

## PRESS RELEASE

### Victoria Leads Nation With Pet-Friendly Aged Care Reform

#### *CANA urges national action to keep older people and pets together*

**Melbourne, June 2025:** National animal welfare charity Companion Animal Network Australia (CANA or Australia CAN) has welcomed the passage of the [Retirement Villages Amendment Bill 2024](#) ([\(Vic\) Retirement Villages Amendment Bill 2024 \(Vic\)](#)) through both Houses of the Victorian Parliament as a significant and compassionate win for the rights and wellbeing of older Australians and their companion animals.

Among the suite of reforms designed to strengthen consumer protections in retirement living, the new legislation includes a landmark provision that prohibits retirement villages from having rules which “unreasonably limit the keeping a pet on a resident’s premises”.

“With [95%](#) of people agreeing that pets improve health outcomes for older Australians, pet-friendly aged care should be the norm, not the exception,” said Trish Ennis, CEO of CANA.

“We are thrilled to see this amendment pass with unanimous support in the Victorian Parliament. This sends a powerful message that companion animals matter as a member of the family.”

According to CANA’s [2023 Aged Care Survey: Status of Pets in Aged Care](#), only **18% of aged care facilities** allow residents to keep pets, and just **9% of older pet owners living at home** – who rely on government-funded Home Care Packages (HCPs).

As a result, “pet surrenders due to life changes, such as moving into aged care or struggling to meet a pet’s needs, continue to rise,” said Ms Ennis.

“Many older Australians lose not only a cherished companion but also the daily joy, comfort and sense of purpose that a pet provides.”

#### **A champion for positive change**

On behalf of its animal welfare agency members, CANA congratulates all parliamentarians involved, especially [Georgie Purcell MP](#), a member of the Animal Justice Party and the Legislative Council for Northern Victoria, for championing this amendment.

“Now we call on all other state governments to follow Victoria’s lead and prioritise the wellbeing of older Australians by embedding similar protections in their own legislation,” said Ms Ennis.

Ms Purcell, who successfully moved the pet-friendly amendment to the Bill, spoke passionately in Parliament about the emotional toll that restrictive pet policies take on older Victorians.



She said: *“It is unacceptable that older Victorians can be forced to choose between keeping a pet they love and finding a retirement community that they love. This amendment aims to strike a fair balance by allowing villages to manage legitimate concerns while ensuring residents are not unfairly denied the companionship and comfort that their pets provide.”*

*“The amendment also seeks to put an end to the restrictive and often unnecessary rules that prevent residents from keeping pets in their homes, often imposed as a matter of policy or convenience. These blanket bans or arbitrary limitations fail to consider individual circumstances and can have a significant impact on the wellbeing of residents.”*

Ms Purcell further emphasised the critical role of pets in supporting the mental wellbeing of older Australians: *“For many older people, especially those living alone, animals are not just companions, they are a lifeline. This reform ensures that no one has to sacrifice the love and loyalty of a pet in order to feel safe and supported in their later years.”*

In her speech, Ms Purcell also acknowledged CANA's long-standing work in this space, referencing the charity's [Pet Friendly Aged Care](#) program and its role as a national voice for companion animal welfare and policy change.

The new law, which will be the Retirement Villages Amendment Act, will come into effect on May 1, 2026.

### **Next step, a national approach**

While Victoria has now positioned itself as a leader in pet-friendly aged care reform, CANA is calling on other state and territory governments to follow suit.

“This is not just a Victorian issue, it’s a national one,” Ms Ennis said. “Research consistently shows that pets help reduce loneliness, lower stress and improve cardiovascular and mental health – factors especially vital for older Australians.

“CANA stands ready to work with all jurisdictions to ensure aged care policy recognises the powerful human–animal bond and protects the rights of older Australians to age with their companions by their side.”

### **Take the survey and help make a difference**

CANA's Pet Friendly Aged Care program aims to ensure no person is forced to surrender a beloved animal due to entering aged care. CANA is inviting aged care providers, policymakers, pet owners and community members to take part in their [2025 Pet Friendly Aged Care Survey](#) to help shape policies that support pet companionship in aged care.

“We believe it’s time for a change and by participating in the survey, you are helping advocate for policies that allow older Australians to continue experiencing the companionship of their beloved pets and helping to keep pets at home,” said Ms Ennis.

The Survey is open to the General public, Residential Aged Care (staff or resident), Retirement Village (staff or resident), In Home Aged Care (carers or cared for) and Home Care Providers.

Take the survey: [petfriendlyagedcare.com.au/surveys](https://petfriendlyagedcare.com.au/surveys)

### **Why Pets Matter: The Voices of Older Australians**

Read real stories that highlight the profound impact of pets in the lives of older Australians:

<https://petfriendlyagedcare.com.au/share-your-story/>

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## **About Pet Friendly Aged Care**

Pet Friendly Aged Care is run by the Companion Animal Network Australia (CANA or Australia CAN) whose five 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**

Companion Animal Network Australia (Australia CAN or CANA) is a registered charity representing the companion animal welfare work of our member organisations across the country: Animal Welfare League QLD, Lort Smith (VIC), Sydney Dogs and Cats Home, Dogs' Homes of Tasmania and Saving Animals From Euthanasia Inc (WA). Our members provide rescue, shelter, re-homing, fostering, health care and enrichment services to more than 50,000 animals every year.

Through national campaigns, partnerships and initiatives, we advocate for the human-animal bond and promote responsible pet ownership. We use our national voice to lobby for the humane treatment of all companion animals, and we rally support for our member programs that deliver high welfare standards. Australia CAN national campaigns include Pets in Aged Care, Rent with Pets and Pets in Business. To discover more, visit [www.australiacan.org.au](http://www.australiacan.org.au)