parliament must compel answers to

1. Who framed and approved the pet-food review and AGSOC process, what evidence and warnings were excluded, and what interests or institutional dependencies influenced the participants?
2. What did governments, manufacturers, veterinary schools, professional bodies and animal-welfare organisations know about periodontal and systemic disease, and what did they fail to investigate?
3. What representations were made to consumers about health, completeness, scientific validation and professional endorsement—and were those representations supported by appropriate lifetime comparative evidence?
4. What are the full animal-welfare, consumer, veterinary, environmental and opportunity costs, and who benefited while animals, owners and the wider community paid the price?

EVIDENTIARY POSITION | Parliamentarians are not being asked to accept these allegations on trust. They are being asked to ensure that allegations of this magnitude are independently investigated rather than extinguished by a process that never examined them.

Action required of every MP and Senator

1. **Establish an empowered inquiry:** Support referral to a Senate or parliamentary inquiry able to compel documents and witnesses.
2. **Preserve and produce the record:** Obtain all AGSOC, departmental and ministerial briefs, communications, consultation records, declarations of interest and dealings with manufacturers and associated institutions.
3. **Commission independent assessment:** Examine animal welfare, consumer representations, dietary suitability, veterinary and corporate influence, and environmental consequences outside the existing industry–veterinary framework.
4. **State a position:** Advise whether you support such an inquiry—or explain why allegations of this magnitude should remain unexamined.

Primary sources and evidence record

[\[1\] Multi-Billion-Dollar Pet Food Fraud](#)

[\[3\] Report to Ministers and cost-benefit analysis](#)

[\[5\] 2021 Government response to Senate inquiry](#)

[\[7\] Prime Minister’s Mars Wodonga media release](#)

[\[2\] Agriculture Ministers’ Meeting, 24 April 2026](#)

[\[4\] 2021 Pet Food Review Working Group report](#)

[\[6\] Mars and the Industrial Pet Food Experiment](#)

[\[8\] Published correspondence with PM&C](#)