

MEDIA RELEASE

Companion Animal Network Australia calls for urgent Government support for older pet owners at home in aged care reform **Please support CANA's Petition for #PetFriendlyAgedCare**

AUSTRALIA: 10 November 2023: National animal welfare charity Companion Animal Network Australia (Australia CAN or CANA) calls for urgent support for older pet owners at home, as the Australian Government is working to prioritise independence and restore the dignity of older people in Australia in a \$18.3 billion reform package*.

Australia CAN is campaigning to increase the number of pet-friendly aged care support services to keep pets and their older owners happy, healthy and together in their own homes for as long as possible.

"Sadly, there is a painful absence of government support for older people with pets in in-home care, resulting in not only putting people's lives in danger but also their much-loved animals being surrendered to shelters across the country!" says Trish Ennis, CEO of Australia CAN.

"We are calling **Hon Mark Butler MP, Federal Minister for Health and Aged Care** and **Hon Anika Wells MP, Federal Minister for Aged Care** to help our ageing population maintain a high quality of life and that includes finding ways to help older adults retain their pets."

CANA's vital message comes in support of the [Joint Submission - Foundations of the Aged Care Act](#) by 13 national organisations working with older people and carers, demanding a human-rights based aged care act that reflects the experiences and wants of older people, including the right to have their beloved companion animals acknowledged, supported and respected.

Many studies demonstrate how pets offer a myriad of physical and mental health benefits for people, such as reducing stress, providing companionship, encouraging social interactions and more.

"This is true particularly for older adults who often face loneliness and isolation and rely on their companion animals to thrive," says Ms Ennis.

"The Government says it is working on keeping older people in their homes. Why aren't they prepared to make minor changes that would benefit the people, pets, home care support agencies and businesses?"

Status of pets in aged care

CANA's [Survey on the Status of Pets in Aged Care facilities and at home](#) shows **86%** of older adults with pets experience improved mental and physical health. When it comes to older adults living at home, the survey reveals **61%** of older adults live alone, and **74%** of older adults with pets say their animals provide companionship and reduce loneliness.



"I am 78 years old and came to Australia from Germany in 1969. Sadly, I lost my wife to Alzheimer's a few years ago. I now live alone with my four cats, Layla, Ruby, Sofia and Anita. They are my family and I would rather die than part with them..."
Rolfe, TAS



"I owe my life to Frankie, my Delta Therapy Dog, for detecting my stage 4 melanoma and alerting the neighbours when I fell twice and needed an ambulance. Us old folks who live alone and are not as well as we should be physically and mentally, we must have a companion animal."
Joanne, NSW

Whilst **40%** of older adults who receive a Home Care Package (HCP) have pets, only **9%** of these pet owners receive pet care support, such as walking their dog (**64% need help**) and taking their pet to the vet (**62% need help**).

"The health and well-being benefits of pet ownership are measurable and indisputable," says Ms Ennis. "The CHSP (Commonwealth Home Support Program) and HCP can be extended to determine and secure the necessary assistance for a person to live independently with their pet by ensuring services are offered to support pet health and well-being."

Ms Ennis says increasing the number of pet-friendly in-home aged care support will also help to prevent animals from being euthanised or surrendered to shelters and maximise the physical and emotional health of animal loving older people.

"Increasing pet-friendly aged care support will not cost the government much. The financial implementation of adding these resources to the packages is minor and would be in many cases, mean simply changing the wording of the delivery of existing items," she says.

"We want to make sure the care that older pet owners receive at home contributes to their quality of life and supports their family and community connections."

Support CANA's #PetFriendlyAgedCare Petition

CANA needs the public's help to convince the Government to include pet friendly aged care support as part of their aged care reform. Help reach 50,000 signatures by signing and sharing their petition for #PetFriendlyAgedCare!

For more detail and to read CANA's submission to the Government, please visit <https://petfriendlyagedcare.com.au/surveys>

For more information about supporting pets in aged care, please visit <https://petfriendlyagedcare.com.au>

For more about Companion Animal Network Australia, visit <https://australiacan.org.au> or contact info@australiacan.org.au

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IMAGES

MEDIA INTERVIEWS

- Trish Ennis, CEO of Companion Animal Network Australia
- Dr Alicia Kennedy, Veterinarian and Founder of Cherished Pets Foundation, Pets & Healthy Ageing Expert and Human Animal Bond Consultant

- Case studies: Older pet owners living at home
- Case studies: In Home Aged Care Providers that support older pet owners

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/>