

Inquiry into the Animal Care and Protection Amendment Bill 2022

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Bark Busters International

30 May 2022

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.

I am writing on behalf of our organisation in regards to the proposed legislation bill where:

This proposed bill is looking to make significant changes on which the community of professional dog trainers, dog walkers and the community at large was not consulted. The government is looking to change legislation so that restraint-based tools can be banned at any point

Possession or use of prohibited devices

(1) A person must not possess any of the following devices (each a prohibited device) unless the person has a reasonable excuse—

(a) a prong collar;

(b) another restraint device prescribed by regulation

Our Credentials

We are a Home Dog Training and an International Company - Founded in Australia and Australian Owned

We are the largest of our kind in the world, with over 350 full time professional trainers and the only dog training company that is established in 6 major countries: Australia, New Zealand, United States, Canada, United Kingdom and Japan.

As one the Founders and the Head Trainer of Bark Busters trainers my background in dog training is vast and as follows: Instructor German Shepherd League Illawarra, Chief Instructor Shoalhaven Dog Training Club, trained dogs for stage plays and TV commercials, Obedience Competition (reaching Australian Obedience Champion with my German Shepherd Taemor Lord Monty).



Tracking, scent discrimination and obedience. I have worked with many disabled people, deaf and blind.

Was Manager of an RSPCA shelter 10 years and now Director of Bark Busters for 33 years. Lecture on dog behaviour, written and have had published 7 books on dog training and psychology.

Bark Busters was started after I had spent 10 years as Manager of a regional RSPCA shelter in NSW, where I tired of seeing dogs surrendered for common behavioural issues.

Bark Busters was founded in 1989 and has now spread to 6 countries with over 350 trainers worldwide.

We are not opposed to the review of welfare legislation which is in the best interests of the dogs and humans in our wider communities. However, two elements of the proposed changes detailed as follows have given us cause for concern:

This proposed bill is looking to make significant changes on which the community of professional dog trainers, dog walkers and the community at large was not consulted. The government is looking to change legislation so that restraint-based tools can be banned at any point in the future.

Possession or use of prohibited devices

(1) A person must not possess any of the following devices (each a prohibited device) unless the person has a reasonable excuse—

(a) a prong collar;

(b) another restraint device prescribed by regulation

We have operated in Queensland for 30 years

Bark Busters currently has 6 full time professional trainers operating in Queensland and we have been operating there for over 30 years.

There has been no discussions with professional dog trainers by law makers in regards to the changes being proposed.

We are concerned that the legislators have not involved any of the professional dog trainers nor any of the dog training clubs and dog enthusiasts etc. Neither has Bark Busters been approached in regards to this matter.

We do NOT use Prong collars

To be clear, **none** of our people use or are **allowed** to use **Prong Collars**, but we know some trainers in the industry who do use them and we are not here to judge them. They are professionals and their voices should be heard.



They should be allowed to state their case. Some Police dog handlers use them too; to call an adrenalized dog off an offender.

I lived and ran Bark Busters in the USA for 5 years where no collar is banned and still we don't see a need to use **Prong Collars** or their like nor **Electric Collars**. We simply won't use them, so this is not about the **Prong Collar**.

Our concern is in regards to the broad statement in the act in regards to the word 'restraints' as that is a very broad statement.

If the person or persons drafting this legislation, has little or no knowledge about why the word 'restraints' is drawing a long bow, then investigation needs to be undertaken as there is literally no dog walking or training equipment that would fall outside of the definition.

Restraints are anything at all that you want to place on a dog and attach a lead to:

Fixed Collar with a leash attached, restrains a dog.

Halti and all head collars-restraint

Martingales-restraint

Slip Collars-restraint

Harnesses of all kinds etc.-restraint

You will always have debate when you open up the subject of 'dog training'. Some folks think dogs should have complete free range and the words 'training' or 'restraint' is abhorrent to them, they don't think dogs need any training at all. We all know how many people and children lose their lives daily around the world because the owners had no idea of the creature they share their lives with.

Some folks are not in full receipt of all the facts and how dog owners struggle to control their large dogs and why frail or disabled person will need a **restraint** of some kind to control an out of control large dog. They might still not be convinced by what we encounter daily, but the same people think the same about children.

The shelters and rescues are full of dogs that people failed to control.

The biggest reason for surrender and euthanasia of dogs where animal welfare groups in Australia are concerned are because of behavioural issues.

No known cruelty among professional dog trainers in Australia

We do not believe that the average Australian dog trainers are cruel or have a desire to hurt or harm dogs, we believe they all have a common goal to save dogs. Their heart is in the right place and we all have a passion for dogs and care about their welfare. There might be some that operate behind closed doors, but we have no knowledge of them and have never encountered any.

**Desperate dog owners try desperate things**

Some uninformed dog owners search for all matter of things on the internet in their desperate need to address their dog's behaviour, don't know how you can address that. These desperate dog owners largely act without seeking professional advice.

All professional dog trainers, dog training clubs, groups and dog walkers etc. should be given an opportunity to have their say. This is not about what tools we each do or do not like to use personally. This is about the government not following their own process and giving us the chance to be heard and looking out for the best interests of the dogs and people in our communities.

Bark Busters would be willing to attend any meeting or provide input where needed.

We would be willing to attend any meeting or speak at any forum if invited.

Kind regards

Sylvia Wilson

Sylvia Wilson- Director/Founder

Bark Busters International