

16th March 2026

INQUIRY INTO THE RESIDENTIAL TENANCIES AMENDMENT (PROTECTION OF PERSONAL INFORMATION) BILL 2025

Opening Statement

Thank you for the opportunity to present to the Committee. In my role as VP of Animal Care Australia, I have attended a range of meetings and compiled numerous submissions regarding pets in strata and in rentals. In 2025, the reforms aimed to normalise and simplify pet keeping for rental properties in New South Wales. ACA argued unsuccessfully—as did, I think, a lot of other organisations—for a default consent, with the landlord needing to provide evidence to remove consent. Unfortunately, this position was not supported by the Government, which has resulted in the issues this bill is attempting to overcome.

Regarding pets in rentals, the bill aims to ensure the statutory process for keeping pets in existing tenancies is applied equally to new tenancies. ACA supports the amendments proposed by Emma Hurst, AJP, which resolve issues should an application to keep a pet be rejected after a new lease has been signed.

The remaining problem is to prevent exclusion of applicants with pets at the rental application stage. A few practical examples illustrate the problem. On Domain.com.au on Saturday, just two days ago, there were 10,518 properties offered for rent in the Sydney region. Of these, just 948 landlords and agents had ticked "Pets allowed"—less than 9 per cent. This does not reflect the intent of the statutory process and whether or not that should continue to be permitted—to have such a tick box—I'm not sure. Rental application forms also routinely ask applicants whether they have pets. This allows agents to exclude those applicants before any statutory process can occur.

A Central Coast solicitor friend of mine provides a good example. She has a small dog that looks much more like a teddy bear than a puppy. She was asked to, and did, disclose her dog on her first six rental applications, and was refused each time. On the seventh application she did not disclose the dog and was immediately accepted.

I personally own a number of investment properties and ██████—my friend—would be the absolute ideal tenant. At ACA we have many other examples, although it's a little difficult to actually work out why exactly they were culled; I think in that case it's absolutely clear.

Animal Care Australia recommends that the legislation explicitly prohibit rental application forms and, hopefully—I'm not sure how to do it, though—property advertising from including pet restrictions or questions about pets unless a tribunal-approved restriction applies to that specific property. One final tweak is to ensure the statutory process for applying to keep a pet can only commence after a lease has been signed, not during the rental application stage.

We encourage Parliament to ensure the statutory process for keeping pets in existing tenancies is applied equally to new tenancies. Many thanks for your attention.