

21st September 2020

Minister Kevin Anderson MP
Minister for Better Regulation & Innovation
E: tamworth@parliament.nsw.gov.au

RE: Amendments to the Strata Schemes Management Act

Dear Minister Anderson

Animal Care Australia (ACA) represents many tens of thousands of pet owners and keepers across the nation with the largest number of members residing in NSW. Further details of ACA attached as Appendix B and via our website.

We write regarding the proposed Strata Schemes Management Amendment (Sustainability Infrastructure) Bill 2020. <https://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/bills/Pages/bill-details.aspx?pk=3761>

In particular, the following Animal Justice Party (AJP) amendment recently passed by the Legislative Council which is due for consideration by the Legislative Assembly shortly.

<https://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/bill/files/3761/AJP%20c2020-116A.pdf>

The aim is to create a clear ability for owners and tenants in strata complexes to keep pets. The law is only required to assess instances where a pet creates a substantiated issue for neighbours or the animal's welfare is significantly compromised.

ACA supports the following modified version of the AJP amendment for the reasons outlined in Appendix A. We are seeking the support of government to ensure this amendment passes into law.

Keeping of Animals 137B Keeping of animals

(2) The keeping of a particular animal on a lot is reasonable unless the owners corporation can show –

(a) that it is a significant detriment to the animal's welfare, or

(b) that the animal causes a nuisance or hazard to the owner or occupier of another lot or unreasonably interferes with the use or enjoyment of another lot or of the common property.

Should you have any further questions please do not hesitate to contact me.

Kind regards,



Michael Donnelly
President, Animal Care Australia.
0400 323 843

CC: Shadow Minister Yasmin Catley
swansea@parliament.nsw.gov.au

Appendix A. –Rationale in support of pets in strata complexes

1. Owners/tenants should be able to keep animals without having to inform anyone, as this a basic right. A right that should exist without the need for cumbersome 'red tape' which some owners' corporations rely on and seem to relish!
2. Pet ownership is popular in Australia. It provides comfort and prevents loneliness, and as we have seen during the recent months of the pandemic, pets have become more essential than ever to daily family life. Small animals are well suited to living indoors with their owners. They brighten our lives, and give us routine and structure. The majority of households in Australia have pets, and this amendment catches up to current sentiments in the community.
3. With the rapid increase in high density housing in Australian centres, increased urbanization, reduced human interaction and more time spent in front of screens, pet ownership has become essential for our mental wellbeing and emotional health. Children learn from pets to be responsible, about obligations, about how to cope with grief, and how to develop routines.
4. Responsible pet ownership involves spending time with our animals, training them, caring for them, and growing emotionally with them. Animals teach adults and children about empathy, which makes them better community members. **This should be supported by legislation.**
5. Many people escaping domestic violence are limited in their options to find accommodation that allows pets, and remain in unsafe situations longer than they should.
6. The default position that animals should be permitted (unless they are problematic) would assist our most high risk and vulnerable community members to be safe. As a community, we need to support their animals to support them. **This should be supported by legislation.**
7. Vulnerable community members such as the elderly, disabled and those struggling with mental health issues also frequently have pets, for support and comfort and to give their daily lives meaning and purpose. This is not insignificant. Pet owners have been shown to live longer, happier and healthier lives. Having someone relying on you to get out of bed every day and take care of them is incredibly meaningful, and comforting. **This should be supported by legislation.**
8. This amendment is about supporting our community, being reasonable and empathetic to the needs of our most vulnerable while ensuring children develop the emotional range to live in a crowded world.
9. As Australians move into more high rises and the ¼ acre block becomes an icon of the past, we need more support from government to ensure that our communities are able to have the well-rounded, diverse lifestyles that are necessary to develop healthy communities that care about each other.

Appendix B.



About Animal Care Australia

Animal Care Australia is a national incorporated association established to lobby for real animal welfare by those who keep, breed and care for animals. Our goal is to promote and encourage high standards in all interactions with the animals in our care.

Animal Care Australia or ACA encourages continued development of animal welfare standards and Codes of Practice for animal husbandry, breeding, training, sale and sporting exhibitions for a wide range of animal species, including pets, companion animals, animals used for educational or entertainment purposes or kept for conservation.

Mission Statement

Animal Care Australia (ACA) is the Peak Animal Welfare Body representing the keepers and breeders of animals in Australia as pets and companions.

Objects

- To represent Animal Care Groups as the peak animal welfare body
- To engage and advise Government and legislators on welfare issues relating to pets and companion animals.
- To protect the rights of ethical hobbyists & animal keepers to breed and keep pets and companion animals.
- To clarify the difference between animal rights and animal welfare
- To promote higher Animal welfare outcomes