



## RSL Care Assistance & Companion Animal Care Guidelines – Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

- Question 1**      **Where can I find the RSL Care Assistance and Companion Animal Guidelines and documentation such as application forms?**
- Answer 1**        The policy and documentation is located on the RSL Care website at:  
[www.rslcare.com.au/](http://www.rslcare.com.au/)
- Question 2**      **What are assistance and companion animals?**
- Answer 2**        - *Assistance animals* are animals that have been specially trained to help a person with a medically recognised disability or illness.  
- *Companion animals* are animals that provide comfort and companionship to people, for example pet dogs and pet cats.
- Question 3**      **Why are assistance and companion animals being considered for introduction into RSL Care retirement communities?**
- Answer 3**        *Assistance animals* are already welcome in our retirement living communities. We acknowledge the important role *assistance animals* play in the life of those with medically recognised disability or illness. *Assistance animals* have a legal right to reside within RSL Care facilities.
- RSL Care plans to undertake a special resolution for Retirement Living Communities, providing residents with an opportunity to decide on the introduction of *companion animals* into their community. A 75% majority will be required to make any changes for the resolution.
- Research shows *companion animals* provide therapeutic and lifestyle goals between a person and the animal. *Companion animal* and *assistance animal* ownership improves the physical, social, emotional, motivational and cognitive functioning of elders.
- We have found through talking with our customers, that many would value the opportunity to reside with a *companion animal*.
- Question 4**      **What is the benefit for me as a resident of this retirement community to have companion animals within the village?**
- Answer 4**        There are numerous benefits for current and new residents of RSL Care retirement communities. Please refer to Appendix 1 – *Benefits of Companion Animals*.



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**Question 5**      **How will *companion animals* be introduced into retirement communities?**

**Answer 5**      RSL Care has implemented an *Assistance and Companion Animal Care Guideline*. It will be up to each Retirement Living Community to decide to implement the policy which would allow *companion animals* to reside in the village. There is a requirement of 75% of the voting community to be in favour of the policy for the special resolution to pass.

*Assistance animals* are already permitted to reside in Retirement Living Communities and are protected by laws to do so.

**Question 6**      **How will I know my retirement community will not be over-run by *companion animals*?**

**Answer 6**      *Companion animals* will only be allowed to reside in the village according to the ACAC Guidelines and at the manager's discretion. Within Australia, the average *companion animal* ownership in retirement villages is between 4.5% and 7.6%. RSL Care can provide reassurance that the *companion animal* percentage at your retirement community can be capped at 7.6% by discussion.

**Question 7**      **How will the introduction of *companion animals* be phased in?**

**Answer 7**      Results of the special resolution will either amend or maintain the village rules/by laws to allow or disallow *companion animals* to reside in the village. The results will be made public to residents in writing.

If a Retirement Living Community votes in favour of the resolution the village will be promoted as an animal friendly village and applications for a *companion animal* can begin to be made.

New and existing residents will be able to discuss bringing a *companion animal* into the village. There is an application process and Management approval and other requirements will need to be met.

**Question 8**      **If am interested in residing with a *companion animal*, what type of animals will be accepted at my village?**

**Answer 8**      Generally, the guideline is aimed at residents who would like to reside with dogs, cats, fish and birds. However, other *companion animals* will be considered on application. We will be unable to accept puppies, kittens and other animals under 12 months of age and animals prohibited by state or federal law or dogs considered dangerous or menacing per local, state and federal laws (see *Assistance & Companion Animal Care Guidelines*) for practicality and safety reasons.



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**Question 9** I am already living in an RSL Care Retirement Living Community and I would like to reside with a *companion animal*, what do I need to do to arrange this?

**Answer 9** Residents who would like to live with an animal will need to submit a *Companion Animal application form*. You can get this form from your Retirement Living Manager.

In the application, you will need to provide a written request with a description of the animal and submit a letter from your vet to outline:

- Condition of *companion animal*
- Up-to-date vaccinations
- Up-to-date internal (worms) and external (fleas & ticks) parasite control
- Suitability for small enclosures

You will also be required to comply with the *Assistance and Companion Animal Care Guidelines*.

**Question 10** I am a new RSL Care Retirement Living resident about to move in and I would like to bring my *assistance or companion animal* with me, what will I need to do?

**Answer 10** New residents will need to submit a *Companion Animal application form* and a written request with a description of the animal and a letter from your vet to outline:

- condition of companion animal
- up-to-date vaccinations
- up-to-date internal (worms) and external (fleas & ticks) parasite control
- suitability for small enclosures.

You will also need to provide:

- a written reference from current neighbours indicating that the *companion animal* is not a nuisance,
- *assistance animals* will require a letter from the veterinarian with a description of health or wellbeing benefits of owning the *assistance animal*
- comply with the *Assistance & Companion Animal Guideline*.

**Question 11** If I would like a *companion animal*, where will it be able to reside?

**Answer 11** *Companion animals* can reside in a resident's home and / or courtyard/ yard (as long as it is fenced), in compliance with the guideline. There may be a requirement to install a cat run to provide a contained outside area for cats.



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**Question 12** Will *companion animals* be able to move around the village?

**Answer 12** Owners may wish to take their *companion animals* for walks around the village. However, there are requirements that will need to be met, to ensure the safety and peace and enjoyment of other residents, these are:

- all animals must be kept on a leash or remain within a pet cage while outside of the residents home, such as in the village,
- *companion animals* are not permitted in the communal areas such as the community centre/s, community kitchen or other indoor communal areas.

Restricted areas, for *companion animals* include, include indoor communal areas such as community centre and dining areas.

Please note: *assistance animals* are permitted to accompany the resident anywhere within the community including communal areas and are protected by laws to do so.

**Question 13** What happens if a *companion animal* becomes a nuisance within the community?

**Answer 13** RSL Care Retirement Living Coordinators / Managers will assess the situation and work with all parties to mediate a solution or the *companion animal* may be evicted from the community.

For a barking dog, the dog may be required to wear a bark collar.

**Question 14** If I am given approval to get a *companion animal*, how do I manage my animal's waste?

**Answer 14** Animals waste must be removed daily from the resident's property, inside and outside.

All waste is to be collected in a plastic bag, tied tightly to reduce odour and placed in the owner's bin.

Dog waste bags need to be carried at all times while walking a dog through the community and discarded as above but not in communal bins.

**Question 15** If I want to go away to visit family and friends or have a holiday, what happens to my animal?

**Answer 15** You may choose to arrange for a family member, friend or professional pet-sitter to care for your animal while you're away. Alternatively, you may decide the animal may need to be boarded at a professional boarding facility for the duration of your time away, at your expense. Under no circumstances should an animal be left unattended for longer than 12 hours.



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**Question 16** If I become unwell, what happens to my animal?

**Answer 16** You may choose to arrange a family member, friend or professional pet-sitter to care for your animal. Or you may decide to board the animal at a professional boarding facility, at your expense. If there are no other options and you are unable to care for your animal, you may need to make the decision to surrender the animal to a welfare shelter or adoption centre.

**Question 17** If I need to permanently leave my unit, what will happen to my assistance or companion animal?

**Answer 17** You may choose to arrange a family member or friend to care for your animal. Or you may decide to board the animal at a professional boarding facility, at your expense. If there are no other options and you are unable to care for your animal, you may need to make the decision to surrender the animal to a welfare shelter or adoption centre.

**Question 18** If I decide to permanently leave my unit, what will I need to do to prepare the unit for it to be ready to sell?

**Answer 18** You will be required to do a pest treatment throughout the house and garden (lime treatment for the garden), remove fences and pet fixtures such as pet doors and cat enclosures.

You may be required to complete a refurbishment of the unit, villa or apartment upon consultation with the village manager, if there is damage beyond reasonable wear and tear.

**Question 19** How do I manage other people's allergies to my *companion animal* within the community?

**Answer 19** To reduce allergic response to your animal from other residents, it is advised you:

- Wash your cat or dog weekly
- Brush your companion animal weekly to remove excess hair (on your property only)
- Refrain from taking your companion animal to areas where people with allergies reside



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**Question 20**      *How do I manage other people's fear and / or anxiety towards my **companion animal**?*

**Answer 20**      Some people have a fear and anxiety of animals like dogs or cats. Sometimes this has been caused by a specific event in the person's life. All animal owners must be respectful of this fear. The following steps can be taken to make your fellow residents feel more secure around your animal:

- refrain from taking your *companion animal* to areas where the fearful person resides
- ensure your *companion animal* is restrained on a leash or in a cage when in communal areas
- inform your friends you have an animal in residence prior to a house visit,
- ensure your *companion animal* is well behaved in the presence of the fearful or anxious,
- respect those with fears or anxiety towards your *companion animal*.

**Question 21**      *What about when dogs urinate the lawn and it burns the grass? How can this be prevented?*

**Answer 21**      Placed in a dog's water bowl with no change to the pH balance of the dog's urine, **Dog Rocks** will help prevent new urine burn patches ruining lawns.