

Inquiry into the Animal Care and Protection Amendment Bill 2022

Submission No: 15
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Submitter Comments:

My name is Annett Finger and I am a client of Beautiful Beasts dog training and behaviour modification in Melbourne, Victoria. I have consulted Stian (head trainer of Beautiful Beasts) to help me my rescue border collie cross Atticus. Atticus has had a bit of a rough start and while he is great in many ways, he is aggressive towards puppies and other, socially awkward dogs. Stian observed Atticus and explained to me that he thinks this is over-correcting behaviour. It is what was done to Atticus as a pup by other adult dogs and he now thinks, this is how you correct other dogs. He then suggested ways to retrain Atticus. We have used different ways of restraint and negative reinforcement. It has taken a while, and I might never be able to fully trust Atticus with puppies, but he now responds to my 'leave it!' rather than escalating aggression. I have also upped my game with him, his recall and some agility training, which improves our bond. Stian alerted me about the current bill being proposed in Queensland, and the lack of due course given to the professional dog trainers and public who utilise various negative reinforcement tools. The lack of transparency in this matter is highly concerning to me, and as a citizen of Australia, I oppose the proposed amendments around the banning of tools. Beautiful Beasts is a company that promotes and teaches balanced dog training, utilising the full spectrum of operant conditioning, and the use of aversive tools. The statements made that aversive tools inflict pain, and make dogs fearful and aggressive, is simply not true. I have seen with my own eyes the efficiency of many of such tools – including electric collars, slip leashes and martingales. These tools can be used to create aversive events, which the dog the learns to avoid, so we can begin a circle of positive reinforcement around for alternative behaviours. Altering extreme behaviour can not be done with positive reinforcement alone, but learning how to use these tools properly, has helped both myself and my dog live better lives together. I am also very concerned about the general nature in which the bill has been written, basically making it possible to ban not just the prong collar, but any restraining device. This would, in my opinion, lead to a complete breakdown in dog ownership, as the only thing we would be able to do, is walk every dog off leash! That is simply not viable and downright irresponsible to even suggest. Which is why I have decided to submit my opposition to this proposal. Many thanks for considering my submission! Annett Finger & Atticus