

Inquiry into the Animal Care and Protection Amendment Bill 2022

Submission No: 694
Submitted by: Meng-Ping Hsu
Publication: Make my submission and my name public
Attachments: See attachment
Submitter Comments:

30 May 2022

RE: Animal Care and Protection Amendment Bill Call for Submission, 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 to the *Animal Care and Protection Act 2001*. Although the intention of the Bill is for the welfare of animals, I am strongly opposed to the proposed amendments and urge the Committee members to seek further consultation with key stakeholders, including professional trainers with experience and expertise in using restraining tools, and the pet owners who are currently using such tools.

As a dog owner of two large and powerful breeds, I rely on the use of restraining tools, specifically the prong collar, to communicate effectively with my dogs with the least possible amount of force exerted. Like many people, the welfare of my dogs is of utmost importance to me and I frowned upon the use of prong collars at first glance. We've all seen the image of a dog with puncture wounds around his neck, supposedly from the use of the prong collar. I even vowed to only use harnesses when I brought my puppy home as the thought of 'controlling' a dog via his neck was to me, a form of cruelty.

However, as my dogs matured and I started advanced training, I found that the use of harnesses was not achieving the level of communication desired. In my first session with a professional trainer, I was introduced to the slip leash, another restraining tool, and the concept of leash pressure. And although things improved dramatically, I had to think long and hard before committing myself to this tool. However, I still found this tool ineffective at times, e.g. when another dog is approaching and you want to turn your dog away. It was with my second trainer that I was introduced to the prong collar. It took solid month of research before I decided to give it a go. Once purchased, I even tried the prong collar on myself (including pulling on the leash) to make sure I was not hurting my dogs. The first time I used the prong collar on my dogs was a game changing moment and we have been training using the prong collar for about six months now. I recognise that this is a stage in our training and this tool is only temporary.

Other anecdotal evidence from Australian dog community groups online has shown me how powerful this tool can be with proper training by a professional dog trainer on correct use. Owners of reactive dogs can improve and change their dog's behaviour, aggressive dogs can learn to coexist with humans and other animals, and dogs that are on death row for behavioural issues can be given a second chance.

As such, I would request a more comprehensive review of tools be considered prior to drawing conclusions stated in the Bill. These training tools are not used as a form of punishment, and instead most commonly used as a means of Negative Reinforcement (guiding the dog towards the correct behaviour). Further consultation with key stakeholders should include 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

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

It is reasonable to state that incorrect use of **any** training 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.

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