

MEDIA RELEASE

Pets in Aged Care program aims to improve older adults assisted living and prevent their pets from being surrendered *Help support the older adults and their pets with the [Pet Friendly Aged Care Survey](#)*

AUSTRALIA: 26 Jan 2023: Australia has one of the highest rates of pet ownership in the world, enjoying the many physical and mental health benefits. Yet there is a painful absence of government support for older pet owners in in-home care, resulting in their much-loved animals being surrendered to shelters across the country.

As Australia's struggling in-home aged care system is under Federal Government review, leading national animal welfare charity [Companion Animal Network Australia \(Australia CAN\)](#) invites the public and stakeholders to complete a **Pet Friendly Aged Care Survey** to help preserve the bond between people and their beloved pets by keeping them together for as long as it provides the best health outcome for the animal and their owner.

"Many studies show caring for a pet can help to ease loneliness, relieve stress, anxiety and depression and provide unconditional love. Yet, many older pet owners who depend on in-home assisted living and the daily companionship of their animals, lack the government support they desperately need," said Trish Ennis, CEO of Australia CAN.

A Federal Government Service List Advisory Body is considering pet care assistance/ pet support as part of the new federally funded In-Home Aged Care Program due to come into effect in July 2024.

The decision on this will likely to be made by around mid-2023 and will be critically important for thousands of frail-aged people dependent on care at home and who rely on and benefit from daily pet companionship.

The results of Australia CAN's [Pet Friendly Aged Care Survey](#) aims to provide Federal Government decision-makers with valuable information about what older pet owners need and want in the new national **In-Home Aged Care Program**.

Ms Ennis said, "Our aim is to support older people and their pets by talking to Government about including pet support options in the Home Care Packages to prevent animals from being euthanised or surrendered to shelters and maximise the physical and emotional health of our pet-loving older people.

"Please help to make pet care assistance/pet support possible by completing the quick survey on [in-home pet support](#) and share the survey widely with your pet-related networks and encourage them to help, too."

The state of play

*3 in 5 Aussie households have a pet**

*Only 1 in 5 aged care facilities permit pet ownership**

*9% of in-home care providers offer a pet friendly service**

*By 2050, Australians aged 65 – 84 are expected to double and people aged 85 and over are expected to more than quadruple to 1.8 million**

*By 2066, there will be more than 4.5m people aged 65–74; with 34% of the population being aged 75-84 and 21% being aged 85 and over**

*Loneliness costs Australia \$2.7b each year**

Government funding to assist pet ownership for the older people is absent.

Call for more aged care facilities to allow pets!

Australia is a nation of animal lovers and yet very few aged care settings permit people to keep or have access to companion animals.

“Our research shows only [18%](#) of aged care facilities consider allowing residents to keep a pet,” said Ms Ennis. “We also ask the government to increase the number of pet friendly aged care facilities and promote the social benefits to aged care villages when they welcome pets into their facilities.

“People who are separated from their pets upon entering an aged care facility often experience an extra layer of grief at a time of loss and sadness. People are putting their lives on the line when they refuse to move into aged care because they can’t bring their pet with them.

“If people were allowed to keep their pets, aged care take-up by older adults will increase and the number of pets being surrendered to animal shelters will decrease. Now is the time to understand the value of pets and develop policies that recognise their role.”

Australia CAN offers free resources, including pet-related policies, guidelines and documents, for aged care providers, support agencies and organisations to manage and care for pets in aged care settings.

“[Pet-Friendly Aged Care website](#) is a place where older pet owners, their families and aged care facility operators can find tips and advice that allow residents to keep their pets in safe and responsible ways,” explained Ms Ennis.

“Whether it be residential care or home care, our members take in pets when their owner goes into hospital. Sadly, there is no government funding to support our emergency pet care programs.

“Now that the entire aged care industry is under review, it’s important to look at the bigger picture and understand that if people need aged care and don’t have support to keep their pets, they have to choose between going into aged care and abandoning their pet. It’s a double-edged sword.”

AUSTRALIA CAN NEEDS YOUR HELP!

Please help Australia CAN’s Pet Friendly Aged Care movement by completing a [survey](#) relating to [General Aged Care](#), [Residential Aged Care](#) and [In-home Aged Care](#).

This vital information will be used to inform both the aged care industry and government of what is truly required. Please encourage your friends, family and connections to take the survey and help us compile this most needed data.

How else can you help make a difference?

- Lobby for laws and funding that benefit pet ownership in aged care. Raise the topic with politicians in your state: find your local representatives or contact the relevant Aged Care Minister: [National](#) | [VIC](#) | [WA](#) | [SA](#) | [NT](#) | [NSW](#) | [QLD](#) | [TAS](#)
- Complete our [survey](#) to help us build our knowledge
- If you’re a pet lover, volunteer your time to an aged care facility
- Review the resources and guidance at <https://petfriendlyagedcare.com.au>
- If you work in the aged care industry, survey your clients demand for pet friendly services.
- Keep the movement purring with a [donation](#) to help us continue what we do
- [Share your story](#) about pet friendly aged care living
- Stay connected to Pet-Friendly Aged Care on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#) and [LinkedIn](#)
- [Download](#) Pet Friendly Aged Care resources and share on social media with hashtag #petfriendlyagedcare to help raise awareness!

Australia CAN represents the companion animal welfare work of [member organisations](#) across the country. The charity also celebrates the human-animal bond and promotes responsible pet ownership through national campaigns, partnerships and initiatives, such as the [Rent with Pets](#) program.

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About Pet Friendly Aged Care

Pet Friendly Aged Care is run by the Companion Animal Network Australia (Australia CAN) whose six member agencies aim to make the world a better place for pets through national campaigns, partnerships and initiatives.

Pet-Friendly Aged Care was established to highlight the often-catastrophic emotional harm caused when older people are forced to give up their pets upon moving into an aged care home, and to provide a more practical way forward.

To discover more, visit <https://petfriendlyagedcare.com.au/>

About Companion Animal Network Australia (Australia CAN)

Companion Animal Network Australia (Australia CAN) is Australia's Peak Body representing companion animals. It comprises six member agencies, each aiming to make the world a better place for pets. Through national campaigns, partnerships and initiatives, we celebrate the human-animal bond and promote responsible pet ownership.

We use our national voice to campaign for the humane treatment of all companion animals and we rally support for programmes that deliver high welfare standards. To discover more, visit <https://australiacan.org.au/>