

To whom it may concern,

My name is Sue Burgess and I have been a dog lover and dog owner since childhood.

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.

If this ban is passed, we feel we will not be able to continue to walk our dog safely and confidently.

Five years ago my adult son, who was still living with us at the time, bought home the most beautiful rottweiler puppy to join our family, which also included a seven year old beagle.

Our gorgeous and gentle Rotty as she developed was however becoming more reactive to other dogs when on a leash and out on walks. We believe this stemmed from the rottweiler experiencing an horrific trauma at a dog beach when she was still a puppy.

As the rottweiler grew and became stronger, I was not strong enough to walk her, and I was becoming more anxious that she may react to other dogs on the walk. My son was the only one able to walk her. This led us to seek specific dog training lessons with Huon Valley K9 and we have partaken in quite a few private lessons and attended group classes. Force free positive training and many types of collars and harnesses were tried, but unfortunately this did not correct the problem of our dog being reactive and my son was still the only one strong enough to control the pulling. Our dog trainer then taught us how to correctly use a pinch collar and the results have been wonderful. Our Rotty is not frightened nor has ever been hurt from the collar (in fact she becomes very excited when she hears the tinkle of the chain as it signifies a walk) and we are all able to now walk her again.

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 lifesaving tool and leads to better animal welfare outcomes. They can help fix a wide variety of behavioral 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, an 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.