

To: [Local Government Division \(DPaC\)](#)
Subject: Submission: Dog control Amendment Bill 2019
Date: Thursday, 26 September 2019 3:41:44 PM

My name is Megan Alessandrini. I wish to make a submission to the Dog Control Amendment Bill 2019. Thank you for the opportunity to do this.

Concerning the three identified changes to the act:

1. I wholeheartedly support the increase in penalties for proven dog attacks on wildlife. As someone who has assisted Bonorong with wildlife rescue, I know that repeated instances of attacks are heartbreaking. The simplification of the collection of samples for this purpose is also welcome. I urge you to allow this more efficient procedure for sample collection when other dog related incidents have occurred such as dog to dog attacks and dog-human attacks.
2. Increased penalties for offences involving dogs in prohibited areas involving sensitive habitat and wildlife are also welcomed. Detection of offences may well be aided by the above provisions for collection of samples for comparison eg faecal samples. Uncontained domestic cats and feral cats (discussed on your webpage) do far more damage and it would send a consistent message to strengthen implementation measures regarding compulsory cat containment too.
3. The provision for off lead exercising of rehabilitated greyhounds is overdue and welcomed and an appropriate next step following the changes to muzzle requirements.

While these changes are welcomed, they will be effective only if there is provision for rigorous implementation. Incidents such as the attacks on penguins, the destruction of habitat and injury to native animals by dogs will continue if despite these changes there are no actual consequences imposed because no-one happens to be watching. These matters have been well and truly aired in the media and on social media. It can no longer be argued that community education will stem these attacks. Urgent practical steps need to be taken to identify the dogs concerned, for example through cctv and sampling, dealing with them appropriately and penalising their owner(s), if they are owned dogs. If these changes are not quickly and effectively implemented with appropriate resources, there will be no improvement.

4. I note that section 18 is mentioned in the commentary on greyhounds. The classification of dangerous dogs while necessary lacks flexibility and is something of a 'blunt instrument' open to misuse. There may be instances where in the absence of any alternative a particular dog is declared dangerous so that authorities can take steps to control the dog. The circumstances may well be that the dog is uncontrolled or wandering, perhaps repeatedly, or causing a nuisance, but is not in any usual sense dangerous. Dog owners may well find themselves needing to fight for their dogs' lives in a court, when the dog/s have posed not actual threat. This is distressing, and potentially an expensive exercise, depending on the awarding of costs, whichever way the case goes. Some owners may not have the resources to undertake a legal battle. The definition of 'dangerous' needs to specifically include evidence of attacks and aggressive behaviours, defined by a qualified dog behaviouralist to ensure barking, growling, running and jumping are not regarded as dog aggression. This will exclude pets that are simply a nuisance. There is a requirement for the provision of categories other than 'dangerous' to be established with options for managing the dog that do not include legal recourse or euthanasia.

5. I note on the webpage in the section covering the Dog Control Amendment Act list of key changes, there is a dot point on the provision that commercial dog minding services require kennel licences. I welcome this but unfortunately this is just not sufficient. Where an establishment is advertising and apparently providing dog minding services, a regulatory framework is required. This can be at a rudimentary level of minimum standards of care and facilities, with an inspection regime and importantly a complaints and grievance procedure. There are care provisions in the Animal Welfare Act 1993 that are basic and require investigation that is difficult to arrange in a timely manner. Most industry operators comply and take excellent care of their charges, requiring owners to provide appropriate paperwork and medical disclosure, and operate well above community expectations. Should there be neglectful and incompetent operators, the pets concerned are obviously in no position to complain, and the damage neglect or injury may not be detected until the pet is collected by owners. There is no mechanism for concerns to be raised or mediation to take place. This needs to be urgently addressed.

Yours faithfully
Megan Alessandrini

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