



Companion
Animal Network
Australia CAN

Status of pets in aged care



CANA 2025 survey findings

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The Australia CAN movement fights for a world that values the extraordinary bond between people and their pets.



**Companion
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Objectives

In 2025, the Companion Animal Network Australia (CANA) launched its second survey into the perceptions and realities of ageing with pets.

CANA surveys provide an up-to-date snapshot of the community's views on keeping pets and their owners together as they age and transition through life.

The data collected will have a valuable role informing submissions to government, encouraging facility owners to embrace pets and influencing community attitudes around lifelong pet ownership. The surveys offer anyone who wants their voice heard an easy and effective way to share their opinions.

CANA thanks all participants for their contribution.



**Companion
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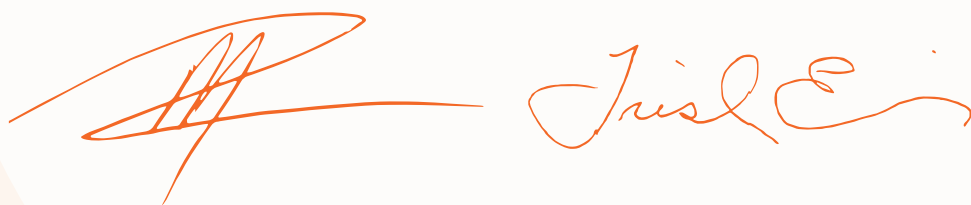
Foreword

While we've always recognised the benefits of owning a pet—be that through companionship, staying active or teaching our children responsibility—we've been slow to understand the enduring value of the human–animal bond for older people.

The 2025 edition of our survey into attitudes towards pets and aged care continues CANA's commitment to improving awareness and influencing policy that benefits older people and their beloved pets.

To complement expert opinion and international data, CANA established a framework to survey the views and experience of Australians. These surveys will continue to collect responses but are already offering statistically sound results.

It is our hope that the voices of our elderly, along with those of aged care staff and the wider public, will open hearts and minds to the mental and physical benefits of lifelong pet ownership.



**Melissa Penn, President, and Trish Ennis, CEO,
Companion Animal Network Australia**



**Companion
Animal Network
Australia CAN**

Who is CANA?

CANA works to reduce and eliminate the abandonment and surrendering of pets through advocacy and education. Through its programme **Pet Friendly Aged Care, Companion Animal Network Australia (CANA)** is working to preserve the bond between older Australians and their furry, finned and feathered friends.



18%

Australia is a nation of animal lovers, yet just 18% of aged care facilities consider allowing residents to keep a pet.

According to an online audit of 2,933 facilities conducted by The Stafford Group in 2018.

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.

Our goals are to:

- Understand the obstacles for pet friendly aged care for older people, caregivers and facilities.
- Increase the number of pet-friendly aged care support services to prevent animals from being euthanised or surrendered to shelters.
- Maximise the physical and emotional health of our animal-loving adults.
- Promote the social benefits for communities who welcome pets.

Methodology

In 2025, five surveys were released to generate data that captures opinions specific to the experiences of the public, people living and working in residential aged homes and retirement villages, and people receiving and providing in-home care.

Following on from the first CANA survey in 2023, questions were developed based on our ongoing advocacy within the aged care sector, and the kind of information they are seeking.

The 2025 surveys were completed online and took about two minutes to complete.

Awareness of the surveys was built through the CANA network of members as well as social media and email marketing.

Respondent details can be found in the appendix at the end of this report.

Our results were sourced from the following groups and locations:



- ☐ Aged care residents
- ☐ Aged care facility owners
- ☐ Family members of an aged care resident
- ☐ General Public
- ☐ Staff members at an aged care facility
- ☐ People receiving and delivering in home aged care support.



Respondents to the surveys were from the following states:

QLD: 24%	TAS: 12%
VIC: 20%	ACT: 7%
NSW: 19%	WA: 6%
SA: 16%	NT: 1%



**“My life would
be empty and
lonely without
my two cats.”**

Marianne H



96%*

of people believe residents
in aged care should be able
to own a pet

CANA General Aged Care Survey Results in detail



What did we find? Participants were invited to select benefits of pet ownership for people in aged care settings. There were **2,185** responses in total, which is twice the amount of the 2023 survey, yet responses were almost identical to those findings.

In an aged care setting

What are the main benefits of allowing pets?



87%

Improved mental and physical health



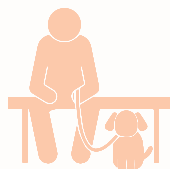
74%

Companionship



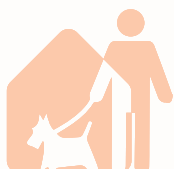
60%

Maintaining an existing pet-owner bond



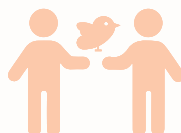
58%

Reducing the forced surrendering of pets



49%

Easing the transition to aged care



42%

Pets socialising with our residents

What does it mean? As our population ages, the role of pets remains consistent in providing positive mental and physical health outcomes and companionship.

What did we find? Across all surveys, a total of **2,846** respondents ranked Systemic Barriers as the main obstacles to pet ownership in aged care facilities and in home care.

In an aged care setting

What are the main barriers to pet ownership?



Lack of education for aged care facility owners on the benefits of pet ownership.

45%



Lack of funding for design changes to accommodate pets is a major challenge.

45%



42%

Shortage of employees or volunteers to deliver or support pet programs.



41%

Health and safety concerns for other residents and/or staff.



32%

Discontent from residents who prefer pet-free living.



27%

Vulnerability to legal action if something goes wrong.

Structural barriers within the aged care system revolve around a lack of formal policies:

78% have no live-in pet policy

59% have no visiting pet policy

30% face management resistance

19% report staff concerns



“She is my life,
my everything.”

Suzanne C



78%*

of people believe pets
improve mental
and physical health

Total respondents across all CANA Aged Care surveys 2,846

CANA Residential Aged Care Survey Results in detail



What did we find? The vast majority of aged care facilities do not permit pet ownership, with numbers that closely reflect those of previous reports.

To help allowing pets in aged care settings

What is the best model?



Direct pet ownership by residents

Live in pets

Does this facility permit residents to keep their own pet? *

70%
No



30%
Yes



In-Facility pets

Does your facility keep one or more shared whole-of-facility pets on-site?

63% No

37% Yes

Alternative Models in Order of Preference: Shared pets within the facility **16%**. Visitors to bring pets **13%**. Visiting pets programmes **3%**. No pets at all **1%**.

What does it mean? Limited progress is being made in maintaining the human-animal bond in aged care facilities, although visiting and shared pets are providing residents of some facilities with valuable pet contact.

Visiting pets

Does your facility have a visiting pets program?

56% No

44% Yes

Are family members or friends permitted to bring pets when visiting residents?

86% Yes

14% No

How would you rate the importance of access to pets in aged care?

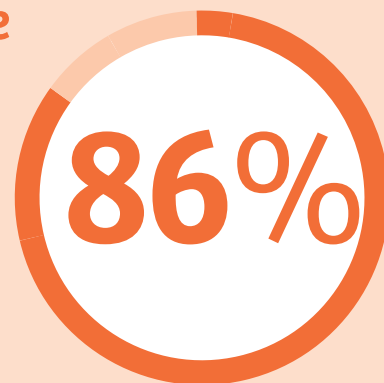
0% Unimportant

1% Quite important

1% Some importance

14% Very important

Vitally 
important



But only 23% of facilities responding to the survey have pet-friendly policies and 50% rate themselves low on pet-friendliness.

This reveals a significant gap between recognising the importance of pets and actually implementing pet-friendly practices. Both facilities and people understand the value but struggle with execution.

Survey results from **81 staff** members or residents across Australia. While this sample size is significantly less than 2023, **the results are the same which indicates a level of accuracy.**



"I have no family close,
my girl is my best friend,
with me 24/7."

Les H



1%*

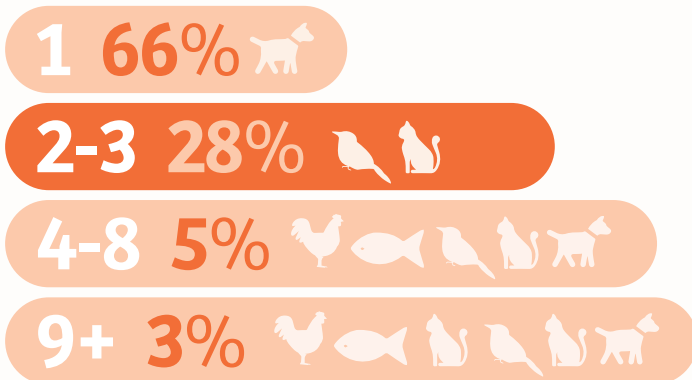
Just 1% of people believe pets
should not be allowed in
aged care settings

CANA In-Home Aged Care Survey Results in detail

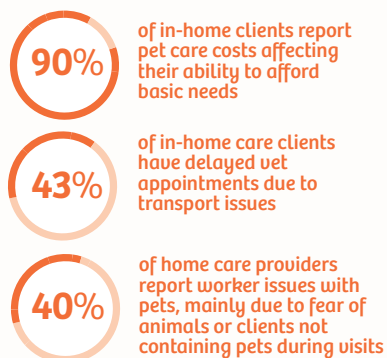


What did we find? Companionship and reduced loneliness are the most highly valued benefits of pet ownership among those surveyed.

How many pets do you have?



In the surveys about in-home care with both providers and receivers responding, there were **a total of 340 respondents** identifying the following issues:

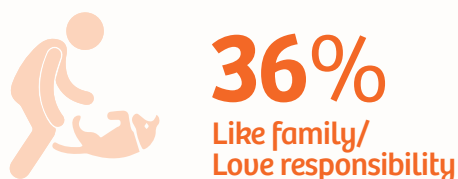


Species of pets kept in-home:



*Responses do not add to 100% as some respondents own multiple pets and some did not identify.

What are the benefits for you of having a pet companion?



*Multiple benefits appear in a single response so percentages won't sum to 100%.

What does it mean? Building assistance with pets into aged care support packages is an obvious way to ensure older people continue to enjoy the many social and physical benefits of pet ownership.

Survey results from **325 respondents receiving in-home care.**

Do you live alone?

60% Yes

"He provides sanity and a reason to rise each day."

"The gentle loving presence of a dog is simply irreplaceable."

Is there anyone now that helps you to care for your pet? *

48% No

52% Yes

"Age care packages will not help."

"I'm not confident asking for help."

What services would you like an in-home aged care service provider to find for you if you had difficulty caring for your pet?



91%

Emergency foster care and boarding



64%

Support with walking



59%

Help taking a pet to the vet



44%

Support with feeding



39%

Support with grooming



32%

Support with cleaning

* 22% of respondents have delayed personal medical care because they did not have anyone to look after their pet.

Are you getting any of the above services from your current aged care package provider?

91% No

9% Yes

Do you go to a vet that provides discounted fees?

65% No

35% Yes

Survey results from **325** respondents receiving in-home care.



“They are the reason that
I get up in the morning.
Most times they are my only
company. They give me
unconditional love.
I have no human family.”

Helen F



68%*

of those surveyed
believe pets reduce
loneliness

The CANA network

Companion Animal Network Australia (CANA) is a registered charity representing the companion animal welfare work of member organisations across Australia.



Our members have more than 300 years of combined experience caring for companion animals.



Affiliate Members



Acknowledgments

Dr Alicia Kennedy BSc BVMS, Veterinarian,
Founder and CEO Cherished Pets **for their
support in the development and distribution of
the surveys.**

www.cherishedpetcare.com.au

AWLQ Golden Hearts team for their support in
the development and distribution of the surveys.

[https://www.awlqld.com.au/pet-owner-help/
seniors-pet-support/golden-hearts/](https://www.awlqld.com.au/pet-owner-help/seniors-pet-support/golden-hearts/)

Geraldine Ellis-Maguire

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Ageing Australia and the Aged Care industry

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Pets and Positive Ageing Inc

Patricia Sparrow

Chief Executive Officer
COTA Australia

Deb Morrison

CEO
Petcloud

CANA Pet Friendly Aged Care programme

CANA has helped to advance the cause of older people and pets in 2024–25. Keeping older Australians and their pets together is a vital pursuit because it:

- prevents animals from being needlessly euthanised or surrendered to shelters
- maximises the physical and emotional health of our animal-loving older people
- promotes social benefits for communities who welcome pets.

More doors have opened in 2024–25 for people to enter residential aged care with their beloved pets thanks to sustained efforts on our part. Our work in conjunction with an Infection Prevention and Control (IPC) programme to create a comprehensive kit for residential care facilities has encouraged more facilities to successfully integrate pets. These easy-to-follow policies and programmes have been a gamechanger for pets in aged care.

We have also continued our work to remove barriers that prevent older people from keeping their pets at home. CANA was a leading voice that helped secure the right for people using Home Care Packages to have a companion animal being written into law.

The most compelling challenge for the companion animal sector is to see pet support added as a claimable item in Home Care Packages, and we continue to lobby the federal government for this sensible change.



**Pet Friendly
Aged Care**
Companion Animal Network
Australia CAN

‘They bring joy and daily exercise. Responsibility and caring for another only serves to make me a better person.’

Annie W

Useful links

A great body of work exists that explores the benefits to older people when they are able to retain a bond with their pet, especially when moving into new and unfamiliar living arrangements.

Animals, themselves, also enjoy the continuation of that bond. Linked here are several resources that support the value of a pet-friendly aged care sector.

- Help us build our knowledge base: take our survey
- Stay connected with CANA: Facebook | Instagram | LinkedIn

References – PIAC

<https://www.waltham.com/news-events/human-animal-interaction/pets-against-loneliness>

<https://habri.org/research/healthy-aging/mental-health/>

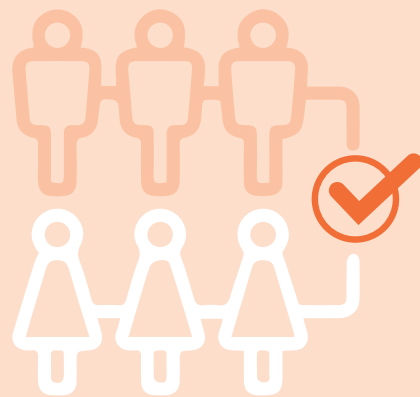
<https://habri.org/research/mental-health/conditions/>

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC10000229/>

Appendix_Survey audience Respondent Details

Breakdown of respondents

- General Survey **2,185**
- In-Home Care (Recipient) Survey **325**
- Retirement Village Survey **240**
- Residential Care Survey **81**
- In-Home Care (Provider) Survey **15**



Breakdown of respondents

General public (did not specify)	1,506	53%
Family & Friends of people in aged care or receiving in-home care support	611	21%
People receiving in-home care support	325	11%
People living or working in Retirement Villages	240	8%
Staff of aged care facilities	117	4%
People in aged care facilities	32	1%
People providing in-home care	15	5%
Total	2,846	

*Breakdown of respondents are across all surveys and may not be included in the specific data cited in this report, based on the survey type and questions they responded to.

What this means

CANA was able to reach much more of the general public with the survey in 2025, however found it difficult to connect with the people living in aged care facilities. For this reason, we do not have a statistically accurate account of aged care facilities that offer pet friendly policies and will evaluate other methods to find this information.

The analysis provided in this report remains statistically accurate based on the total respondents.



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Thank you

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