

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

<b>Submission No:</b>	492
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<b>Submitter Comments:</b>	

Julie Lymer

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29<sup>th</sup> May 2002

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 Julie Lymer, I participate in weekly obedience classes with my dog and I am strongly against the proposed amendments to the Animal Care and Protection Act 2001 (detailed below).

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.

Lack of community consultation means the impacts on the community have not been adequately assessed. Conclusions drawn regarding restraint based tools, specifically the prong collar, have been made based on unsubstantiated research and without consultation of key stakeholders.

I have grown up with working packs on cattle properties so am not inexperienced with dogs. I have owned a GSDxHuskyxKelpie mix for approximately 4 years who started with me as a foster through a rescue. She has high prey drive, stubborn nature and enough strength to pull my 95kg frame off my feet. I have had trainers refuse to work with her, been told that she just is what she is, tried a whole year of “positive only” training and I still wasn’t able to confidently take my dog for a walk. Two sessions with a balanced trainer and a prong collar and we were able to walk along a high traffic area.

I know how incredibly frustrating it was to have a dog that I couldn’t manage and the best solution trainers seemed to have was to just not walk her. She is now a confident, calm, happy dog who gets out every day and goes for a walk in the park and visits a café.

I would fear that removal of this tool will result in more uncontrolled dogs, more jumping to medication or behavioural euthanasia, more injuries to owners, and/or more dogs thrown in back yards with no enrichment. This presents more of a welfare concern than the possible abuse of a tool.

Conclusions drawn regarding restraint based tools, specifically the prong collar, have been made based on unsubstantiated research and without meaningful 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.

In my personal experience, my dog pulls on a flat collar and chokes herself regularly, placing a lot of pressure on her trachea, I’ve attempted to use a halti and that was very stressful for her, I’ve also used harnesses which have rubbed the skin and caused irritation. I believe that harnesses alter the normal gait and cause damage as a result. The prong places pressure all the way around the neck and since the

dog believes that she is in control, she understands that she can relieve the pressure. This style of communication works for her when seemingly nothing else did.

Additionally it is of great concern to myself that, as per the wording 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

Julie Lymer