



Animal Care Australia  
2023

# Pets & Companions



**Animal Welfare Policy & Position Statement**

*Version 3 — July 2023*

***Animal Welfare is Animal Care***

# Animal Welfare Policy & Position Statement

This document sets out the policies and position statements of Animal Care Australia Incorporated. It is intended that this document will operate as a living document, which will be improved upon as policy is updated.

We encourage all members to suggest edits and additions, with a view to clarifying policy and to improve the administration of the organisation.

Animal Care Australia Incorporated – INC1801209

ABN: 36 438 686 995 Tax File No: 508 268 553 CFN:25599

## **Document development:**

Draft Welfare Policy & Position Statement presented: Monday 11<sup>th</sup> May 2020

Finalised version 1 - Welfare Policy & Position Statement approved by Committee: Monday 10<sup>th</sup> August 2020

Finalised version 2 - Welfare Policy & Position Statement approved by Committee: 19th December 2022



“Animal Care Australia acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the land on which we reside, and pay our respects to their Elders past and present.”

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# Definitions

For the purpose of this document, Animal Care Australia utilises the following definitions:

**Animal welfare** means the physical and mental state of an animal in relation to the conditions in which it lives and dies.

An animal experiences good welfare if the animal is healthy, comfortable, well nourished, safe, is not suffering from unpleasant states such as pain, fear and distress, and is able to express behaviours that are important for its physical and mental state.

**Animal Rights** means humans should not make use of, own or benefit from animals in any manner, and the immediate abolition of animal ownership in any form.

Historically this has taken the form of animal rights, animal liberation, animal justice and animal protection.

**Animal Rights Extremists/activists** are political parties, associations/organisations, and individuals that will go to any length to manipulate societal understanding and legislative reform to achieve the abolition of animal ownership. Throughout this document referred to as ARE's.

**Commercial Pet Industry** means businesses or other services where the aim is to make a profit from selling animals, products or services directly relating to the keeping of pets and animals.

This includes entities such as pet shops, grooming services, agistment providers, etc

**Commercial Shelter Industry** means the commercialisation of shelter/rescue services that are operated under a profit-driven model and/or placing the existence of the service as a priority over the welfare of the animals. The Shelter industry has existed for years. The commercialised shelter industry is relatively new and is a concept driven by animal rights ideologies and a lack of government commitment to resolving the issue of abandoned animals.

**'personhood' rights** means the legislated removal of the property status of animals from being owned by a person/s resulting in the animal acquiring its own 'rights'.

**Pet and Companion Animal Community** means the collective of community-based associations, groups, and individuals (both keepers and breeders) who share the common interest of the caring for and keeping of pets and companion animals.

**Pet Factory, Puppy Factory/Farm** is any unethical operator/breeder is any person/entity who is breeding an animal with poor welfare outcomes in defiance of the animal welfare standards.

**(Animal) Sporting Industry** means the collective of events and activities in which people, business/enterprises, and organisations are involved in the producing, facilitating, promoting, or organising of activities involving the inclusion of animals in a sporting capacity (such as racing).

# Introduction

Animal Care Australia was founded in early 2018 to represent the interests of animal keepers and breeders throughout Australia. Animal Care Australia was established as an organisation where the real animal welfare experts, those who keep, care for and breed animals would advocate for real and improved animal welfare.

With extreme animal rights and animal liberationist ideologies influencing government legislation, regulation and policy at our expense and to the detriment of our animals and pets, it has become necessary to provide government with a balancing voice.

Just over 60% of Australian households own pets. It is estimated more than 24 million pets are kept in the care of our community. Pet/animal ownership provides companionship for many within our society including, the elderly, the lonely, and our young generations.

The keeping of pets and animals teaches a sense of responsibility, an awareness of the importance of animals to exist and to co-exist with us. Animals provide us with an understanding of life, love, loss, and a sense of belonging. The continued keeping of animals as we grow from youngsters into adults allows us to improve our skills in animal husbandry, and leads to advancements in animal welfare.

Originally founded to speak on behalf of owners of pet and companion animals, Animal Care Australia quickly recognised there is a need to expand our purview to include all animals held in 'captive' care with the exception of commercial livestock and it's directly associated activities, such as live export etc.

The Association has a strong committee composed of representatives for each major animal group – dogs, cats, birds, horses, fish, insects, reptiles, hobby farm animals, small mammals, (pet) native mammals and exhibited animals.

Animal Care Australia's membership base is comprised of animal keeping associations (members) and individual pet owners (supporters). We recognise the role played by animal keeping organisations in educating their members, and we call upon government to fund educational initiatives for the general public.





Animal Care Australia's position is to promote welfare education over regulation. Our goal is to promote and encourage high standards in all interactions with the animals in our care, to encourage responsible pet ownership, and the respectful treatment of all animals in our community.

We support and consult in the continued development of animal welfare law at all levels of government, including federal, state and local government. ACA will consult on all relevant legislation to protect your rights as an animal owner. We will continue to defend against changes that could impair your ability to keep, show, compete or work with, and to engage in all lawful activities with your animals and pets.

Animal Care Australia acknowledges the requirement under legislation to ensure minimum animal care standards can be enforced. We support mandatory minimum standards and codes of practice designed to encourage the improvement of higher animal welfare. Animal Care Australia recognises animal keeping organisations are well placed as experts in their specific species and we strongly encourage their inclusion in the development and review of both minimum standards and codes of practice.

As a society we have a responsibility to provide 'whole of life' welfare and protection for all animals living within our care, and accordingly Animal Care Australia will continue to advocate for the rights to ethically breed animals, and promote responsible breeding activities that are designed to ensure the highest welfare outcomes, thereby protecting the continued existence of each species and breed. Animal Care Australia does not discriminate against species or breeds where the appropriate care for the health and welfare, in compliance with all state/territory laws that govern the keeping of those animals, is being met.

*For the purpose of this document all legislated Acts of federal and state parliament, associated regulations, policies, standards and guidelines, codes of practice, local government laws, etc. that influence or deal directly with matters of animal care and welfare will be referred to hereafter as "animal welfare laws".*



A close-up photograph of a dark brown animal's fur, possibly a dog or cat. A bright, diagonal highlight of light reflects off the fur, creating a shimmering effect. The text "Pets and Companion Animal Community" is overlaid in the center in a yellow, serif font.

# Pets and Companion Animal Community



# Pet and Companion Animal Community

Pet and Companion animals covers a broad range of species including:

- Birds – including poultry and waterfowl – both native and exotics
- Dogs
- Cats
- Reptiles & amphibians
- Fish – tropical, fresh-water, and ocean-dwelling – both native and exotics
- Horses – including ponies & donkeys – although legislative differences impact their definition as a companion animal or as livestock
- Native mammals – native mammals are kept as pets in most States – the species permitted to be kept varies between States
- Small mammals – rabbits, ferrets, rats, mice, guinea pigs, etc
- Hobby farm & pet livestock – including livestock animals as well as alpacas, camels, etc kept as pets

Animal Care Australia considers all species above to be domesticated animals. These animals have been continually bred in the care of their owners for many decades and should not be considered or confused with similar wild animal counterparts.

## Responsible Pet Ownership:

Pets are great company, and are loyal friends. They not only bring an innocent joy into our lives, but the human-animal bond is a deeply personal and mutually beneficial experience.

Owning a pet is a lifelong responsibility but there are many positive benefits. Pets really can make us physically and mentally healthier. It is well documented that the bond between people and their pets can increase fitness and immunity, reduce stress and loneliness, and bring happiness to their owners.

They can help us feel safe while we're home alone.

Pets also benefit from having their own human. They enjoy a personal daily caregiver, a safe home, and longer lifespans than their homeless cousins. A recent study<sup>\*</sup> has shown that the stronger the human-animal bond is, the better veterinary and preventative care that animal will receive in its lifetime.

Choosing the right pet is key to ensuing a strong bond and lifelong commitment to our animals. The pull of love at first sight when we meet a cute fluff-ball can be very powerful, but being a responsible pet owner means earnestly considering whether we are a good fit for our new pet as much as they are for us before committing to taking them home.

## Pick the Right Pet

It is your responsibility as a pet owner to thoroughly research the basic requirements of your chosen



pet, and it's important to do this before bringing your pet home so that you are well informed about the specific needs of your new pet. It's also important to understand that owning a pet is a lifelong commitment. Depending on the breed, health and lifestyle, cats can live for 15-20 years, dogs for 10-20 years and birds for up to 80 years. Companion animals thrive on human company and will always depend on you. You should also consider:

- your working hours
- your social life
- the time you spend away from home, including holidays
- whether you are prepared to walk a dog every day
- whether you are home often enough to keep a cat company
- who will care for your pet when you are away from home

Pets also need to be:

- fed and watered
- stimulated and exercise – all pets need species appropriate daily stimulation and exercise
- given access to appropriate shelter when in the yard
- groomed and bathed
- played with and entertained
- trained – many behavioural issues stem from lack of time spent training your pet (in particular, dogs). Training is mental stimulation and helps prevent bad habits that often stem from boredom. Training good manners is important too.

### Keep Your Pet Healthy

No matter whether you have a dog, cat, horse, bird, small mammal (rodent, rabbit etc), bearded dragon, or other pets, providing regular life-long veterinary care is important for keeping your pet and family healthy. Regular veterinary visits are essential to good pet health. Talk to your pet's veterinarian about how to keep your pet healthy.

Provide your pet with a good diet, fresh water, clean bedding, and plenty of exercise. Keep up with your pet's vaccines, de-worming, and flea and tick control.

By keeping your pet healthy, you help to keep yourself and your family healthy. Contact your veterinarian if you have any questions about your pet's health or if you think your pet may be sick.

**Animal Care Australia supports and encourages responsible pet ownership**

## Teach Children How to Interact with Animals

Pets can teach children compassion and responsibility. However, children should be supervised while interacting with animals to ensure the safety of the child and the pet. Teach children to wash their hands right after playing with animals or anything in the animals' environment (cages, beds, food or water dishes). Teach your children how to understand the animals body language when the animal is telling you/your child that they have had enough and need space, and to be left alone.

## Breeding of pets and companion animals

Animal Care Australia does not support restriction on the breeding of companion animals. Animal Care Australia encourages responsible breeding and responsible ownership over restrictive breeding legislation.

There is a recognised acknowledgement that restrictive breeding also restricts genetic quality within breeds and currently many pure-breeds are being severely impacted by shrinking genetic diversity.

## Responsible Breeders Policy

A 'Responsible Breeder' is responsible for the healthy wellbeing & upbringing of their pets by following best practices, animal welfare standards and including a varied healthy diet appropriate to the species.

Animal Care Australia believes that non-pedigree breeders should follow the same level of care and consideration, as those of pedigree breeders. Animal Care Australia supports a positive approach to all inter-breed crosses and genetically diverse and purebred pets.

Responsible breeders strive to improve their expertise in a range of areas including:

- Feeding and nutrition
- Housing and enclosure requirements
- Husbandry and cleanliness
- Breeding requirements of their species
- Basic genetics
- Disease control and understanding of health requirements.
- Hereditary problems within the breed/species.

Responsible Breeders:

- Generally plan ahead and aim to find good homes for the animals they breed
- Provide a high standard of care and living conditions for all of their animals
- Are genuinely concerned about the welfare of their animals for their entire lives

- Are open to questions and are willing to provide some background or history of the animals, including support and information about the upkeep to potential new owners
- Make sure the buyer will suit the animal and the animal will suit the buyer
- Breed to produce happy and healthy pets
- Comply with all animal welfare laws within their State/Territory.

Healthy animals that are sound in temperament and body are the aim of all responsible breeders. The more we know of all the factors affecting our breeding stock before breeding, the better equipped we will be to find solutions to potential problems. Responsible owners and breeders will make honest attempts to decrease the incidence of any problems.

### **Brachycephalic breeds in dogs and cats**

With the recent rise in other countries of banning the breeding of certain brachycephalic breeds of dogs and cats, Animal Care Australia strongly encourages all breeders and breeding associations to improve their breeds by utilising up to date advances in technology to health check their breed through regular relevant health testing to improve the welfare, health and well-being of your dogs and cats.

There is scientific and veterinary research supporting the fact SOME brachycephalic breeds do suffer more from unnecessary breathing, brain-related and some spinal (vertebrae) medical conditions. These CAN BE reduced and potentially eradicated through responsible breeding. All breeders are responsible for the health and well-being of their animals – regardless of any standards that may be suggested, or lack of standards.

For the continuation of these breeds in Australia, higher welfare outcomes must always be paramount.

### **What is a sound temperament and body?**

For physical soundness, is the animal able to cope with the demands of ordinary life? Does it have a good temperament or mental soundness? Different temperaments are required for different home environments and areas of activity. Some pets are more suited in larger families with children whilst others are more suited to owners living alone. Some animals require a high exercise regime whilst others are more suited to quieter living.

Before considering breeding, you should always:

- Assess the strength of the animal, its genetic make-up, etc
- Check your capacity to look-after and house any young until new and suitable homes can be found
- Check if there is actually a need for those animals (a shortage of that species or an over-abundance)
- Ensure the animals involved are of an appropriate age

- Females of every species should only produce a certain number of young per season. It is vital that females be allowed to recover and have breaks from pregnancy. Check Codes of Practice or best practice with Societies & Clubs. This will help maintain a healthy animal that will then produce healthy young

## **Animal Care Australia supports responsible breeding**

### **De-sexing**

Companion Animal Acts in each State require the registration of dogs and cats, including de-sexing of dogs and cats as well as those sold through pet shops, or re-homed.

Animal Care Australia supports this especially while feral dog and cat populations continue to escalate and impact our native wildlife.

Animal Care Australia does not support mandatory de-sexing of all companion animals owned by members of the public for the following reasons:

It is impossible to enforce. Government agencies struggle with significant compliance issues and resources and community education is more economically viable

There would be a massive increase in numbers surrendered and abandoned due to the inability of the community to afford the veterinary costs associated

Animal Care Australia encourages State Governments and Local Councils to expand on and provide funding for de-sexing programs, in particular, education on the benefits of de-sexing cats and dogs kept as pets and not for breeding. Accountable reporting of statistics assessing the success of local de-sexing initiatives in reducing shelter numbers and kill rates is required and should be mandated.

## **Animal Care Australia does not support mandatory desexing of all companion animals**



## Responsible Buyers:

Potential owners should investigate the source of the animal they are seeking to purchase. Where possible visit the place where the animal is bred, ask questions about diet, exercise, enrichment, social interaction. If the breeder refuses access to their home/facility – for security reasons - then buyers should insist on live/video conferencing introductions to their potential new pet, it's surroundings and circumstances. Ask to sight documentation such as vaccination and vet visit records. If you don't know where your new family member was bred, how can you possibly know what conditions they or their mum have been living in?

Before adopting or buying a new pet, make sure that it is the right one for you and your family. Do some research beforehand about the specific needs of the animal. Ask yourself these questions before getting a pet:

- ⇒ How long will this animal live?
- ⇒ What are the ongoing costs? (click the link)
- ⇒ What does the pet eat?
- ⇒ How much exercise does the pet need?
- ⇒ How large will it become?
- ⇒ How much will it cost for veterinary care?
- ⇒ Do I have enough time to properly care for and clean up after the pet?
- ⇒ What type of habitat does this pet need to be healthy?
- ⇒ What type of exercise does this pet need?
- ⇒ If you are a tenant, are pets allowed in the house, apartment, etc?
- ⇒ Can I take my pet with me if I have to move to a new home?

**Animal Care Australia supports responsible  
buying**

## Responsible Sellers:

When the time comes to sell animals it is important for the seller to recognise their responsibilities to the animals and the buyers.

The animals are relying on you to do your best to ensure their new home will be with someone who can properly care for them and will maintain that care for the remainder of their lives. You do have that animal's future in your hands.

An important point to remember is the sale should not be about the money. Sure it is important to ensure you receive the appropriate funds for your animal – the future of that animal must always outweigh the profit.

Animal Care Australia strongly encourages buyers to view the animals in their current living conditions and to educate themselves about the animal they are about to add to their family. As a seller you have the responsibility to accommodate that where possible. Ensure you always follow covid/health and other biosecurity protocols when allowing people to visit your property.

Animal Care Australia acknowledges that you may not always want potential buyers trampling through your home for a number of reasons, including protecting your own security and to maintain biosecurity protocols or preventing potential buyers from interacting with animals that are not for sale. However, we do strongly encourage you to use current technologies and part-take in live phone/video introductions of your animals to the potential buyers. You can safely achieve this and allow the buyers to see what it is they are about to purchase without forgoing your privacy.

With the ever increasing amount of scamming that occurs this is an important aspect to consider.

It also allows you to interact and ask questions of the buyers, ensuring you feel comfortable that the animals will be going to a secure new home.

A responsible seller will:

- ask questions of the new owner, seeking out their knowledge of the animal they want to purchase, including its dietary, housing and husbandry needs
- provide that information especially where it is not known (provide written resources or links to credible online resources)
- provide education that will assist the animal settle into their new home
- offer full transparency to the buyers, ensuring they are welcome to see the animals, enclosures and living conditions (even if electronically in the first instance)
- provide information about local community groups and clubs for the species being purchased
- ensure the animal is going to be transported in an appropriate manner – remember most states have legal requirements regarding how animals can travel. Additionally, a buyer who turns up with a flimsy insecure transport box is showing you, they do not have a proper understanding of that animals needs for security and minimised stress.

And the MOST important responsibility:

- provide a contact point of support for the lifetime of the animal – this may also include offering to rehome the animal in order to prevent it needing to be surrendered to a shelter/rescue group

With some species it is a requirement under legislation to offer a refund policy, especially for dogs and cats. Each state has different criteria so check your appropriate state legislation for this.

**Animal Care Australia supports responsible selling**

## **Pet-factories/farms and unethical breeding**

Animal Care Australia does not support irresponsible/unethical breeding or individuals who commit acts of cruelty against animals. It is generally agreed no-one likes 'puppy farms'.

Animal Care Australia's concern is the lack of a clear legal definition that is not skewed by the social environment a person participates within. This has resulted in different groups who all support improved welfare speaking past each other due to the lack of clarity in terminology

There appears to be a common and agreeable factor within all the definitions and that is 'inadequate or poor welfare conditions'. Accordingly, Animal Care Australia's position revolves around our definition:

**"An unethical operator/breeder is any person/entity who is breeding an animal with poor welfare outcomes in defiance of the animal welfare standards."**

Predominantly the focus is on puppies/dog breeding, Animal Care Australia has adopted a broader definition to include all breeders, as we acknowledge poor breeding and poor animal welfare outcomes can be found across the species.

**Animal Care Australia DOES NOT support unethical breeders operating in substandard conditions where animals needs are not met.**

### **Educating the public to reduce unethical breeders abilities to exist.**

Animal Care Australia strongly advocates more focus should be aimed at changing the perspective to educating the public about responsible breeding, buying and pet ownership.

Animal Care Australia implores government to provide more adequate funding for educating the public on their responsibilities as pet owners including supporting & promoting animal keeper associations & clubs.

Educating the public is a key step into changing behaviour. Education needs to be themed with the aim of making pet owners more aware of their responsibilities. In general, most people are unaware that there are Codes of Practice that must be followed. They know that animal cruelty laws exist, but do they know what is written in those laws?



Education needs to start in our schools (primary and high school). Our children are usually the one's seeking to own a pet and they are also the keepers and breeders for the decades that follow. Introducing basic pet care and the responsibility of pet ownership skills to children will enhance the understanding of pet ownership within the community and more specifically will help overcome many barriers within multi-cultural communities, where often pet welfare and ownership has been inherited from different societies with a vastly different understanding of how animals should be kept.

Teaching children throughout their primary and higher education levels about responsible buying and the need to ensure you buy from a reputable breeder is crucial in this era of technology where not-so-credible sellers are attracting the new generations that live in the technological space. Once upon a time if you wanted an animal you read an advertisement, you phoned, you visited the home of the breeder, and you came back when it was old enough to take it to its forever home with you. Today, pictures of animals are posted, money is transferred and quite often animals are exchanged without having seen where they were born, the parents or the standards they'd been living in. In an increasing trend no animals are exchanged at all — and the buyer is scammed .

## **Animal Care Australia advocates for further government funding to increase public education initiatives.**

### **Animal grooming, clipping and groomers**

Grooming and clipping includes trimming fur, hair, feathers (wings), and maintaining healthy nails or hooves.

Animal Care Australia recognises grooming as a vital component of animal welfare. Animal Care Australia supports educating the public on the essential need for animals to be groomed, and encourages the public to seek out qualified or experienced groomers, where possible.

Animal Care Australia encourages groomers to seek out appropriate training or learning opportunities, where available, to ensure a quality professional service can be provided.

## **Animal Care Australia supports responsible pet grooming**

A close-up photograph of a horse's coat, showing a rich, dark brown color with a prominent golden-brown highlight running diagonally across the frame. The texture of the fur is visible, and the lighting creates a soft, glowing effect.

Community Animal  
Expos, Club Shows,  
Competitions &  
Recreational Activities

# Community Companion Animal Expos, Club Shows, Competitions and Recreational Activities

There are many social animal groups and organisations that hold shows, expos and competitions across a wide range of species. Groups and organisations should instill and implement internal codes of practice for the holding of these events. These codes of practice must ensure strong welfare standards are met which include:

- the use of holding & exhibiting (display) cages designed for minimum stress and providing easy access to feed and water.
- animals exhibited outdoors may be exposed to heat or cold, so must be provided with suitable shelter and protection from extreme conditions.
- display areas should provide a space where animals exhibiting symptoms of stress can be immediately removed from public view.
- limits on numbers of animals permitted per cage to ensure no over-crowding or potential fighting.
- display cages must be able to be secured to prevent the accidental release/escape.
- animals that may pose a potential risk to the public due to possible biting or are venomous (such as some reptiles, arachnids & other invertebrates) must have protective area of fencing or defined boundaries ensuring a safe viewable distance for the public.
- if there is a need for animals to be transferred from one cage to another – an enclosed and sealable area should be provided by the organisers to prevent the risk of escape.

**Animal Care Australia supports companion  
animal Expos, Club shows and competitions**

Social animal groups and organisations hold additional events that enhance interaction and allow the animals to display their skills while exercising. These include horse riding events, dog sport activities, training activities and more.



Unfounded concerns from Animal Rights Extremists (ARE's) have been raised in regards to the following:

### **Recreational Carriage Driving**

This activity is being forced out of national parks, recreational spaces and other suitable public spaces with rule changes contrary to public wishes. Increasingly carriage driving is limited to private property or public roads, which can be unsafe due to careless motor vehicle drivers.

Many horses are not suitable for riding, and most people cannot keep up with a horse at any pace above a walk, so driving is a great activity for them to keep them fit and healthy. It also meets horses' innate need to explore their surroundings. Ponies and mini horses in particular can end up spending much of their lives contained in small yards in order to restrict their access to excess feed, but this also restricts the self exercise larger paddocks provide.

Carriage driving can be the perfect activity for minis, outgrown kids ponies, or horses who cannot carry weight on their back. The weight of a correctly sized carriage puts almost no weight on the horses' back, and the horse only pulls the carriage when increasing pace or going uphill. A horse can comfortably pull twice their own weight on level ground, and half that on hills or rough terrain.

Horses NEED a lot of exercise to live long healthy lives, and to feel good about themselves, improving their mental state.

Horses with proper training enjoy driving as much as their humans do. The public are usually excited to encounter carriage horses.

Carriage driving is popular amongst the disabled and former riders, who, due to injury or illness, can no longer ride or walk with their horse. Driving keeps horses active and well cared for in their forever home for longer.

### **Equestrian Activities**

Horses and ponies may engage in a wide variety of equestrian activities. Competitive sports can range from club level gymkhanas, to endurance events, showing and horse agility, up to the elite levels of dressage, show jumping, reining and mounted archery. Non-competitive activities can include trail riding, trick training and hiking.

Horses and ponies benefit from lots of exercise and enrichment that training provides. Most horses enjoy their activities and outings, and regular outings with horses helps prepare them for emergency evacuations (it's too late to teach a horse to load into a trailer when the bushfire is already next door) and to be calm and safe in strange environments. Horses that regularly engage in a wide range of activities are viewed as more valuable - not just in monetary terms but because a well educated horse with a wide range of experiences is a calmer, quieter and safer horse to handle and ride or drive.

Owning horses is no longer a symbol of elitism or wealth. Most modern horse owners are ordinary people, who make many personal sacrifices to take good care for their animals.

Welfare standards are constantly improving in animal husbandry and competitive sports, and modern horse handling methods have evolved well beyond the 'old days' of breaking horse's spirits.



Animal Care Australia supports owners who ensure their horses and ponies live in horse friendly accommodations, are appropriately educated, and are fit enough to comfortably participate in the activities asked of them, with comfortable, well-fitting equipment.

### **Dog Agility and Show Events**

Many dog breeds are utilised in different activities such as fly-ball and other competitive sports organised by community-based social groups and associations and are separate to the greyhound racing industry.

Animal Care Australia has no objection to these events continuing, as long as the appropriate breeds are utilised within the appropriate events, and high welfare standards are maintained during training, participating in the event and care at home.

Animal Care Australia does not support the existence of breeding standards that result in the loss of physical function where the appearance or presentation of the animal takes precedence over the health and well-being of the animal.

**Animal Care Australia supports animal agility events, equestrian activities, recreational carriage driving and dog sporting events**



Pets in our society

## Pets in rental housing

Research has shown that there are health benefits, both mental and physical when owning a pet. Such benefits can help promote a more harmonist environment within a strata environment, as caring for an animal can decrease the severity of depression and anxiety, as well as relieve stress.

Many of the arguments against pets being kept in strata could equally be applied to the impacts that children can have on a property. In many cases children are arguably as destructive and more of a nuisance than pets could be. To discriminate against animals is simply pandering to the bias of individuals.

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 legislation needs to catch up to current sentiments in the community.
3. With the rapid increase in high density housing in Australian centres, increased urbanisation, 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. Allowing pets in strata 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.

### Some basic principles:

#### Principle 1 -

The large majority of Australian residents would like to keep pets, or are already keeping pets.

All research, including the Animal Medicines Australia report, supports this principle. Indeed, given the current difficulties keeping pets due to By-laws and to many council's numbers-based regulation, ACA suspects the percentage of residents wishing to keep pets to be substantially higher than statistics indicate.

Given the overwhelming support for pet keeping, ACA recommends Acts are edited to remove all restrictions on pet keeping.

Report: (<https://animalmedicinesaustralia.org.au/>)

#### Principle 2 -

Pets greatly enhance the mental health of the community.

There is an enormous body of evidence supporting the therapeutic value of pets to the mental (and also physical) health of the community. Beyond Blue's, "[Pets and their impact on mental health](#)", is an excellent introduction to such research.

Laws and By-laws that attempt to restrict the ability to keep pets will impact on the mental health of residents. Such regulation, as the recent NSW Court of Appeal case found are oppressive, and in ACA's view are also harsh and unconscionable.

#### Principle 3 -

Pet keeping should be encouraged, with the caveat that it does not adversely affect others.

Model By-laws should also be amended to make it clear to all owners and tenants that pets are permitted, however they must be kept under control when on common property and they must not cause a nuisance to other lots.



# Animal Care Australia supports pets in strata/rental housing.

## Animals on Public Transport

Throughout much of the world, pets are allowed on public transport. Each country/region has slightly different rules governing how the pets are to travel.

In Australia, public transport is looked after by the state governments. This means the rules stating whether pets are permitted on board differs between each state. Please note, for this section we are NOT referring to Accredited Assistance Animals that are permitted across Australia to travel on all public transport. Below is a breakdown of rules relating to pets travelling:

**Australian Capital Territory:** Canberra and the ACT is fairly pet-friendly when it comes to public transport, as long as you have a small pet.

Pets are allowed on both the new light rail line and buses, as long as you ask permission off the driver. However, they need to be in a box, basket or other appropriate pet container, which means this is only really an option for smaller pets.

**New South Wales:** Pets are allowed on buses, light rail and ferries in NSW, albeit they need to travel in a suitable carrier at all times when on board. This means it is only really a practical transport option for small dogs and other small pets.

It's also a requirement to ask permission from the driver or crew, who, as long as your pet is in a carrier, are most likely to deny permission if the service is reaching capacity. Animals may also be refused if they are unclean, seem vicious, or are likely to annoy or threaten other passengers.

Unfortunately, pets are not allowed on any of the state's trains, including the metro trains, plus on coaches, even if in a carrier. This means it's difficult to transport pets longer distances using public transport in NSW, including between Sydney and the surrounding cities of Wollongong and Newcastle.

**Northern Territory:** The Northern Territory is one part of Australia that prohibits pets in its public transport rules.

**Queensland:** Pets have limited access to public transport in Queensland. At the moment, pets are only permitted to travel on the Brisbane River ferries and CityCats.

Unlike in Sydney, both small and large dogs are permitted, either in an enclosed carrier or wearing a leash and muzzle, on the outside deck. Dogs are also not permitted onboard during peak hours, 6:00am to 8:30am then 3:30pm to 7:00pm on weekdays. Plus if a service is full, you might be asked to wait for

the next one. Dogs are also welcome on board the CityHopper service, a free ferry that runs roughly every half hour in between North Quay and Sydney Street.

**South Australia:** Pets not permitted to travel on public transport in the state.

**Tasmania:** Pets are also not permitted to travel on public transport in the state.

**Victoria:** The most pet-friendly state in Australia when it comes to public transport, with pets allowed on a wide range of public transport services.

Metropolitan trains, allow both small animals in a container or larger dogs wearing a leash and muzzle permitted. It's recommended though to avoid peak hour, between 7am and 9am and 4pm and 6pm on weekdays. Small pets are also allowed on board trams, buses and regional V/Line train services, as long as they are travelling in a suitable container. The only non-pet-friendly services are V/Line coaches, which only allow assistance animals.

**Western Australia:** Pets are not permitted on public transport in the state.

Australia is way behind the times and society expectation when it comes to pets being permitted on public transport.

This is why Animal Care Australia supports amendments to all relevant legislation permitting pets to travel.

Animal Care Australia supports the model in Victoria with the exception that coaches should also permit pet travel under similar conditions to other public transport in Victoria.

Animals should not be permitted to roam freely, and passengers (the general public) with phobias or allergies should be provided with access without coming into immediate contact with the animals.

That is, animals may be within pet carriers, a separate carriage on trains or trams, or separate sections on buses and ferries. Dogs not in pet carriers should be on a leash and harness.

**Animal Care Australia supports pets on public transport**

## Assistance Animals

ACA strongly suggests the definition of an Assistance Animal NOT be restricted to the *Disability Discrimination Acts*, that being:

*“... a dog or other animal that:*

- is accredited by a prescribed animal training organisation or under a State or Territory law, or*
- is trained to assist a person with disability to alleviate the effects of the disability and meet the standards of hygiene and behaviour appropriate for an animal in a public place.”*

Many people keep animals for emotional support - **Emotional Support Animals**. These animals provide support for people with special physical or mental needs, providing comfort, companionship, they relieve loneliness as well as help with depression, anxiety and motivating their owners to get out and about. These animals do not receive any specialised training to qualify them as assistance animals by law, however they do play a major positive role when it comes to mental health.

The Assistance Animals definition does not apply to non-certified ‘facility animals’ or ‘therapy animals’ who are partnered with health care, educational or other professionals to support people in various facilities (such as schools, learning or rehabilitation centres, care homes, therapy clinics, psychiatric facilities or courts) and who live either at the facility or with their handlers. These animals are an integral part of our society and people living within strata lots should not be penalised or discriminated against simply because their particular animal and/or needs do not fit within an existing definition.

The Accreditation process must be expanded to include Assistance and Therapy Animals as well as broadening the inclusion of other species (not just dogs) as many species have the ability of providing the support and needs of these vital roles.

In rental housing, there should be no burden of proof that an animal is either an Assistance Animal or an Emotional Support Animal. Requirements should be based so they are not related to any impact on other lot owners.

Both Assistance Animals AND Therapy Animals should be permitted to travel on public transport without restrictions, as long as they are adequately accredited and identifiable.

**Animal Care Australia supports greater expansion and accreditation of Assistance Animals and Therapy Animals.**

## Pets in Aged Care

Traditionally, residential care homes and retirement villages have been pet-free zones, with residents having to give up their pets when they move in. Thankfully, aged care homes are increasingly welcoming pets through the door, due to the increasing evidence of the benefits of having a pet. Research shows that having pets around can boost health and wellbeing of elderly people, and the benefits can also be seen socially, emotionally and cognitively.

The benefits of allowing pets to live in nursing homes are well established:

- ◆ Being allowed to take a pet into aged care can ease the transition of the move
- ◆ Pets can reduce feelings of loneliness
- ◆ Pets can reduce levels of stress and anxiety, lower blood pressure and increased aerobic activity
- ◆ More people may choose to live in aged care facilities if they are allowed to take their pet with them
- ◆ Lower number of pets taken to animal shelters
- ◆ Pets create a sense of independence for their owners
- ◆ Pets in nursing home boost the morale of both staff and residents
- ◆ The responsibilities of owning and caring for a dog, for example, can encourage increased levels of motivation and physical activity. It also provides companionship and a sense of purpose by looking after it. Owning a pet can also help people deal with stress and grief.
- ◆ Research has also found that dog and cat owners make fewer visits to the doctor and spend less time in hospital. They also tend to have lower cholesterol and blood pressure compared to people who don't have pets.

The love and companionship offered by pets is particularly important in residential care, where a much-loved pet can help ease the transition from moving from their home to an aged care residence. While there are challenges with pets in aged-care facilities, the benefits far outweigh the demands. Pets can be an integral part of aged care homes, just like they are in the wider community.

As the Australian population ages, the demand for aged care accommodation is likely to rise , and so should the need for including companion animals in these facilities.

Animal Care Australia supports pets in aged care, with some simple provisos:

- ◆ Animals may be owned by the facility itself or may be brought in and privately owned by individual residents.
- ◆ The management of associated risks to the animals and residents is achieved through the establishment of a veterinarian–client (the facility) –patient relationship.
- ◆ Animals should also undergo behavioural assessment by a suitably qualified veterinarian/behaviourist prior to entry and this should be reviewed on a regular basis.
- ◆ The facility and individual owner(s) of the pets should enter into an arrangement for regular veterinary care with a veterinary professional, including arrangements for out-of-hours emergencies.
- ◆ A suitable agreement/arrangement should be in place between the facility, the pet owner and the

family for the continued care of the pet during it's time at the facility as well as when the time arrives that either the owner or the facility is no longer capable of caring for the pet.

- ♦ The welfare of the pets must be centric to the above arrangement at all times.

In some situations, it's not feasible to live with a pet in a nursing home. Pet-friendly facilities might be full (demand often outstrips supply), located in an inconvenient part of town, or just plain unaffordable. Under these situations Animal Care Australia supports the inclusion of Pet Therapy Animals, in which a trained animal provides vulnerable people, including the elderly, with much-needed emotional support.

Frequent, hands-on interaction (lots of cuddles and pats) with a therapy animal has been shown to reduce blood pressure, alleviate chronic pain, stimulate memory, and boost morale. From Alzheimer's to isolation, pet therapy can treat a wide range of cognitive, emotional, mental, and physical conditions.

Alternatively, facilities that can be deemed "pet-friendly," but unable to allow pets to reside, can mean the family pet is allowed to visit during the day, but will need to reside with a loved one for the rest of the time.

**Animal Care Australia supports pets in aged care**



## Domestic violence and our pets

For some people who experience family violence, their pets become a significant tool used against them, effectively forcing them into making the decision to leave without the pet, risk the pets' lives or persevere and continue the lifetime of abuse on both themselves and their pets.

This problem is exacerbated by the fact that most rental homes and refuges around Australia still do not permit animals.

Our laws must be brought up to date and community expectation to allow the human and animal victims access to rental and supported accommodation. For many people their pets are their last remaining hope of comfort and a foreseeable future. Law enforcement and community organisations are not empowered to be proactive in the cases of family violence against pets. Animal Care Australia supports and will fight for reforms to protect all victims of domestic and family violence - both human and animal. We will continue to lobby for legislative changes to ensure their safety is not jeopardised or compromised by the perpetrators of family and domestic violence who threaten them with harm in order to make family members comply.

**Animal Care Australia strongly supports ongoing legislative review of laws pertaining to and protecting of animals and their welfare**

## Pets (animals) in hot vehicles

Animal Care Australia highlights this offence should cover animals and not be restricted just to dogs.

Equally Animal Care Australia supports the inclusion of exemptions for working dogs being used for working livestock as well as the additional consideration of ambient temperatures and the length of time involved, as part of any proposed or introduced legislation.

Animal Care Australia supports protecting animals from experiencing this kind of irresponsible neglect!

**Animal Care Australia strongly supports legislative change preventing animals being left in hot vehicles**



# Animal Care Australia