



Strong dog laws: Safer communities

Final consultation report

September 2023

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The Department of Agriculture and Fisheries proudly acknowledges all First Nations peoples (Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders) and the Traditional Owners and Custodians of the country on which we live and work. We acknowledge their continuing connection to land, waters and culture and commit to ongoing reconciliation. We pay our respect to their Elders past, present and emerging.

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How the Queensland Government consulted the community

The release of the Strong dog laws: Safer communities discussion paper was announced on 25 June 2023 by the Minister for Agricultural Industry Development and Fisheries and the Minister for Rural Communities, the Honourable Mark Furner, through a Ministerial Media Release.

The Queensland Government enabled a variety of submission avenues to ensure all Queenslanders could have their say. The community was encouraged to submit responses to the discussion paper via channels including the engagement hub (eHub) site, email, postal mail, or the 1300 government number.

Additionally, 17 Indigenous Local Councils were contacted via letter, which included an attached poster alerting them to the consultation period and how to participate. Fifty-nine Community Connectors and 52 Community Justice Groups were also notified of the consultation paper and avenues to submit a response by letter.

Reach of consultation

Stakeholders were able to provide feedback by completing a survey via the department's eHub or requesting a hard copy. Written submissions were also accepted by email or mail.

The communication and engagement reach of the Discussion Paper can be gauged from the following metrics:

- The eHub dangerous dogs section had 24,559 views on the page, with an engagement rate of 56.78% across over 13,700 total site users.
- 105 media mentions since the first media release was distributed to the end of consultation.
- 2 articles about the consultation were placed in Biosecurity News (July and August), which has a distribution of more than 18,000 subscribers. Links associated with these stories were clicked 1674 times (non-unique).
- 3 social media posts were posted on Biosecurity Queensland's social media pages (noting comments were turned off), which had a reach of 6068 people, were shared 15 times, and links were clicked 120 times.

Respondents

A total of 3,969 submissions had been received as of midnight 31 August. Of these submissions, 318 were written submissions. Thirty-four of the written submissions were on behalf of organisations (Table 1).

Table 1: Organisations which provided written submissions

Local governments (14)	Tablelands Regional Council, Isaac Regional Council, Fraser Coast Regional Council, Rockhampton Regional Council, Redlands City Council, Far North Queensland Regional Organisation of Councils (FNQROC), Brisbane City Council, Central Highlands Regional Council, Sunshine Coast City Council, North Burnett Regional Council, City of Moreton Bay, Logan City Council, Local Government Association of Queensland (LGAQ), Gold Coast Council
Animal welfare, veterinarian, or dog organisations (11)	RSPCA, Animal Welfare League Queensland (AWLQ), 'Queensland canine community' (German Shepherd Dog Council of Australia; National Rottweiler Council Australia; German Shepherd Dog Club of Queensland; Rottweiler Club of Queensland; Nanango Kennel Club; and The Cattle Dog and Kelpie Club of Queensland), Animal Justice Party, Animal Care Australia, Australian Veterinary Association (AVA), Dogs Queensland, Professional Dog Trainers Australia, Australian Pet Welfare Foundation, Australian and New Zealand College of Veterinary Scientists (ANZCVS), Australian Institute of Animal Management
Organisations from the	Energy Queensland, Australian Post on behalf of the cross-industry taskforce (this includes ATCO, Ausgrid, BSA, Club Assist, Coles, Downer, Endeavour Energy, Energy Queensland,

service industry (2)	Essential Energy, Evoenergy, Greater Western Water, Hire Up, Jemena, Linfox, Mondo, NBN Co, SAPN, ServiceStream, Spotless, Telstra, Uber, UGL Limited, and Woolworths).
First Nations animal management organisation (1)	Animal Management in Rural and Remote Indigenous Communities (AMRRIC)
Environmental and native wildlife organisations (4)	Friends of the Earth, Friends of the Earth – Far North Queensland (FoE FNQ), Guardians of the Wet Tropics, Koala Action Inc. (KAI) and Queensland Koala Crusaders Inc. (QKC)
Other organisations (2)	Queensland council for civil liberties (QCCL), Australian Pig Doggers and Hunters Association

A total of 3,651 stakeholders submitted responses online to the consultation survey.

On 13 July, the survey was amended to collect data on the dog ownership status of survey respondents. Of the respondents, 3.9% did not provide their dog ownership status. Of the respondents who did provide their dog ownership status:

- 87.38% own or have owned a dog (not declared dangerous or menacing).
- 1.99% own or have owned a dog (declared dangerous or menacing).
- 4.07% own or have owned both dogs (not declared dangerous or menacing, and a declared dangerous or menacing).
- 6.56% have never owned a dog.

On the eHub Dangerous Dogs landing page, a total of 12,382 site users were recorded. On 13 July, data was captured from respondents on their location via postcode.

Using the Australian Statistical Geography Standard (ASGS) Remoteness Structure, Queensland respondent postcodes were classified into five classes of remoteness to determine the response rates across different parts of Queensland. Figure 1 shows that 54% of respondents were from major Queensland cities such as Brisbane and areas around the Sunshine Coast and Gold Coast. A further 20% were from inner regional Queensland locations, which include areas such as Bundaberg and Gympie. 20% of respondents were from outer regional centres such as Townsville and Cairns.

Figure 1 provides a map showing the high level of spread of respondents' locations across Queensland. Of the respondents, 6.1% did not provide their location.

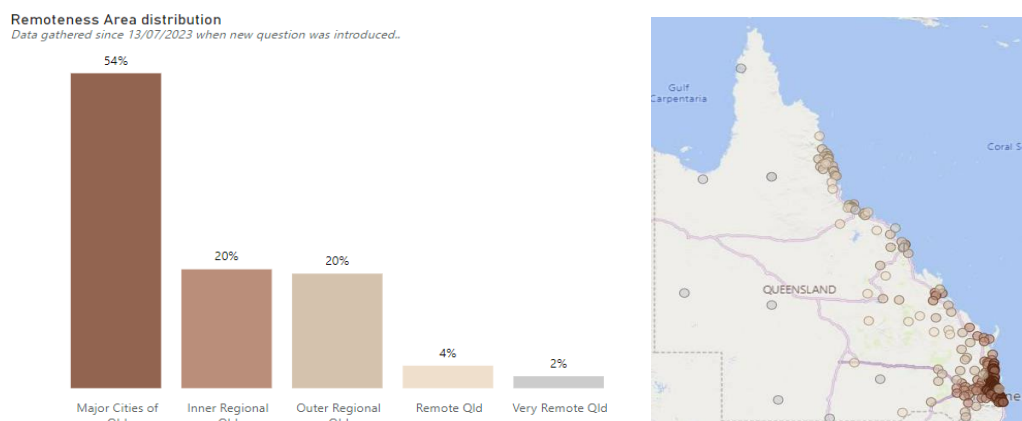


Figure 1: Remoteness area distribution of survey respondents and map of distribution by postcode (data gathered since 13/07/2023)

Summary of consultation results

Across all consultation methods, there was a high level of support for the proposals contained in the Strong dog laws: Safer communities discussion paper. Support varied across dog ownership status and between various organisation types.

The Department of Agriculture and Fisheries undertook detailed qualitative and quantitative data analysis across the data provided through the public consultation. Analysis results were grouped by type of submission, including survey results (Likert scale data and survey comments) and written submissions from the public, local governments, and organisations.

Survey response results

Results from the survey responses across all questions are detailed in Figure 2 below. The Likert scale survey results indicated that respondents who took the survey were most supportive of the education campaign proposal (90%), while they were least supportive of the banning breeds proposal (69%). Where respondents provided comments alongside their Likert scale survey results, they were identified as being most supportive of the reviewing penalties proposal (93%), while they were least supportive of the banning breeds proposal (33%).

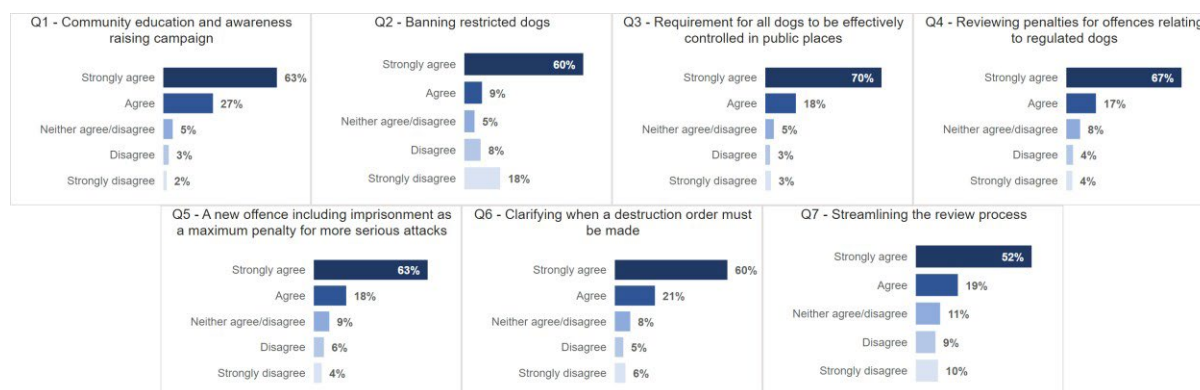


Figure 2: Survey results across all 7 proposals

Written response results

For written submissions from the public, they were most supportive of the education campaign proposal (98%) while being the least supportive of the banning breeds proposal (62%). Of the fourteen written submissions from local governments, they were largely supportive of all the proposals. However, only six out of thirteen local governments support the banning breeds proposal, with three being neutral and four not supporting the proposal. Of the twenty organisations that submitted written responses, they were supportive of most of the proposals. However, only two out of fourteen organisations support the banning breeds proposal, with two being neutral and ten not supporting the proposal.

Detailed consultation results

Proposal 1 – community education and awareness raising campaign

Survey response analysis

90% of all survey respondents supported the development and implementation of a community education and awareness raising campaign, while 5% of respondents were not supportive (Figure 3).

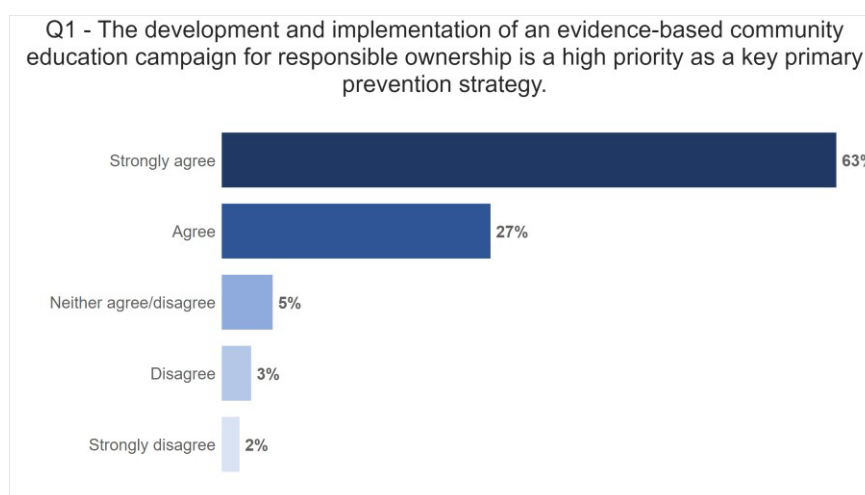


Figure 3: Likert scale results of survey responses for proposal 1

From the 120 sampled responses to the final comments of the survey, this was the second most mentioned proposal (33%).

Of the 60 sampled in-scope (i.e., relevant) responses to question 1, 83% were identified as supportive. The common reasons provided for this can be summarised as follows:

- **Lack of awareness (46%):** respondents who believe that there is currently a lack of awareness and knowledge about dogs from both owners and the public. Because of this, developing and implementing an evidence-based community education campaign would help reduce and prevent attacks.
- **Responsible dog ownership (30%):** respondents who believe that preventing future dog attacks starts with responsible dog ownership. This involves the owner looking after the dog's health and being more aware of their responsibility to keep the public safe.
- **Suggestions (33%):** some suggestions from the respondents include:
 - education being compulsory and ongoing,
 - targeting education towards indigenous dog owners and rural residential areas, and
 - the education campaign to cover topics such as the cost of owning a dog, animal discipline, effective control, and interacting with dogs.

Of the sampled comments in response to survey question 1, 17% were identified as not supportive. The main reason respondents were not supportive was because they didn't believe the campaign would reach the dog owners who should hear it. Even if the campaign does reach the dog owners, they will either ignore it or won't be affected by it if they think the campaign does not apply to them.

Analysis of the data from 13 July to 24 August, where respondents provided data on dog ownership status, revealed some differences in support for the proposal based on ownership status (Figure 4). Most notably:

91% of all respondents who identified as owning a dog (not declared dangerous) either strongly agreed or agreed with the proposal. This is higher than those who owned a declared dangerous dog, with 80% of owners either strongly agreeing or agreeing with the proposal.

Q1 - The development and implementation of an evidence-based community education campaign for responsible ownership is a high priority as a key primary prevention strategy.

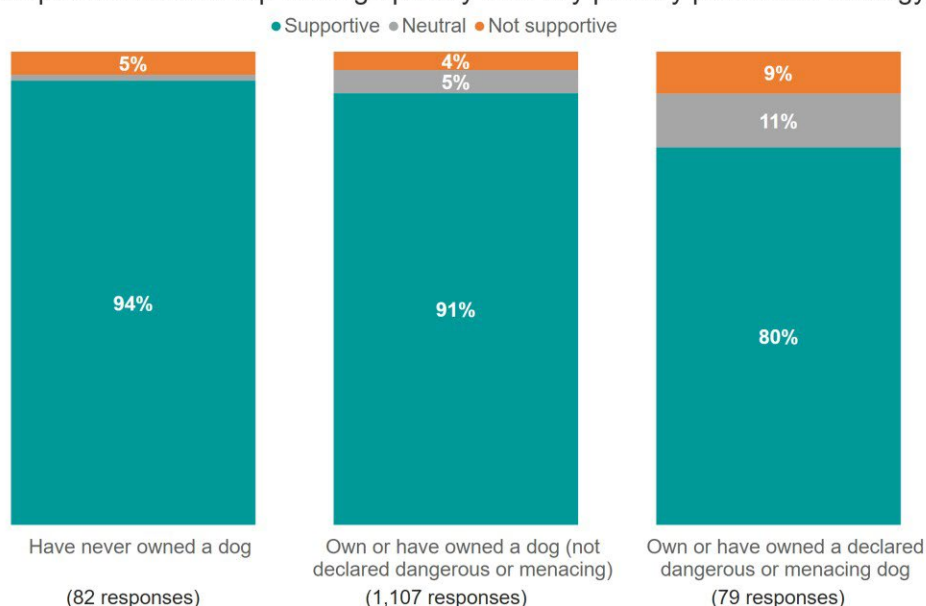


Figure 4: Likert scale results of survey responses by dog ownership type for proposal 1 (data gathered since 13/07/2023)

Written submission analysis

Of the 318 written submissions, 65 commented on the proposal to develop and implement a community education and awareness raising campaign. Of those respondents, 64 supported the proposal, and one did not.

The most common reasons for support for the proposal can be summarised into the following themes:

- **Responsible dog ownership:** education will lead to responsible dog ownership principles being followed in the community, including understanding a dog's temperament and the owner's responsibility to look after the mental, emotional, and physical wellbeing of their dog.
- **Educating children:** focus on the importance of teaching children how to interpret dog behaviour and equipping them with the skills to interact with dogs safely.

“By teaching essential canine body language tips, we empower children to understand and interact safely with dogs.”

- **Friendly dogs:** education needs to highlight the risk presented by dogs who are well-behaved and allowed off-leash when they run up to a leashed dog and cause an aggressive reaction by the leashed dog.

“More campaigning needs to be directed towards owners of “friendly” dogs as they feel that the rules don’t apply to them and allow their dogs to hang out the front of their house unsupervised and seldom put them on a lead.”

The only written submission that was not supportive of the proposal stated that education campaigns are unlikely to reduce dog attack numbers in the long term.

Of the 13 local governments that commented on the proposal to develop and implement a community education and awareness raising campaign, all were supportive of the proposal.

Of the 15 animal welfare, veterinarian, and dog organisations that commented on the development and implementation of an education campaign, all were supportive.

The sentiment from organisations in the service industry regarding the development and implementation of an education campaign was also supportive.

As a First Nations animal management organisation, AMRRIC was supportive of the education campaign. AMRRIC believes there are very few benefits to responsible animal owners who register their animals, as a lack of compliance and enforcement means that those who are not registering their animals face no consequences.

Proposal 2 – banning restricted dogs

Survey response analysis

69% of all survey respondents supported the proposal to ban restricted breeds in Queensland, while 26% of respondents were not supportive (Figure 5).

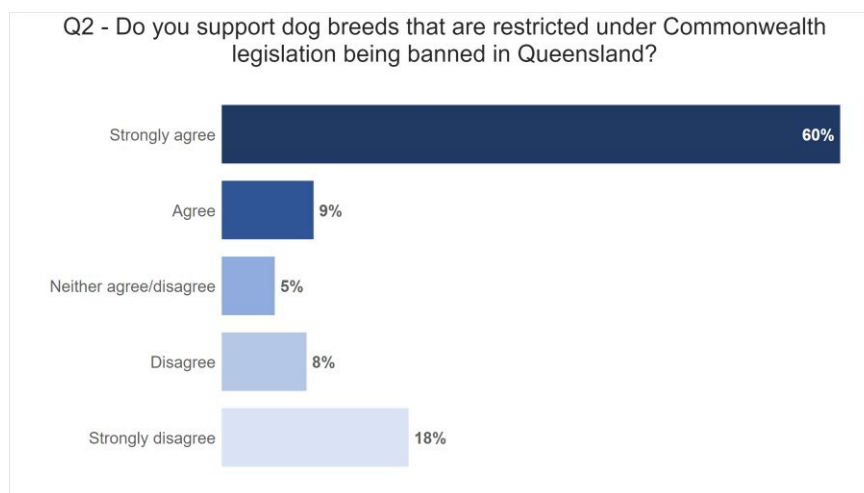


Figure 5: Likert scale results of survey responses for proposal 2

From the 120 sampled responses to the final comments of the survey, this was the most mentioned proposal (39%).

Of the 60 sampled in-scope responses to question 2, 33% were identified as supportive of the ban. Of those supporting the ban, 70% believe that restricted dog breeds are spontaneously aggressive, known to be dangerous, or fighting dogs. The remaining 30% listed suggestions with the ban, some of which include:

- Banning more breeds outside the restricted list. Breeds that were mentioned are Bull Terriers, Staffordshire Bull Terriers, Mastiffs, and Rottweilers.
- Having a procedure to determine whether a dog is a restricted breed, such as DNA testing.
- Clarifying what will be done with crossbreeds.
- Allowing restricted breeds if needed for work.

Of the sampled comments in response to survey question 2, 67% did not support the ban. This is significantly higher than the survey respondents who answered using only the Likert scale. This could be because people who were not supportive of the proposal were more likely to express their reasoning in the comments than those who were supportive. The common reasons for not supporting the ban can be summarised as follows:

- **Other more significant factors lead to a dog's aggression (94%):** respondents who believe that there are other more significant factors that lead to a dog's aggression. The most mentioned factor was irresponsible owners not properly training and taking care of the dog.
- **Counterproductive (7%):** respondents who believe that the process of banning breeds is counterproductive.
- **Keep current legislation (3%):** a respondent believes that the current legislation requiring a permit to own a restricted breed is sufficient, given a good enough reason to own a restricted breed.

Analysis of the data from 13 July to 24 August, where respondents provided data on dog ownership status, revealed some differences in support for the proposal based on ownership status (Figure 6). Notably:

80% of respondents who do not own a dog were supportive of this proposal. For respondents who identified owning a dog (not declared dangerous), support dropped to over half, with 52% of all respondents supportive. Support for this proposal dropped again for those who identified as owning a declared dangerous dog, with only 28% of owners supportive.

Among dog owners who own a declared dangerous dog, 66% (53 submissions) disagreed with this proposal. In addition, 39% (435 submissions) of dog owners who own a dog that was not declared dangerous disagreed with this proposal.

Q2 - Do you support dog breeds that are restricted under Commonwealth legislation being banned in Queensland?

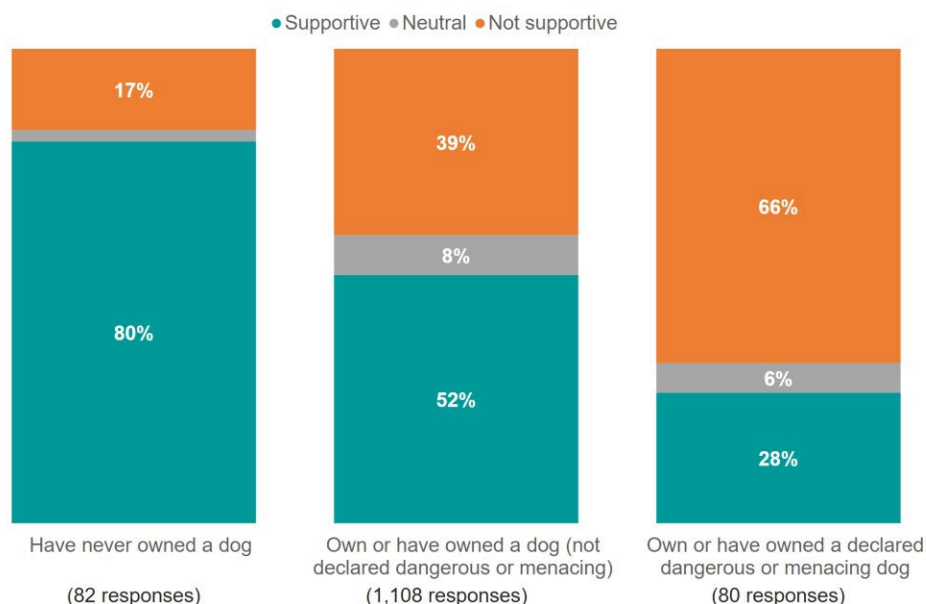


Figure 6: Likert scale results of survey responses by dog ownership type for proposal 2 (data gathered since 13/07/2023)

Written submission analysis

Of the 318 written submissions, 119 commented on the proposal to ban restricted dog breeds. Of those respondents, 74 supported the proposal, and 45 did not.

The most common reasons for support for the proposal can be summarised into the following themes:

- **Community safety:** the safety of the community, and especially children, should take precedence over an owner's preference to own a particular breed of dog.

“Ban all of them before another child gets maimed or killed. Nobody needs dogs of any of these breeds.”

- **Dog fighting:** these breeds were historically bred for fighting as they have aggressive tendencies, and some are still used in dog fights today.
- **Not suitable for high-density living:** these breeds are too active and aggressive and represent too great a risk to live in highly populated areas.

The most common objections to the proposal can be summarised as follows:

- **Breed-specific legislation is ineffective:** breed-based legislation has not worked in some jurisdictions previously and may not work in Queensland.
- **Environment, not breed:** it is the environment and training provided to a dog that shape its behaviour, not the breed itself, which may lead to a bite or attack.

Of the 13 local governments that commented on the proposal to ban restricted dog breeds, 6 supported the proposal, 3 were neutral, and 4 did not support the proposal.

For local governments that were not supportive of the proposal, additional suggestions and concerns included:

- **Evidence:** it has been comprehensively demonstrated that, in almost all cases, breed is not a key determinant of aggression in dogs.
- **Resource-intensive:** changes could cause an increase in administrative and operational burden.
- **Breed identification:** DNA testing is the only reliable method of determining a dog's breed, but it is too expensive and does not provide conclusive results.
- **Illegal ownership:** may encourage owners to illegally own restricted breeds.

Of the 14 organisations that commented on the proposal to ban restricted dog breeds, 2 supported the proposal, 2 were neutral, and 10 did not support the proposal.

Of the animal welfare, veterinarian, and dog organisations, only AWLQ supported the proposal to ban restricted breeds.

The ‘Queensland canine community’ was neutral with the proposal, as although they are not against banning breeds, they prefer a “deed, not breed” approach.

Of the remaining nine animal welfare, veterinarian, and dog organisations that did not support the proposal, additional suggestions and concerns included:

- **Evidence:** the AVA stated that breed-specific legislation does not and cannot work.
- **Breed identification:** identification of banned breeds is problematic.

- **Other factors in dog aggression:** this approach does not consider the complexities of dog behaviour and the role of socialisation, rearing, training, owner behaviour, environment, and people’s actions, including provocation.
- **Illegal activity:** banning certain breeds can make them more attractive to certain groups. It may also lead to illegal backyard breeding and underground markets.
- **Resource-intensive:** Banning breeds is resource-intensive and can be challenging when dealing with cross-breeds.

Of the organisations in the service industry, only Energy Queensland commented on the banning breeds proposal. They took a neutral stance, as they have no opinion on the proposal.

As a first nations animal management organisation, AMRRIC was not supportive of the proposal, as breed alone is not an effective indicator or predictor of aggression in dogs. They also note that most dogs in remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities are mixed breeds. Determining the breed of dogs by visual appearance has been demonstrated to be inaccurate, and the logistics and cost of genetic testing are not feasible for most remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

Proposal 3 – requirement for all dogs to be effectively controlled in public places

Survey response analysis

Most survey respondents (88%) supported the requirement for all dogs to be effectively controlled in public places, while 6% of respondents were not supportive (Figure 7).

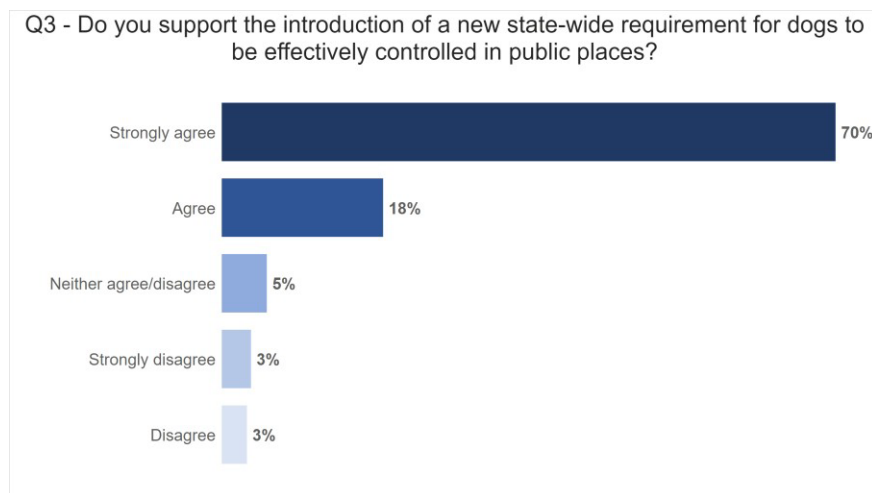


Figure 7: Likert scale results of survey responses for proposal 3

From the 120 sampled responses to the final comments of the survey, this was the fourth most mentioned proposal (19%).

Of the 60 sampled in-scope responses to question 3, 85% were identified as supportive. The common reasons for this can be summarised as follows:

- **Effective control (79%):** respondents who believe all dogs should be effectively controlled in public spaces (excluding off-leash areas) to ensure the safety of others.
- **Suggestions (21%):** some suggestions from the respondents include properly enforcing effective control across all regions, including rural and indigenous communities, and making sure enforcement occurs during times when most dog owners are walking their dogs. Some people also noted that if there is going to be a state-wide requirement, there needs to be more areas where dogs can be off leash.

Of the sampled responses to the survey question, 5% were identified as not supportive. These respondents believe that not all dogs should be on a leash if they are trained and friendly, or that effective control should be limited to certain areas.

10% of sampled survey responses raised the need to properly define 'effectively controlled', which includes how it will be enforced, penalties, and clear exemptions.

Analysis of the data from 13 July to 17 August, where respondents provided data on dog ownership status, revealed some differences in support for the proposal based on ownership status (Figure 8). Notably:

100% of all respondents who identified as never owning a dog were supportive of the proposal. For respondents who identified as owning a dog (not declared dangerous), support dropped to 85%. For respondents who identified as owning a declared dangerous dog, support dropped even lower to 78%.

Q3 - Do you support the introduction of a new state-wide requirement for dogs to be effectively controlled in public places?

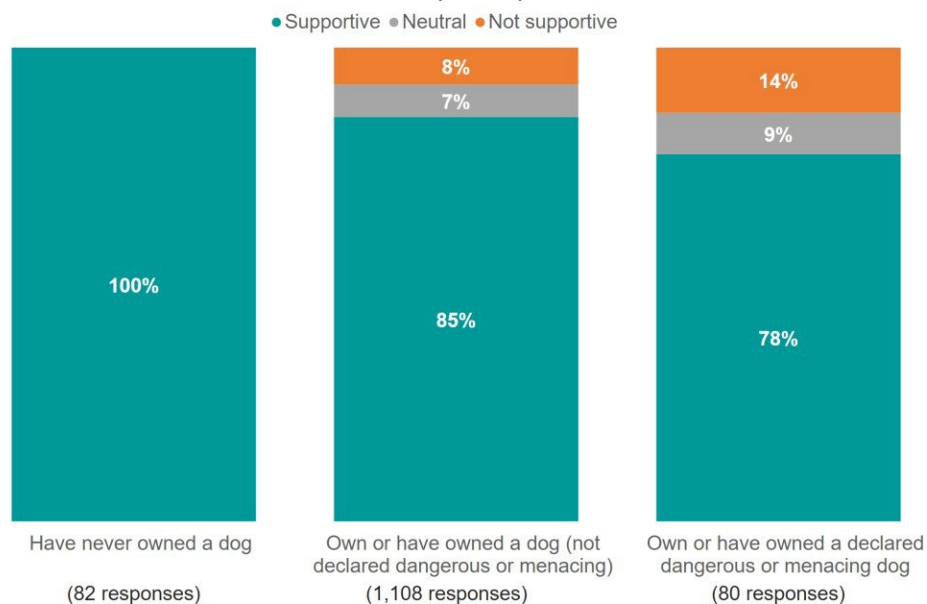


Figure 8: Likert scale results of survey responses by dog ownership type for proposal 3 (data gathered since 13/07/2023)

Written submission analysis

Of the 318 written submissions, 45 commented on the proposal for a new requirement for dogs to be under effective control when in public places. Of those respondents, 41 supported the proposal, and four did not.

The most common reasons for support for the proposal can be summarised into the following themes:

- **Community safety:** community safety is negatively impacted by dogs that are not on leash in public, as they could run at or attack a person.

“Have witnessed a lot of irresponsible owners walking with unleashed dogs and experienced scary situations personally.”

- **Loss of public amenity:** community members are too scared to use public amenities such as parks and beaches due to the presence of unrestrained dogs and the risk of attack on them and their children.

The most common objection to the proposal was:

- **People are the issue:** the public needs to be aware of how to act around dogs and not approach an unknown dog.

Of the 12 local governments that commented on the proposal for a new requirement for dogs to be under effective control when in public places, all of them were supportive of the proposal.

Additional suggestions and concerns the local governments had for supporting the proposal include:

- **Regulated dogs:** provide a clear differentiation in the offence provisions between a regulated and non-regulated dog not under effective control. Also, review regulated dog conditions to exclude regulated dogs from off-leash areas.
- **Local laws:** ensure that all the regulatory tools that exist under local laws are extended to the Act to ensure local government powers are not lessened.
- **Wandering animals:** include wandering at large type offences within the Act.
- **Effective control in off-leash areas:** ensure the Act includes dog owners having the ability to effectively control their dog in off-leash areas.

Of the 13 organisations that commented on the proposal for a new requirement for dogs to be under effective control when in public places, 12 were supportive and 1 was not supportive.

Of the nine animal welfare, veterinarian, and dog organisations that commented on the proposal, all were supportive.

Energy Queensland supports measures requiring the effective control of dogs in public places to ensure the safety of our employees and contractors, as well as the broader Queensland community.

As a first nations animal management organisation, AMRRIC was not supportive of the proposal because of the following reasons:

- Unachievable given the current compliance capacity of many remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.
- Considers only the risk of free-roaming dogs without appreciating the socialisation benefit. It also doesn't consider the different relationships dogs and people have in remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities as opposed to non-Indigenous communities.
- Attempts to apply a one-size-fits-all approach to dog ownership when instead, local government authorities are best placed to decide on the appropriate control requirements for their populations.

Proposal 4 – reviewing penalties for offences relating to regulated dogs

Survey response analysis

Most survey respondents (84%) supported the proposal to review penalties for offences relating to regulated dogs, while 8% of respondents were not supportive (Figure 9).

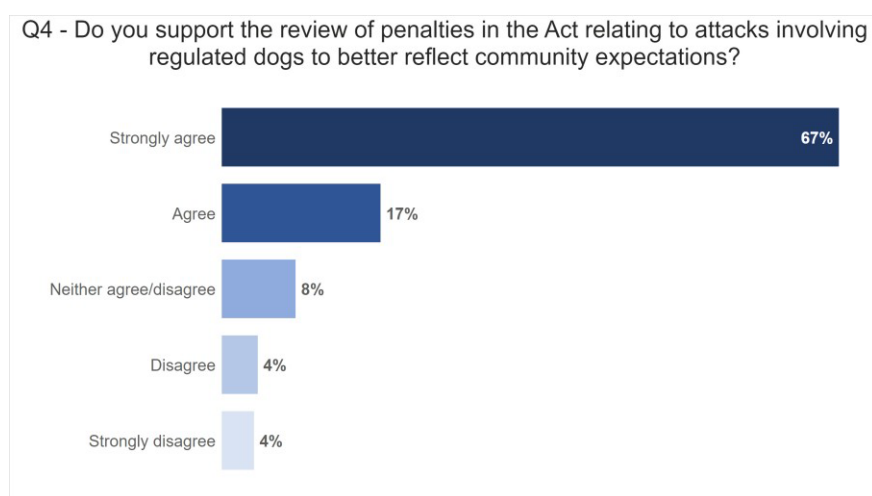


Figure 9: Likert scale results of survey responses for proposal 4

From the 120 sampled responses to the final comments of the survey, this was the third most mentioned proposal (20%).

Of the 60 sampled in-scope responses to question 4, 93% were identified as supportive. 'Community expectations' of penalties relating to attacks involving regulated dogs can be summarised as follows:

- **Punish irresponsible owners (35%):** respondents who believe that it is the owner's responsibility to control their dog and keep the public safe, and so penalties give an incentive for them to do so.
- **Penalties (27%):** respondents who believe that penalties should be stronger or increased, including jail time. Penalties should also be like those in other Australian states.

- **Criminal charges (18%):** respondents who believe penalties for emotional and physical injuries or death resulting from dog attacks on both people and other animals should be treated the same as other forms of attack.

Of the sampled responses to the survey question, 3% were identified as not supportive, as they do not believe it will be useful when laws won't be realistically enforced. 3% of sampled comments wanted clarification on how 'community expectations' will be defined.

Analysis of the data from 13 July to 17 August, where respondents provided data on dog ownership status, revealed some differences in support for the proposal based on ownership status (Figure 10). Notably:

96% of all respondents who identified as never owning a dog were supportive of the proposal. For respondents who identified as owning a dog (not declared or dangerous), support dropped to 78%. For respondents who identified as owning a declared or dangerous dog, support dropped even lower to 58%.

Q4 - Do you support the review of penalties in the Act relating to attacks involving regulated dogs to better reflect community expectations?

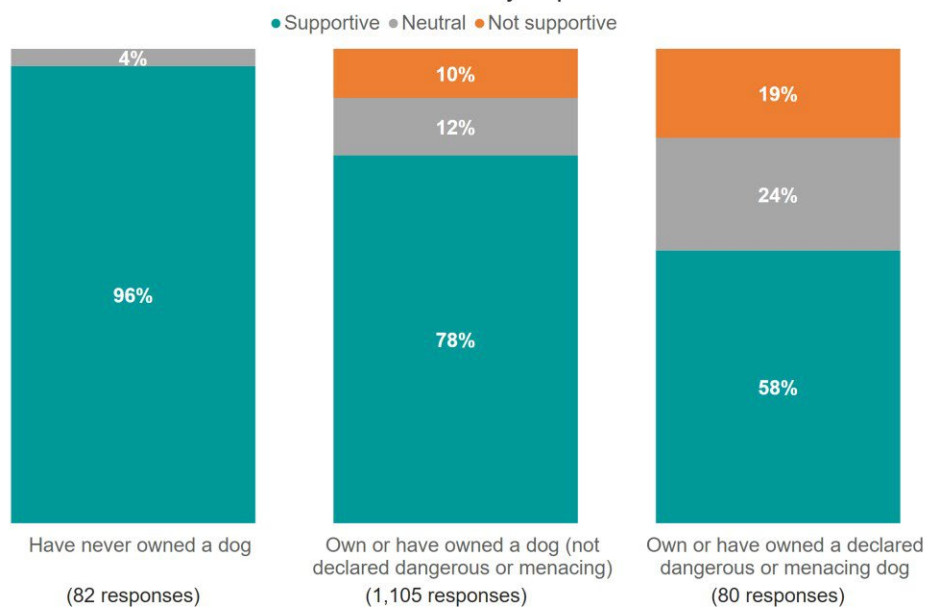


Figure 10: Likert scale results of survey responses by dog ownership type for proposal 4 (data gathered since 13/07/2023)

Written submission analysis

Of the 318 written submissions, 62 commented on the proposal to review penalties for offences related to regulated dogs. Of those respondents, 52 supported the proposal, and 10 did not.

The most common reasons for support for the proposal can be summarised into the following themes:

- **Increased deterrent:** increasing penalties for irresponsible dog owners will act as a deterrent to people doing the wrong thing and will result in fewer incidences of dog attacks.

“I feel that the provision of greater penalties may go a long way to convince dog owners to be more aware of their responsibilities.”

- **Responsible dog ownership:** dog owners should be responsible for their dogs behaviour and act in a way that protects the safety of the community.

The most common objection to the proposal was:

- **Local council won’t enforce them:** there is no point in increasing penalties as a deterrent as dog owners feel local council doesn’t and won’t enforce these laws.

“Increasing penalties and regulating dogs means nothing to most dog owners, because they know Councils will rarely enforce the laws and unlikely to apply penalties anyway.”

Of the 13 local governments that commented on the proposal to review penalties for offences related to regulated dogs, 12 supported the proposal, and 1 was neutral.

Additional suggestions and concerns the local governments had for supporting the proposal include:

- **Progressive system:** a provision that considers an owner’s previous offences relating to a regulated dog.
- **Penalties:** increase penalties for each offence, introduce minimum penalty amounts, and penalties should be proportionate to the seriousness of the offence.
- **Penalty Infringement Notices (PINs):** include the ability to issue PINs for certain offences to put less burden on councils and the judicial system.
- **Strict liability:** include a liability provision in the Act that makes an owner of a dog strictly liable for any injury or death caused by a dog. This would bring Queensland in line with other states.

The Brisbane City Council was neutral with the proposal, as they consider it to weaken their enforcement provisions, particularly for serious attacks.

Of the 12 organisations that commented on the proposal to review penalties for offences related to regulated dogs, 9 supported the proposal, 1 was neutral, and 2 did not support the proposal.

Dogs Queensland was neutral on the proposal, as they questioned whether reviewing penalties would have any deterrent effect.

Animal Care Australia and Professional Dog Trainers Australia were not supportive of the proposal because they believe current legislation is already sufficient and increasing penalties would not act as a greater deterrent.

For the service industry, Energy Queensland and Australia Post both support a review of penalties to ensure the safety of our employees and contractors, as well as the broader Queensland community.

Proposal 5 – a new offence including imprisonment as a maximum penalty for more serious attacks

Survey response analysis

Most survey respondents (81%) supported the proposal to introduce a new offence including imprisonment as a maximum penalty for more serious attacks, while 10% of respondents were not supportive (Figure 11).

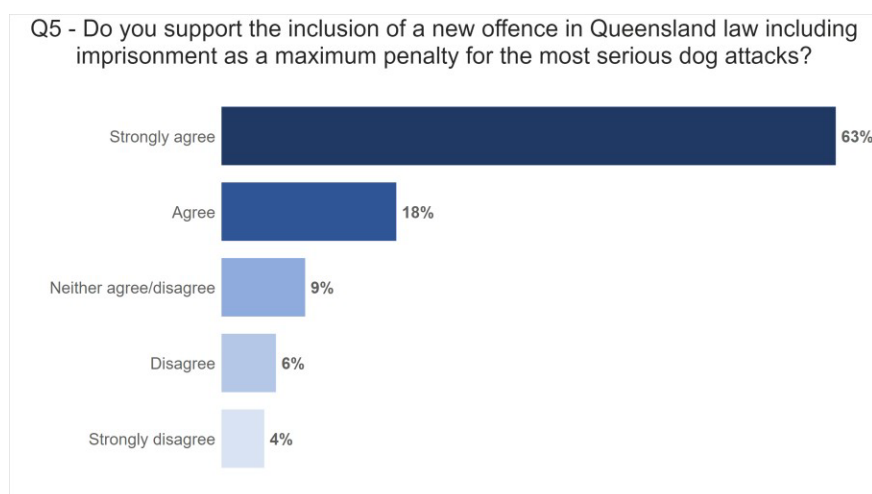


Figure 11: Likert scale results of survey responses for proposal 5

From the 120 sampled responses to the final comments of the survey, this was the sixth most mentioned proposal (3%).

Of the 60 sampled in-scope responses to question 5, 88% were identified as supportive. The common reasons for this can be summarised as follows:

- **Accountability (65%):** Respondents who believe that owners need to be held accountable for their actions, which includes imprisonment for dog attacks that caused serious injury or death.
- **When should imprisonment be applied? (43%):** Respondents who had varying opinions on when imprisonment should be applied. Some respondents believe that imprisonment should apply if the dog owner demonstrated negligence or malicious intent regarding securing the dog and preventing an attack. Other respondents emphasised the need to determine on a case-by-case basis, consider the number of previous offences, and determine whether the owner was remorseful.

Of the sampled responses to the survey question, 5% were identified as not supportive because they may believe current laws are sufficient, are worried about misjustice, or think it is unfair for an owner to go to jail because of the dog's actions. 7% of the sampled responses either agree or disagree with the proposal but believe that imprisonment won't deter ignorant dog owners who believe their dog won't attack anybody.

Analysis of the data from 13 July to 24 August, where respondents provided data on dog ownership status, revealed some differences in support for the proposal based on ownership status (Figure 12). Notably:

89% of all respondents who identified as never owning a dog were supportive of the proposal. For respondents who identified as owning a dog (not declared or dangerous), support dropped to 74%. For respondents who identified as owning a declared or dangerous dog, support dropped even lower to 58%.

Q5 - Do you support the inclusion of a new offence in Queensland law including imprisonment as a maximum penalty for the most serious dog attacks?

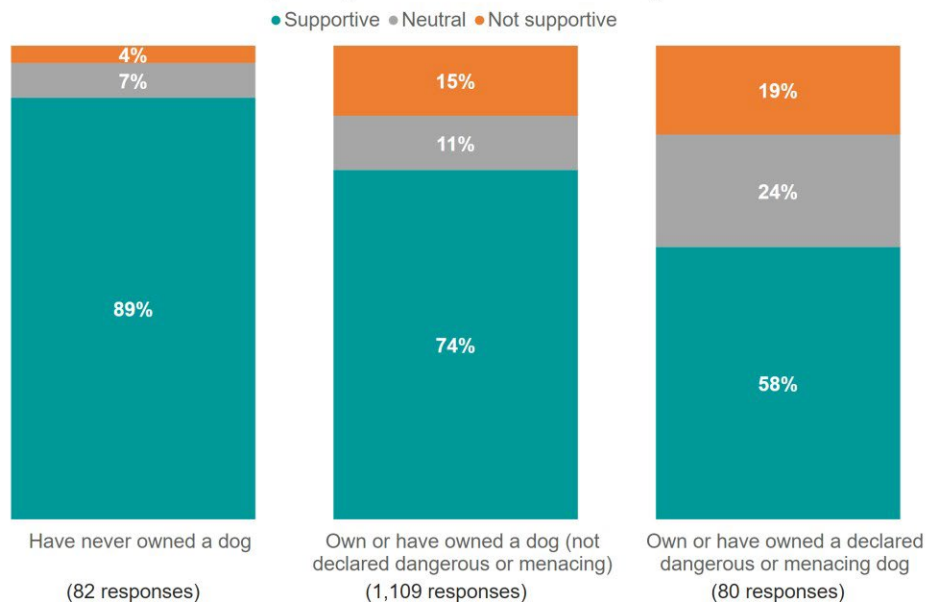


Figure 12: Likert scale results of survey responses by dog ownership type for proposal 5 (data gathered since 13/07/2023)

Written submission analysis

Of the 318 written submissions, 40 commented on the proposal for a new offence, including imprisonment as a maximum penalty for more serious attacks. Of those respondents, 32 supported the proposal, and eight did not.

The most common reasons for support for the proposal can be summarised into the following themes:

- **Owner accountability:** owners need to be held accountable for the actions of themselves and their dogs.

“Owners definitely need to be held accountable with imprisonment for menacing or damage caused by their animals.”

- **Community safety:** a prison sentence will make owners think twice before deciding to own a dangerous dog and will act as an incentive to do the right thing in public.

“I completely support tougher laws. The tougher the better. I am fed up hearing of dog attacks and being scared to walk on the beach.”

The most common objections to the proposal can be summarised as follows:

- **Animal cruelty:** the focus should be on reducing animal cruelty and ensuring dogs are well looked after in order to reduce the likelihood of attack.

“Instead of threatening to send people to prison we should instead create stronger animals rights and anti-cruelty laws to ensure that dogs are well looked after by their owners”

- **Focus on other crimes:** there are many other problems that communities face that should have prison terms other than for dog owners.

“Youth crime is at an all-time high yet the parents are not being held responsible. Why would you blame a dog breed rather than the grubs who do not train them.”

Of the 13 local governments that commented on the proposal for a new offence including imprisonment as a maximum penalty for more serious attacks, 11 were supportive of the proposal, and 2 were neutral.

Additional suggestions and concerns the local governments had for supporting the proposal include:

- **When should imprisonment be applied?:** imprisonment would apply if the attack resulted in the death of a person. It may also be appropriate where a dog seriously injures or causes grievous bodily harm to a person, provided there is clear guidance about these circumstances.
- **Previous offences:** consider imprisonment if the owner or responsible person has previously been convicted of an offence relating to a regulated dog.
- **“Seriously attack”:** amend the definition of “seriously attack” and add new attack categories to provide for a sliding scale of outcomes and corresponding penalties for offences.
- **Investigation responsibility:** must clearly delegate responsibility under the Act to conduct investigations where the attack has been serious in nature.

Isaac Regional Council and Gold Coast City Council were neutral on the proposal. Although they acknowledge the necessity of enhancing penalties for severe dog attacks, they are limited in terms of resources to conduct an in-house criminal investigation and prosecution of attacks. Therefore, local governments require additional resources and training to carry out this proposal effectively.

Of the 11 organisations that commented on the proposal for a new offence including imprisonment as a maximum penalty for more serious attacks, 9 supported the proposal, and 2 were neutral.

Of the six animal welfare, veterinarian, and dog organisations that supported the proposal, additional suggestions and concerns include:

- **When should imprisonment be applied?:** applies to situations where a person has deliberately, wilfully, or recklessly allowed a dog to attack, chase, or harm another person or a domestic or wild animal. This will be brought in line with the rest of the States.
- **Case-by-case basis:** consider the circumstances and evidence surrounding each case, ensuring that enforcement of these laws is fair.
- **“Serious dog attack”:** there is a need to have a precise definition of a “serious dog attack” to determine when imprisonment should apply.

AVA and ANZCVS were neutral on the proposal.

Energy Queensland supports the proposal of imprisonment as a maximum penalty, especially if intent to harm can be proven.

QCCL supports the proposal; however, they emphasise that the maximum sentence should not be excessive and should only be used in the most serious cases.

Proposal 6 – clarifying when a destruction order must be made

Survey response analysis

Most survey respondents (81%) supported the proposal to clarify when a destruction order must be made, while 11% of respondents were not supportive (Figure 13).

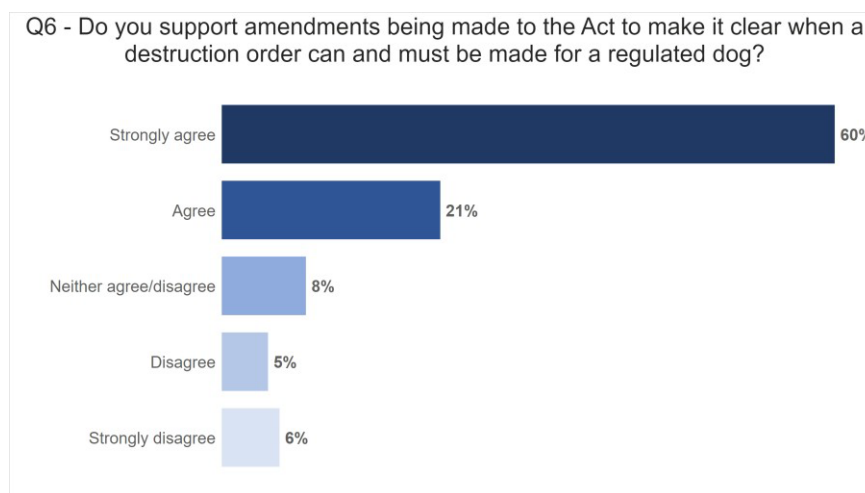


Figure 13: Likert scale results of survey responses for proposal 6

From the 120 sampled responses to the final comments of the survey, this was the fifth most mentioned proposal (6%).

Of the 60 sampled in-scope responses to question 6, 80% were identified as supportive. The common reasons for this can be summarised as follows:

- **Community (56%):** Respondents who believe that clarifying when a destruction order must be made will make the community safer, give an incentive for dog owners to be more responsible, or be more humane for the dog.
- **Suggestions (44%):** respondents suggest that destruction orders must first undergo thorough analysis, including an assessment by a behavioural veterinarian, to avoid cases of dogs being falsely accused. Other suggestions include giving owners the option to rehabilitate, retrain, and/or rehome the dog and informing owners when a destruction order must be made.

Of the sampled responses to the survey question, 20% were identified as not supportive because they believe destruction to be cruel and that it does not make sense to punish the dog when it is the fault of the owner. Instead of destruction, it would be more humane to rehabilitate, retrain, and/or rehome the dog.

Analysis of the data from 13 July to 24 August, where respondents provided data on dog ownership status, revealed some differences in support for the proposal based on ownership status (Figure 14). Notably:

91% of all respondents who identified as never owning a dog were supportive of the proposal. For respondents who identified as owning a dog (not declared or dangerous), support dropped to 75%. For respondents who identified as owning a declared or dangerous dog, support dropped even lower to 49%.

Q6 - Do you support amendments being made to the Act to make it clear when a destruction order can and must be made for a regulated dog?

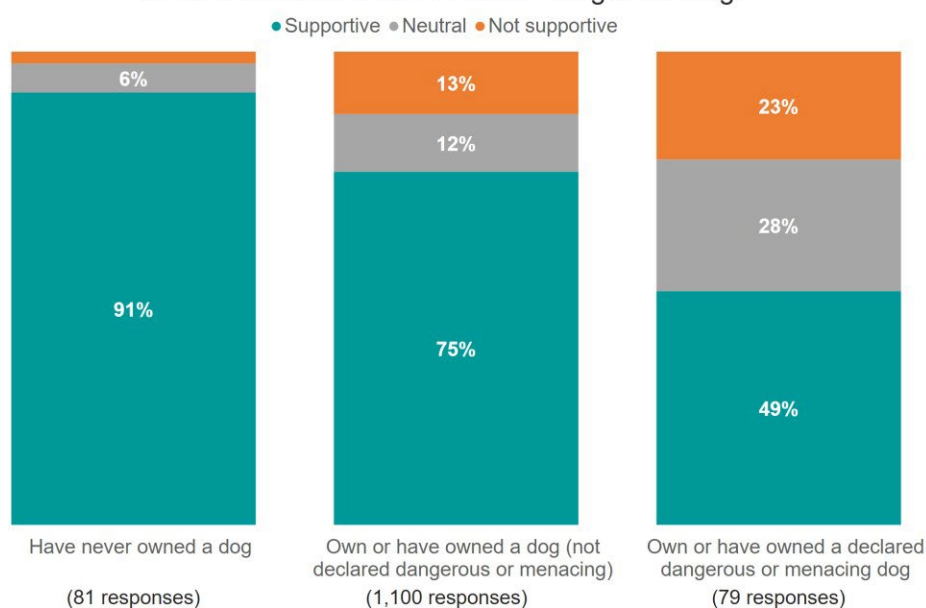


Figure 14: Likert scale results of survey responses by dog ownership type for proposal 6 (data gathered since 13/07/2023)

Written submission analysis

Of the 318 written submissions, 40 commented on the proposal to clarify when a destruction order must be made. Of those respondents, 33 supported the proposal and seven did not.

The most common reasons for support for the proposal can be summarised into the following themes:

- **Community safety:** if a dog has bitten or attacked a person, it is a risk to the community and should be removed from the community.

“The first time they bite anyone or another dog that is the end... No second chances. The second chance might be the killer chance.”

- **Won't stop at one bite:** once a dog has bitten or attacked a person, it is likely to do it again as it is part of the dog's behaviour.

- **Justice:** issuing a destruction order for a dog that attacks will result in justice for the victim, who is likely to carry physical and emotional scars from the experience.

The most common objections to the proposal can be summarised as follows:

- **Poor training:** the dog should get a chance to be retrained or rehomed before being euthanised, as the owner may not have trained it properly or trained it to be aggressive.

“It is already trained to be predatory and not a social animal. I want this to be taken into consideration before euthanasia and all means taken to rehouse the dog before euthanasia.”

Of the 13 local governments that commented on the proposal to clarify when a destruction order must be made, all of them were supportive of the proposal.

Additional suggestions and concerns the local governments had for supporting the proposal include:

- **Clear guidelines:** to ensure clear guidelines, the terms “effectively controlled” and “responsible dog owner” should be clearly defined.
- **Framework:** the technical working group recommends applying the Dunbar Bite Scale as a reputable and established framework for dogs proven to have caused grievous bodily harm or death to a person to be immediately euthanised. Brisbane City Council is also willing to collaborate with the Queensland Government to develop an effective regulatory framework for decision-making.
- **Rehabilitate and rehome dogs:** clearly articulate who is responsible for identifying if a dog can be rehabilitated and rehomed following an attack.

Of the 11 organisations that commented on the proposal to clarify when a destruction order must be made, 10 were supportive of the proposal, and 1 was neutral.

Of the eight animal welfare, veterinarian, and dog organisations that commented on the proposal, all were supportive.

Proposal 7 – streamlining the review process

Survey response analysis

Most survey respondents (71%) supported the proposal to streamline the review process, while 19% of respondents were not supportive (Figure 15).

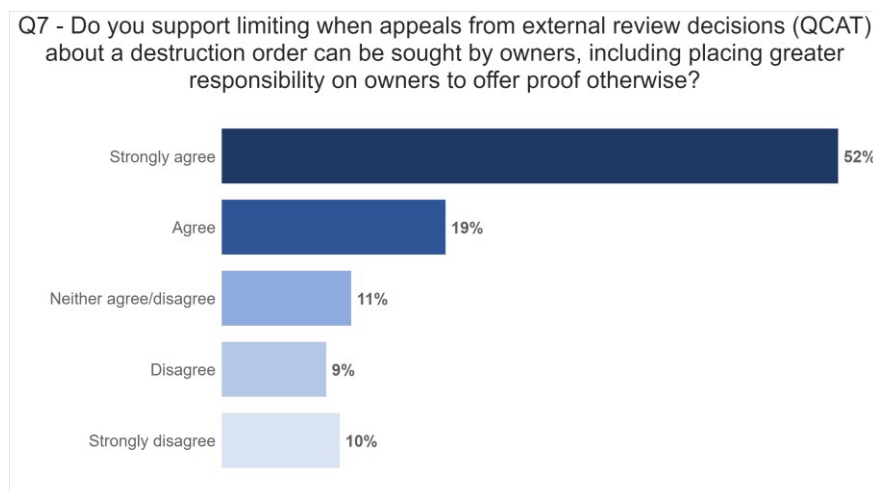


Figure 15: Likert scale results of survey responses for proposal 7

From the 120 sampled responses to the final comments of the survey, this was the least mentioned proposal (2%).

Common reasons that respondents gave for supporting the proposal include:

- Streamlining and clarifying the process is in everyone's best interest.
- Limiting appeals would be more humane for the dog.
- Owners should not be given a chance to appeal.

For respondents who were not supportive of the proposal, their reasoning was that owners should have the right to appeal and have a fair and accessible legal process. Limiting appeals would mean less thorough reviews, thus resulting in more innocent dogs being destroyed.

The most common suggestion respondents had was to have appeals be on a case-by-case basis and not apply a blanketing rule. The investigating officer would need to ensure the evidence is strong to have the appeal limited. Other suggestions include limiting appeals to cases involving grave injury or death and having shorter appeal times.

Analysis of the data from 13 July to 24 August, where respondents provided data on dog ownership status, revealed some differences in support for the proposal based on ownership status (Figure 16). Notably:

88% of all respondents who identified as never owning a dog were supportive of the proposal. For respondents who identified as owning a dog (not declared or dangerous), support dropped to 60%. For respondents who identified as owning a declared or dangerous dog, support dropped even lower to 34%.

Q7 - Do you support limiting when appeals from external review decisions (QCAT) about a destruction order can be sought by owners, including placing greater responsibility on owners to offer proof otherwise?

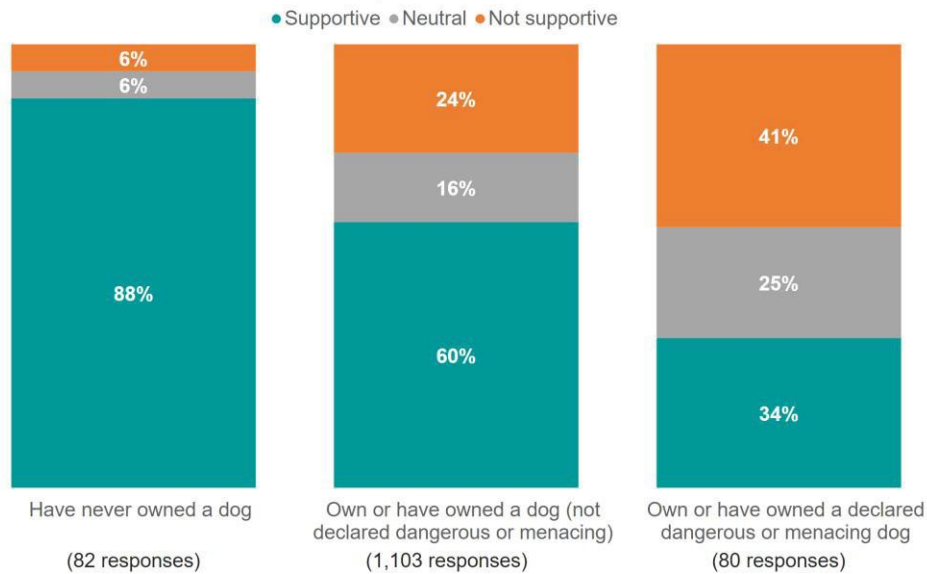


Figure 16: Likert scale results of survey responses by dog ownership type for proposal 7 (data gathered since 13/07/2023)

Written submission analysis

Of the 318 written submissions, 29 commented on the proposal for streamlining the review process. Of those respondents, 21 supported the proposal and eight did not.

The most common reasons for support for the proposal can be summarised into the following themes:

- **Minimise costs:** Streamlining the appeals process will reduce the costs and resources taken up by housing a dog through the review process.

“Streamlining external review process for regulated dogs to minimise unnecessary delays experienced by councils and relevant parties.”

The most common objections to the proposal can be summarised as follows:

- **Dog owner pays costs:** the review process should not be amended; however, the dog owner must be aware of all costs involved in the review process, including housing, food, and medical costs, and pay these in full.

Of the 14 local governments that commented on the proposal for streamlining the review process, all of them supported the proposal.

Additional suggestions and concerns the local governments had for supporting the proposal include:

- **Shorter external reviews:** prioritise external appeals to QCAT when a dog is in the care of the local government. Could also assign a maximum holding time for impounded animals subject to QCAT proceedings.
- **Evidence:** appeals should only be accepted if the owner can provide sufficient evidence to support a question of law or a question of fact.

Of the 13 organisations that commented on the proposal for streamlining the review process, 4 supported the proposal, 3 were neutral, and 6 did not support the proposal.

Of the five animal welfare, veterinarian, and dog organisations that did not support the proposal, additional suggestions and concerns included:

- **Justice:** owners have the right to follow the appeals process and have their animal returned. A period of 7 days must elapse between the incident and destruction to give the owner a chance to appeal (exceptions would apply where a fatality has occurred). Both sides should be heard before destroying a dog.
- **Quicker process:** the process could be expedited by councils appointing a panel of qualified independent assessors with expertise in animal behaviour.

QCCL was not supportive of the proposal to limit appeals as it diminishes the recourse of justice and has the potential to jeopardise public faith in the justice system.

Other issues or proposals

Several respondents raised concerns about other aspects of animal management or proposed alternative approaches to dealing with dangerous dogs. The following responses were out of scope for this discussion paper but have been noted by the Department and will be assessed for further consideration. Some representative quotes are provided as relevant.

Restricting dog ownership

At least seven local governments and two organisations suggest that some dog owners should be restricted in what breeds they can own. Restricting dog ownership would occur if they had a history of not taking proper care of their dog, had already been given multiple chances, or had a serious offence related to a regulated dog.

Updating terminology within the Act

At least four local governments and three organisations suggested making certain terms within the Act clearer to reduce subjective interpretation. The 'Queensland canine community' is willing to assist the Queensland Government in creating clear and absolute definitions by providing support and consultation to local governments. Terms that need clarifying include:

- "Dangerous dog" and "menacing dog"
- "Aggression" and "aggressive"
- "Causes fear"
- "Bite" (grading of bite severity)
- "Severe attack"
- "Responsible person"
- "Animal Keeper"
- "Owner"

Restructure the regulated dog declaration process

At least five local governments and one organisation suggested restructuring the regulated dog declaration process. The Brisbane City Council suggests having a clear criteria or recognised methodology for issuing a declaration, such as embedding the Dunbar Dog Bite Scale into the Act as the preferred framework. Other suggestions include removing the need to issue a declaration notice to the owner for the dog to be classified as a regulated dog and allowing for regulated dog declarations to be reviewed after 3-5 years.

Regulated dog registration

At least five local governments suggest incorporating the registration of regulated dogs as a condition for keeping a regulated dog.

Control of breeding regulated dogs and their offspring

At least five local governments suggest amending the Act to prevent the offspring of seized dogs from going to irresponsible keeping environments. Brisbane City Council also suggests shortening the current three-month timeframe within which a newly declared dangerous dog needs to be desexed.

Body worn cameras

At least four local governments suggest the introduction of provisions allowing council officers to utilise body-worn cameras to reduce the likelihood of assault in addition to improving the quality of evidence collected.

Enhancing powers of entry provisions for regulated dog compliance inspections

At least four local governments suggest enhancing powers of entry provisions to ensure ongoing compliance with keeping regulated dogs. Currently, these powers are restricted by the Act, resulting in a heavy reliance on courts to obtain warrants.

Statewide dog registration database

At least one local government and three organisations suggest a centralised, statewide dog registration database to track regulated dogs and record dog attacks across the state. This information would be shared between councils and relevant organisations, such as Energy Queensland and the Australian Post. The database can also track critical information on both dog owners and dog breeders, such as licence and purchaser numbers.

Review enclosure requirements for declared dangerous dogs

At least three local governments suggest a review of the enclosure requirements that apply to regulated dogs. This would include clarifying the requirements for regulated dogs in apartments or small-lot dwellings.

Failure to register a dog

At least two local governments suggest that the Act should be amended to provide all local governments with the necessary powers to issue compliance notices and other regulatory tools to deal with unregistered dogs. Also, ensure local governments have the enforcement powers under the Act to address non-compliance with an owner's obligation to register a dog.

Implementing a licencing system for dog owners

The 'Queensland canine community' and Animal Justice Party suggest implementing a licence system for dog owners to ensure the owner is fit to own a dog. Some submissions suggested that this could function similarly to a car or gun licence.

Service provider workers

Energy Queensland and the Australian Post strongly advocate for safer access to someone's property for service provider workers and other community members. This could include signage requirements on the property for all dog owners.

“[Australia Post] data shows that most dog attack incidents occur at a customer’s home, often in the presence of an owner. Requiring owners to keep their dogs under effective control at all times is likely to significantly reduce the risk of a dog attack.”

Rescues and rehoming organisations

Animal Care Australia and Professional Dog Trainers Australia suggest a review of currently unregulated rescue and rehoming organisations to reduce the number of dogs with behavioural issues being given to people. Animal Care Australia recommends a provision within this review for rescue and rehoming organisations to be held liable where proof can be provided by an owner that, they obtained the dog under false pretences or with misleading information from a rescue or rehoming organisation.

Increase desexing rates

The Central Highlands Regional Council and Animal Justice Party suggest increasing desexing rates or even making desexing mandatory.

Aboriginal communities

AMRRIC suggests more attention needs to be given to Aboriginal communities and to ensuring the Act does not prevent locally driven solutions to local management problems.

“The majority of remote Aboriginal communities, including those in QLD, suffer from a lack of accessible animal health, welfare, and management services... Without regular and effective management, dogs and cats in remote communities can breed uncontrollably resulting in large populations of animals that typically roam freely, causing considerable nuisance and public health threats... In most remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities there is often very limited equipment and infrastructure (e.g. scanners, animal handling equipment, pound etc.) to enable effective management of dog registration or enforcement of any penalties for dog related offences.”

Owners should be financially accountable for dog bites/attacks

The Australian post suggests owners of dogs that attack or cause harm should be financially liable for any costs caused by the attack or bite, including hospital and vet costs, medicine, counselling, and retraining for their dog.

Breeding practises

Stronger regulations are needed to manage breeding practises, particularly backyard breeding and puppy mills. These breeding practises can have poor standards, resulting in behavioural issues with the puppies. Dogs Queensland further stipulates that even “registered breeders” don’t need to take any education or adhere to the Code of Ethics and welfare standards.

Noise pollution

Dogs should not be kept in high-density buildings or highly populated areas, as the noise pollution generated by dogs who are not properly trained or large dogs who are not adequately exercised is detrimental to other community members.