

**Inquiry into the Animal Care and Protection Amendment Bill 2022**

<b>Submission No:</b>	448
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<b>Submitter Comments:</b>	

28<sup>th</sup> May 2022

Diane Andrell

State Development and Regional Industries Committee

Dear Parliamentary Committee,

**Submission on proposed amendments to the *Animal Care and Protection Act 2001***

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission on the proposed amendments.

My name is Diane Andrell. I have worked in the pet industry as a retail supervisor for over 4 years and am currently employed within a pet dog grooming salon. My partner and I are the proud owners of a 2 year old female German Shepherd. We have owned her since she was 8 weeks old. We have been regulars at our weekend pet dog training classes since first registering with them almost 2 years ago. Throughout the past 2 years we have also competed in canine nosework competitions, in house (with our training group) Rally competitions and also have attended fortnightly hydro therapy sessions with our dog to help with her physical conditioning.

I am strongly against the proposed amendments to the *Animal Care and Protection Act 2001* (detailed below).

There are three major points that I strongly object to

- The Government has not followed its own best practice guide for the amendment of legislation. As a result, key stakeholders and the wider community have not been afforded the opportunity to be consulted on the proposed amendments to the Act.

*The Queensland Government Guide to Better Regulation May 2019* states that:

- Consulting effectively with affected stakeholders at all stages of the regulatory cycle
- Ensuring that government action is effective and proportional to the issue being addressed
- Considering a range of feasible policy options including self-regulatory, co-regulatory and nonregulatory approach
- Adopting the option that generates the greatest net benefit for the community

**Evidence that the government has not followed it's own best practice guidelines:**

I refer to the 'REVIEW OF THE ANIMAL CARE AND PROTECTIONS ACT 2001 CONSULTATION OUTCOMES REPORT', prepared by the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries and published in October 2021.

I refer to page 37 of the report, section titled 'Relevant E-Petitions'. It is acknowledged that *"there were six animal welfare related e-petitions that were tabled in the Legislative Assembly during the consultation period. Issues raised in these e-petitions (listed below) are also being considered as part of the ACPA review process"*.

Of these six petitions, the relevant subject matter of three of these petitions was also involved as part of the initial discussion paper; as such, stakeholders and the community were provided the opportunity to give feedback on these matters. I have included the 3 relevant petitions below:

- Make suitable shelter mandatory for all farmed animals (Petition no. 3499-21)
- Tethering of dogs must be prohibited (Petition no. 3501-21)
- Continue the use of all methods, including dogs, to control feral pigs (Petitions no. 3515-21)

There remains three relevant e-petitions, for which there was no correlating subject matter in the initial discussion paper:

- Ban the use of shock collars on dogs (Petition no. 3526-21)
- Illegal to import – Prohibit the use of prong collars in Queensland (Petition no. 3530-21)
- Prohibit the use of choke collars in Queensland (Petition no. 3531-21)

These three petitions were made to the Hon. Mark Furner, with closing dates in May 2021 and a response due date in June 2021. I wish to note that, since the closing of these petitions, there has been no opportunity provided to relevant stakeholders or the community to be surveyed on these matters. All three petitions listed above closed on 23<sup>rd</sup> May 2021. The closing date for feedback on the review of the *Animal Protection and Care Act (2021)*, as details in the Outcomes Report, was 21<sup>st</sup> May 2021.

With reference to the *"Animal Care and Protections Amendment Bill 2022 Explanatory Notes"*, page 33, section titled *"Consultation"*. The use of prong collars or any other restraint based tools is in fact missing from the key consultation outcomes of the discussion paper.

It is of concern to me that the following has been stated in the bill (I refer to page 18), given adequate community consultation has not been completed:

*New section 37A allows for the possession of additional types of collars or devices to be prescribed. The amendment is required because continuous developments in collars and devices for animals means that some existing and new collars and devices become unacceptable to the community"*

- Lack of genuine community consultation means the impacts on the community have

not been adequately assessed.

The “Queensland Government Guide to Better Regulation May 2019” states that *‘The depth of analysis and consultation undertaken for a proposal should be proportionate to the complexity and significance of the problem and the size of the potential impacts’*.

To quote from page 14 of the bill *“New Section 37A prohibits the possession of a prong collar or another restraint device prescribed by regulation, unless the person has a reasonable excuse”*

The proposed banning of restraint-based training tools presents a number of adverse impacts on the community, which have not been considered due to insufficient community consultation (as evidenced above). To quote from The Queensland Government Guide to Better Regulation May 2019, these include:

### **Competition Impacts**

The wider dog training community will be impacted in many ways. By limiting the use of tools in our industry, all trainers will be limited to the use of only one quadrant of scientifically researched and proven learning techniques, this being the quadrant of positive reinforcement. It has been well documented that behaviour can be learnt using this quadrant, however it will never be able to stop undesired behaviours or communicate to the dog that behaviours can have negative outcomes and are undesirable. It also limits our dog training professionals to limiting consumers to only being targeted by select training methods, some of these may not be suited to the person or their dog. Our trainer regularly quotes "train the dog in front of you", all of our pet dogs are living, breathing and cognitive creatures. Banning certain training tools is attempting to create a one size fits all methodology, which does not exist in this industry.

### **Social and environmental impacts**

From my own personal experience, the use of these tools in questions provides myself (the educated handler of the dog) the confidence to be able to control any unforeseen behaviours whilst out in public if necessary. If these tools are removed from our use, I fear there would be an increase in dog related incidences, as dogs with behaviour issues will be kept locked up within the confines of their property, as taking the dog for a walk or out in public would be too much hassle for the handler. The inturn will create a lack of physical and mental exercise as well as a lack of biological fulfilment which is necessary for any dog. This would likely result in an unpredictable dog which will find an outlet in other undesirable and unsafe behaviours. The welfare concern of having a dog not receive adequate exercise or biological fulfilment is one of greater concern than that of using tools which will give these dogs those freedoms.

As pet dog ownership skyrockets (particularly following the COVID-19 years) so does the reported accounts of dog attacks on humans, livestock and other pets. It makes no sense to remove these tools which can help reduce these attacks. This would also require a good education campaign to the general public.

Rather than acting on behalf of the general uneducated bias of the public purely based on the 'look' of a tool, accurate scientific data, workings and use of the tool with practical demonstration would build knowledge and understanding around the design and use of such training methods and tools. Removing emotions and inserting evidence based arguments is vital.

- Conclusions drawn regarding the restraint based tools, specifically the prong collar, have been made based on unsubstantiated research without the consultation of key stakeholders.

I refer to page 25 of the bill, which states:

*“Imposing restrictions on the use of prong collars and other devices is justified as they are considered to be inappropriate as a training aid because they cause pain and fear in dogs which is used as a punishment. Research has shown that using aversive training methods including the use of prong collars can cause pain and distress and can compromise the dog’s welfare”*

I would request a more comprehensive review of tools be considered prior to drawing such conclusions, as the above statement demonstrates a lack of understanding of behavioural science and the means in which training tools are most commonly used as a means of Negative Reinforcement (guiding the dog towards the correct behaviour) not Punishment. Adequate consultation with key stakeholders, including but not limited to:

- Members of the Queensland Government currently utilising these training tools, including Police and Military units
- Certified Animal Training Professionals, working to improve standards of pet ownership and care, community safety and education around responsible pet training and ownership
- Animal Welfare Organisations
- Members of the public who own pets or have pet dogs living in their community

Would generate a more comprehensive understanding of the use of training tools in behavioural modification and the betterment of animal welfare.

I refer to page 3 of the bill, which states:

*Prohibiting inhumane practices*

*The Bill amends the ACPA and introduces new offences which will prohibit the inhumane practice of:*

- *Possessing or using a prong collar, which is designed to bruise or pierce an animal's skin or another prescribed restraint on an animal*

The above statement is factually incorrect – the tool is not **designed** to bruise or pierce an animal's skin. I refer further to page 25 of the bill, which states:

*If used incorrectly, prong collars can also cause physical injuries, such as bruising, scratching, and punctures to the skin of the dog. Over time, this can lead to scar*

*tissue developing on the dog. In extreme but rare cases, prong collars have been associated with spinal cord injuries and other severe injuries.*

This refers specifically to the **incorrect** use of the prong collar. It is reasonable to state that incorrect use of **any** tool (for example a leash, flat collar or harness) has the potential to cause injury. It is also reasonable to state that **correct** use of the prong collar does not cause injury to the dog.

From my previous 2 years owning a high drive German Shepherd, we have utilised a variety of different training tools to help us through different periods in her life and development. All training tools we have used were thoroughly explained to us from our professional trainers. Not once has our dog been harmed by one of these tools. Any time we take her out for a walk, we always receive compliments from the public on how well behaved she is and how happy she looks. I can walk our dog by myself with any of the training tools we have been taught to use and feel completely confident in my ability to handle her given any situation.

Additionally, it is of great concern to myself that, as per the working of the bill above, the use of potentially **any and all** restraint based tools is considered to be inhumane. I am especially concerned by this wording given key stakeholders and members of the community have not been given room to provide feedback on this.

My understanding is that an individual can currently be convicted of animal cruelty for the misuse of any training tool. I would request that current and historical data on such convictions be cited and included in the consideration of amendments to regulation.

Based on the above, I would request that amendments to the use / availability / legality of tools not be considered as part of the proposed amendments to the Act, until such time as best practice process is followed and the community is consulted on the proposed changes.

Yours Sincerely

Diane Andrell