

Pets are part of the family

Older people shouldn't have to choose between the care they need and the pets they love.



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

Pet-Friendly Aged Care Fact sheet

Our goal

To ensure older Australians can maintain the human-animal bond as they age, including when they need support at home or transition into residential aged care.

Why the human-animal bond matters

Pets are family.

For many older Australians, pets provide companionship, purpose, routine, activity and social connection. Losing a pet because an older person needs care or support can be a major disruption to routine and wellbeing.



Companionship



Purpose and routine



Physical activity



Social connection



Emotional wellbeing

What the data tells us

With more than 31.6 million pets across the nation, 73 per cent of households share their lives with a companion animal. Australia ranks as one of the world's leading nations in pet ownership per capita.*

*Source: Pets in Australia:
A National survey of pets and people;
Animal Medicines Australia 2025

96% of Australians believe residents in aged care should be able to own a pet.*

90% of in-home clients surveyed reported pet care costs affecting their ability to afford basic needs.*

43% of in-home clients surveyed delayed their own medical care because they had no one to care for their pet.*

*Source: CANA's 2025 Survey Status of Pets in Aged Care.

Older people can face losing their pets long before they enter residential aged care.

They may need help with transport, veterinary visits, walking, feeding, grooming or caring for a pet during hospitalisation or other life changes. Most people want to stay in their home as long as they can, and having support and assistance to keep a pet may be a vital part of in-home care.



Pet-friendly aged care means providing support to people where they live—at home, in retirement living or in residential aged care.

Why now?

Australia's aged care system has changed. The Aged Care Act 2024 and Support at Home program commenced on 1 November 2025. The new system emphasises choice, control, dignity and quality of life. CANA is advocating for the human-animal bond to be recognised as part of genuinely person-centred care.

CANA advocates for an aged care system that recognises the human-animal bond and supports older people to remain connected with their pets wherever it is safe, appropriate and beneficial to both.



Ageing with pets is possible

Being pet-friendly doesn't mean every resident needs to have a pet. It means having policies and practices that enable safe, responsible access to pets where appropriate.

- 1 Develop clear pet-friendly policies
- 2 Support residents with their own pets
- 3 Welcome visiting pets safely
- 4 Consider shared or facility pets where appropriate
- 5 Address infection prevention, health, safety and risk
- 6 Plan practical support for pet care
- 7 Use CANA's free resources and guides

What individuals can do

Ageing people / pet owners

Ask your aged care provider how they support people with pets. Tell your care team that your relationship with your pet is important to your wellbeing.

Supporters / community

Share CANA's research, advocate for policy change and share your stories with CANA.

Corporate / businesses

Sponsor CANA to create more resources; production and distribution of fact sheets and videos to assist people working in aged care to feel comfortable with pets. Contact info@australiacan.org.au.

What aged care providers can do

Ask – Do people have pets and are managing to take care of them themselves or do they need help?

Develop – Create a clear pet-friendly policy.

Plan – Consider visiting and shared pets before preparing for a resident-owned model.

Manage – Address health, safety, infection control and staff responsibilities.

Support – Identify practical assistance with pet care.

Use CANA – Access CANA's free guides and resources.

Who we are

Companion Animal Network Australia (CANA) is a national charity advocating for the wellbeing of people and their pets. Through our Pet Friendly Aged Care program, we are working toward an aged care system that recognises the importance of the human-animal bond and supports older people to remain connected with their pets.



VIC



NSW



TAS



WA



QLD



ACT



VIC



SA



SA

300+ Years combined member experience caring for companion animals



What CANA is calling for
Recognition of the human-animal bond in person-centred care,
with safe and practical support wherever older people live.

petfriendlyagedcare.com.au

