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Committee Secretary
Legislative Scrutiny Committee
Legislative Assembly of the Northern Territory
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Submission in Strong Support of the *Animal Protection and Related Legislation Amendment Bill 2025*

Dear Committee Members,

As a former Police Officer and Member of the Legislative Assembly I write in support of the *Animal Protection and Related Legislation Amendment Bill 2025* (“the Bill”). I was excited to hear the Committee’s call for submissions on this Bill and hope my short and simple response is in suffice accordance for the Committee to accept my submission.

As a member of the Northern Territory Police Force it was our duty to respond to Animal Welfare matters. It will be adequate to say some cases are not easily forgotten. Changes made within the Bill are as refreshing and empowering as they are overdue.

Unfortunately, the Northern Territory has a chequered past when it comes to dealing with animal cruelty and neglect, be that in our suburbs and remote communities or high profile cattle stations. Internationally the most horrendous is the Adam Britton crimes.

I am greatly pleased to see stronger controls and protection from animal abuse equipment. I fear some people will try and give support to the continued use or permitted controlled use of some of these items like prong collars. A little bit of animal abuse, torture, fear and coercion if used “correctly” is akin to accepting that a little bit of Domestic Violence, abuse, fear and coercion is ok if done correctly. In both cases I find it utterly unacceptable.

Disappointingly the failure to apply suitable penalty units on infringements should have been a glaringly obvious oversight. It is a significant opportunity lost to set real expectations in monetary terms as to the seriousness all sides of politics in the Northern Territory takes in protecting animals from abuse and neglect.

Sect 24 amendment’s (Cruelty to an animal) with an increase of only one year in the maximum penalty is deeply disappointing. An inclusion at this point for the use of infringement notices may have also been useful providing significant penalty units be applied circa 8.

Sect 25 (Aggravated cruelty) has been entirely ignored. This is where Adam Britton's Crimes fell. To have not amended this section is disastrous. This is where community and international law falls. An increase of maximum penalty units should have been made in the range of 700 unit. **Most importantly a 10 year imprisonment must be applied.**

Conclusion and Recommendation

The *Animal Protection and Related Legislation Amendment Bill 2025* represents a reform package that will significantly improve animal welfare outcomes in the Northern Territory.

I strongly urge the Committee to make urgent recommendations around Sect 24 Cruelty to an animal and particularly Sect 25 Aggravated cruelty in line with my above respective comments. Aside from the forementioned I recommend the Bill's passage without dilution. Its provisions reflect best-practice and addresses many deficiencies in the current framework. It is also supported by a majority of the rational thinking community giving mandate for stronger animal protection.

Thank you for considering my submission.

Yours sincerely,

Ross Oscar Charles Bohlin

Former Member for Drysdale.