



Association for Behaviour Analysis Australia

Association for Behaviour Analysis Australia Statement Against the Use of Contingent Electric Skin Shock as Treatment for Challenging Behaviour

Association for Behaviour Analysis Australia (ABA Australia) condemns the use of contingent electric skin shock on people with disabilities. We argue that the practice of contingent electric skin shock (CESS) as punishment for behaviours of concern is inconsistent with the science of behaviour analysis, presents an unreasonable risk of harm, and is less effective than other humane alternatives.

CESS is in direct contradiction of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disability (Articles 1, 15, 16, and 17; CRPD, 2006), violates the ABA Australia Code of Ethical Practice, BACB Code of Ethics, and the NDIS Act, Section 3(2013)

Research suggests that CESS may be associated with the following harms (Zarcone et al., 2020):

1. Pain
2. Physical harm (burns, blisters, and other forms of tissue damage)
3. Psychological harm (anxiety, depression, fear, and avoidance)
4. Trauma responses, such as flight or freeze responses
5. Negative emotional and behavioural reactions, including the substitution of other forms of challenging behaviour

ABA Australia represents professionals in the field of behaviour analysis. It is our ethical and professional responsibility to protect and uphold the rights of people with disabilities. By making this statement, we aim to:

1. Make our commitment to the principles outlined in the United Nations CRPD known and take steps to actively protect and uphold the rights of people with disabilities.
2. Make it known that we, as an organisation, condemn the practice of CESS.
3. Add our voice to the growing international behaviour analytic community calling for an end to this practice.

Approved by Member vote on 24 October 2022