

# Media release

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## No pets rule fueling loneliness

Many older Australians are being condemned to lonely and unhealthy lives because of bans on pets in rental accommodation, a seminar has heard.

Older people moving into single accommodation often find restrictions against pet-keeping in public housing as well as in private rented accommodation – the places where loneliness in Australia is also most concentrated, according to Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute researcher Professor Adrian Franklin.

“There is considerable evidence to show that companion animals can be highly beneficial to human well-being,” he said.

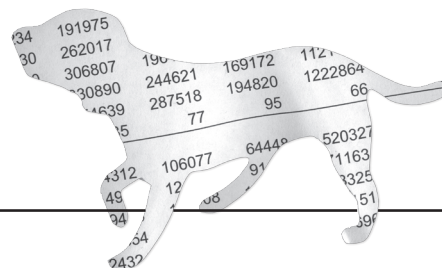
“But rental agreements and bodies corporate compound the problem. Most opt for a ‘no pets’ clause. And this trend is impacting most heavily on precisely the wrong group.

“Small dwellings and rentals are preferred by people who live in pairs or alone - exactly the group most likely to benefit from animal companionship,” said Prof Franklin in delivering his research essay ‘Housing, Loneliness and health’ at the State Library of Victoria today (March 10).

“Housing concerns are undoubtedly major contributing factors to the counter-intuitively low levels of pet ownership seen in the over 65 age group,” he said.

“As our population ages until fully a quarter of the population is over 65, the disparity can only become more obvious. It is early stages yet, and we are really only looking at warning signs, but to see the potential impact housing policy has on pet ownership you only have to look at the reasons Australians currently give for not owning a pet. It’s not because they don’t want them – only 2% of those surveyed in National People and Pets said they don’t like pets. The number one reason given for not having a pet is restrictions due to housing,” said Prof Franklin, a sociologist at the University of Tasmania, who is also a host of ABC TV’s ‘Collectors’ program.”

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The essay described loneliness as a significant emerging social problem with a third of Australians now saying they suffer from it.

It said research suggested that age, housing tenure, partner status, social class and health status were important predictors of loneliness in Australia.

## Additional information

A copy of the full Essay can be found on the AHURI website:

<http://www.ahuri.edu.au/publications/p40601/>

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