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Tasmanian Government **Media Release**

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Guy Barnett, Minister for Primary Industries and Water

Strengthening animal welfare laws

The Tasmanian Government takes animal welfare very seriously, which is why we are taking action to further strengthen the Animal Welfare Act and provide greater protection for Tasmanian animals.

Having received expert advice from the Animal Welfare Advisory Committee (AWAC), the Department of Primary Industries, Parks, Water and Environment and in consultation with the RSPCA (Tasmania), this Government will be introducing a Bill to amend the Animal Welfare Act, to further strengthen enforcement and support the prosecution of animal welfare breaches.

Through these proposed amendments, we are toughening the existing laws and providing Authorised Officers, including RSPCA representatives, with powers of emergency entry and the power to take possession of animals – where Authorised Officers reasonably believe the animal to be at imminent risk.

We will also move to restrict the use of pronged collars within Tasmania.

The Government will work closely with the RSPCA and key stakeholders to draft proposed amendments and undertake community consultation before tabling the Bill in early 2022.

The Government has also asked the AWAC to provide advice on whether reforms are required to the *Animal Welfare (Dogs) Regulations 2016*. Any reforms to the Animal Welfare Regulations relating to dogs will be considered separately to the amendments to the *Animal Welfare Act*.

This Government has previously significantly strengthened the Animal Welfare Act, increasing penalties across the board.

We increased the penalty for aggravated cruelty to up to \$33,600 and/or a maximum custodial sentence of up to 5 years imprisonment for an individual under the Animal Welfare Act, and strengthened penalties to send a strong message and increase deterrence against acts of animal cruelty.

The Tasmanian Liberal Government takes animal welfare seriously and we are delivering our plan for more contemporary laws.