

Summary of submissions from the Cat Protection Society of NSW to the NSW Government on Amendments to the Residential Tenancies Act – pets in rentals; and summary overview of the related campaign with Lucy's Project and others, Homes are for everyone September-October 2024

Cat Protection made submissions to the NSW Government on proposed changes to the Residential Tenancies Act and participated in confidential targeted consultations on the draft Bill. The following summarises our views expressed in confidential submissions, private meetings, correspondence, and public statements.

Our concern was, as it has been always, that responsible pet owners make good tenants and there is no good reason to ban pet ownership just because a person is renting.

Just like people who have mortgages, renters pay to live in their homes. Banks don't deny people with mortgages from keeping pets and landlords shouldn't deny people paying rent from keeping pets. Everyone should be able to enjoy a safe and happy home.

Providing tenants with the basic human right to the lawful, peaceful enjoyment of their own home shouldn't be seen as radical. Landlords enjoy protections at law, bonds, tax benefits and they can buy (tax deductible) insurance. Their tenants are capable of damaging property with or without pets.

Focusing on pets is outdated, neglects to consider the many benefits of pet ownership, and is discriminatory.

We noted the NSW Parliament was holding an inquiry into loneliness and that there is a wealth of data on the benefits of companion animals to the alleviation of loneliness. Yet renters can't keep pets? Is loneliness a fair outcome of not being wealthy enough to own your own home?

Data shows that people will delay leaving, or not leave, situations of family and domestic violence if it means leaving their pets behind. No certainty of pet-friendly accommodation is dangerous, and potentially lethal. The health, safety and wellbeing of people, of women and children, and of beloved pets should not depend on home ownership.

Homes are for everyone

In October 2024, we were pleased to join with Lucy's Project, Domestic Violence NSW, the Tenants' Union of NSW, the Animal Welfare League of NSW, Sydney Dogs & Cats Home, and the Australian Companion Animal Network, to invite the community to join our efforts to ensure stronger protections for pet-owning tenants.

Everyone in NSW has the right to a safe home, including renters with animals!

Around 7 in 10 Australian households live with animals. Yet only 1 in 10 homes available to rent in NSW advertise that animals will be 'considered'.

When people are forced to surrender their animals because they can't find somewhere to live together – this can be a death sentence for animals if they can't be rehomed.

Many women and children experiencing domestic and family violence face challenges in finding a safe home to live with their beloved animals – this puts them all at risk.

The NSW Government must act now to make sure all renters with animals can find a safe home.

We are joining Lucy's Project in calling on the NSW Government to:

- 1. Make rental housing animal-inclusive by default. If a landlord wants to prohibit animals, the landlord should be required to get permission from the Tribunal to do so.*
- 2. Landlords and real estate agents shouldn't be allowed to ask about animals when people apply for rental housing. No one should be discriminated against!*
- 3. Landlords and real estate agents should not be allowed to advertise rental homes as 'no pets', or to say 'no pets' can live in the rental homes. Homes are for everyone.*

Contact the NSW Premier and tell him why NSW renters should be able to live with their animals!

Please join us in demanding change.



The campaign drew a strong response with heartfelt and heartbreaking stories about renting with pets. These were sent to the NSW Premier and other government ministers. We sought amendments that would provide greater certainty to tenants when they move between properties. This certainty is not provided for in the changes that are proposed to come into effect in 2025. We will watch developments closely.