

8th July 2022

To Whom it May Concern,

My name is Caitlyn Hitchens and have been a kennel hand for one and a half years with Huon Valley K9. I have been training my own dog for three and a half years with the help of Huon Valley K9. I have had both private lessons and attended group classes and enjoy training and spending time with my dog and also the dogs I work with.

I am strongly against the amendment to section 8(2) of the act which will specifically ban the use of pronged (or pinch) collars and make it an animal cruelty offence to use one.

The Pinch Collar is specifically designed to distribute pressure evenly around the neck of a dog and to prevent neck and tracheal injuries. For strong, powerful dogs, the amount of safe control that these collars can provide is invaluable.

Pinch collars, when used correctly, are gentle and effective tools for training some dogs. Pinch collars are a life saving tool and leads to better animal welfare outcomes. They can help fix a wide variety of behavioural issues in a short time, especially in cases where positive reinforcement training alone has failed. The reality of the animal world is that positive reinforcement can only bring so much success and most dogs require a different approach.

The proposed banning of pinch collars presents a number of adverse impacts on the community. This ban will limit access to the wider dog training market by limiting the options available to responsible dog owners. The removal of these tools prevents dog owners training in a way that is one of the most gentle ways you can train a dog. For many dogs, positive reinforcement only training is not effective, and balanced training is required to correct unwanted and dangerous behaviours.

For dogs and owners who rely on this tool as a training aide to help with these behaviours, a ban will be devastating. The suggested alternative suggested by force free trainers who cannot fix the issue is to medicate or euthanise the dog, which is a poorer outcome leads to a diminished quality of life for dogs whose behaviour can be fixed efficiently with a pinch collar.

It is reasonable to state that the misuse of any dog training tool (flat collar, harness, head halti etc.) can cause injury to an animal. When used correctly then they do not. The same can be said for pinch collars. My understanding is that under the current legislation, and individual can be convicted of animal cruelty for any injury that is caused by the misuse of ANY dog training tool, so the provision to specifically ban pinch collars is unnecessary and will lead to poorer animal outcomes for dogs in Tasmania.

At this point in time, I am unaware of any current or historical investigations by RSPCA Tasmania that have specifically involved the use of pinch collars so do not believe that the use of pinch collars is an animal welfare issue in Tasmania.

The pinch collar has improved my life with my dog by allowing me to safely walk my dog, in addition to, improving my dogs behaviour. Previous to using the pinch collar, my dog was difficult to walk, highly reactive and I was not confident in taking my dog for walks in public around people and other dogs. My trainer suggested a pinch collar and I am really glad he

did. Since the use of the pinch collar my dog has become easier to walk, my dog's temperament has changed and I am now more confident in taking my dog into public spaces. Previous to using the pinch collar, positive only training was not beneficial for my dog. The pinch collar is a fantastic tool that has given me and my dog a new found happiness and freedom.

Based on the above, I would request that the amendment to the use and legality of pinch collars be removed as part of the proposed amendments to the Act.

Kind Regards,

Caitlyn Hitchens