

Public Submission Re: Dog Control Amendment Bill

Ms. Stephanie Gleeson

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the review of the *Dog Control Act 2000* in response to the recent deaths of Little Penguins by domestic dogs. As a member of the public, I value Tasmania's fauna for its intrinsic value as well as the instrumental role of wild animals in Tasmania's biodiversity and the tourism industry. It is concerning not only that so many Little Penguins have been killed in recent times but also the manner in which they have died.

I support the State Government's proposed amendments to the *Dog Control Act* to increase penalties and to allow the taking of saliva samples from dogs for identification. Creating harsher penalties for dog owners who do not take adequate responsibility for their dogs sends a message that ownership of domestic animals and animal welfare is important to the community. However, harsher penalties for crime alone do not necessarily result in a reduction in the frequency or severity of offending.¹ Due to a number of aspects regarding the problem of dog attacks on penguins the Government may need to take additional measures to better protect Little Penguins and other wildlife from attacks from both humans and domestic animals.

Furthermore, due to the current spate of fatal attacks on penguins in recent times, punishing offenders after the fact will not help re-establish penguin colonies. Although Little Penguins nest onshore in several parts of the country and are generally numerous, they face an increasing number of threats.² The many threats they face in the ocean³ combined with threats on land means that Tasmania is at risk of losing its Little Penguin colonies altogether should further significant attacks occur.⁴ To protect existing penguins and other wildlife from future attacks, the government may need to consider some or all of the following measures:

- Banning or restricting dogs in some areas or imposing curfew conditions.
- Fencing areas to prevent easy access to penguin borrows

¹John West Memorial Lecture <https://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/bigideas/what-can-modern-prisons-learn-from-the-convicts/11078530>

²<https://penguinfoundation.org.au/about-little-penguins/>

³<https://theconversation.com/grim-reaper-cuts-swathes-through-the-little-penguins-of-perth-5653>;
<https://theconversation.com/penguins-under-threat-from-drowning-in-fishing-nets-88308>

⁴<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2019-09-04/penguins-numbers-in-tasmania-dip-after-dog-attack-spate/11473906>

- Signage to indicate penguin areas
- Installing CCTV where appropriate
- Having rangers patrol known penguin areas, especially during the peak breeding season and including at night
- Creating a dedicated tourism centre and information bureau or museum to further engage and educate tourists and locals about penguins
- Extra or on-going funding for the Penguin Rehab and Release Facility
- A penguin hotline to offer monetary rewards regarding information that leads to a prosecution regarding attacks on penguins
- Dedicated dog exercise areas away from penguin nests. Having dedicated dog exercise areas creates a number of benefits. Recently a dog exercise park opened in Chapel Street, Glenorchy. Anecdotal evidence suggests that people in the area socialize with each other more, that some people with physically mobility issues now make a particular effort to walk to the park, and that more people visit local businesses in the area such as the nearby takeaway store.
- In the interests of consistent implementation of the law and good governance, that Tasmania's dog management laws, which currently fall across four separate pieces of legislation, be reduced or integrated to become the responsibility of one ministerial portfolio.