

Wednesday 3 March 2021 | 11:00am – 12:30pm (AEDT) | #AHURIwebinar



Research Webinar Series

## Housing and housing assistance pathways with pets

### Speaker

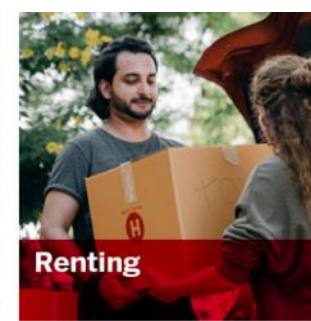
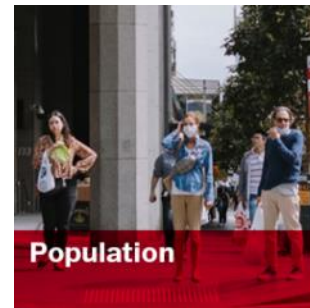
Prof Wendy Stone, Swinburne University of Technology

### Respondent

Kristina Vesk OAM, CEO, The Cat Protection Society of NSW

# Welcome

**Dr Michael Fotheringham**  
AHURI (facilitator)



Visit: [ahuri.edu.au/research/covid-19](https://ahuri.edu.au/research/covid-19)

# Housekeeping

**Webinar recording available at:**

<https://www.ahuri.edu.au/events/ahuri-research-webinars/webinar-housing-and-housing-assistance-pathways-with-pets>

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# Audience Q&A

Submit questions for presenters



# Housing and housing assistance pathways with pets

Download the report: [ahuri.edu.au/research/final-reports/350](https://ahuri.edu.au/research/final-reports/350)

## Speaker

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# Housing and housing assistance pathways with companion animals

Risks, costs, benefits and opportunities

Professor Wendy Stone  
Swinburne University of Technology

# Research team



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Artist:  
Darren C Fisher  
Lecturer  
Swinburne  
University



# Aims of the research

To inform policy and practice development and decision-making about companion animal ownership (including assistance animals) in housing and housing assistance contexts nationally: across tenures, sectors, emergency/crisis accommodation, residential settings, and for diverse resident population groups receiving income and housing assistance support.



# Part 1: Rationale and context

## Why housing and companion animals?

# Why research housing and companion animals?

- Around 60% of Australian households include a companion animal, yet not everyone has equal opportunity to have a 'pet'
- Animal relinquishments and euthanasia are known to relate to housing barriers, and this appears to be an increasing cause
- Reforms are underway to address differences across tenures and sectors but are uneven and divergent in their approach
- Benefits of animals are widely recognised in health and urban studies, including individual longevity, sociability, increased social capital and neighbourliness
- Housing policy is lagging behind urban inclusivity, recognition of non-humans in policy & practice, and of green space development.

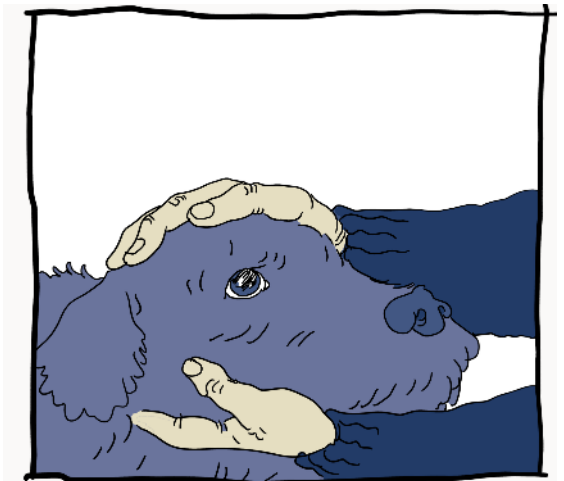
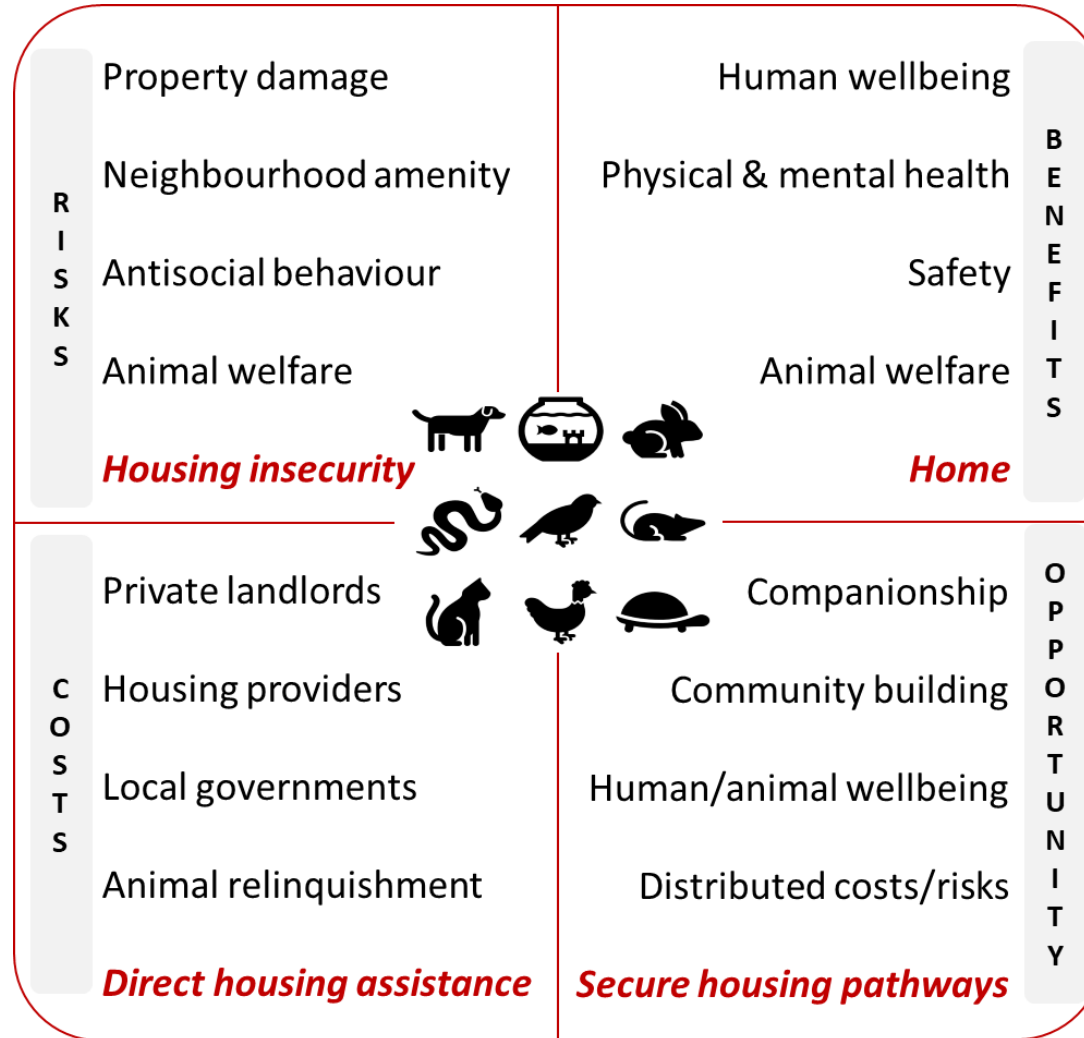
# Part 2: Research questions, approach, methods and data

# Research questions

1. How can companion animals be understood and conceptualised in housing and housing assistance pathways?
2. What are the experiences and needs of residents in relation to companion animals in the context of housing and housing assistance pathways?
3. How are companion animals included in housing and housing assistance policies and practices across select jurisdictions nationally and internationally, and what is a 'best practice' approach?
4. What opportunities exist for policy and practice development in Australia in relation to companion animals within housing and housing assistance contexts?



# A risk, cost, benefit and opportunity approach



# Research approach & data



- A wide housing system approach across sectors
- Review of existing evidence & conceptualisation
- Policy and practice review across major sectors
- Victoria, NSW, SA, WA and the ACT in national context
- Secondary analysis of survey and interview data to explore residents' housing pathway experiences
- Media analysis
- Key informant interviews

# Part 3: Research findings

Terms,  
definitions &  
approaches

Legislation,  
policy &  
practice

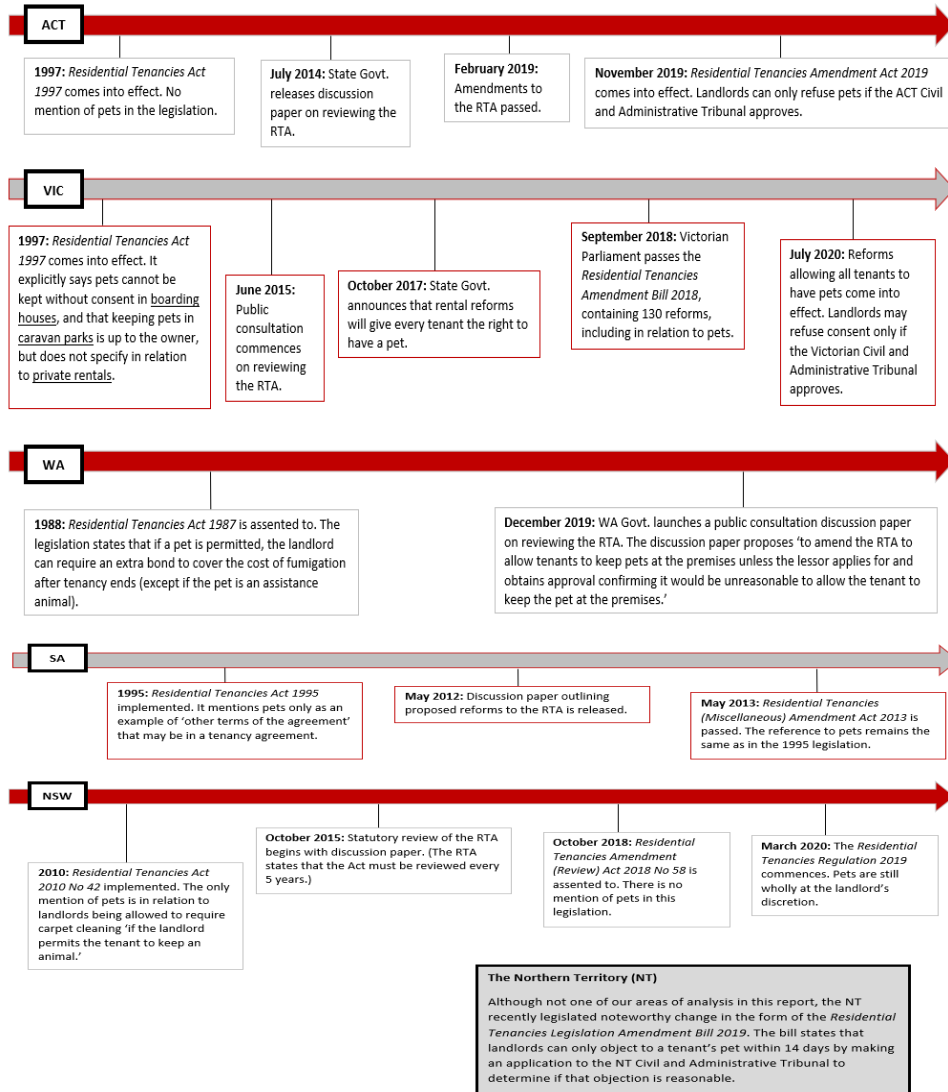
Resident  
experiences  
& pathways

## What did we find? | A 'dog's breakfast' of definitions & approaches

- Inconsistencies in the meaning of 'companion animal', 'pet', 'domestic animal', 'assistance animal', and more, vary across and within sectors, jurisdictions and laws and policy/practice guidelines
- Highly diverse approaches to managing perceived/real risks and costs across sectors and jurisdictions and appreciation of benefits
- Dynamism in legislative reforms, particularly related to tenancy reforms nationally, however high levels of variability in approaches taken and timing of reforms

# What did we find? | Legislative, policy & practice reforms

Timelines of Pet-Related Rental Policy in Each Case Study State

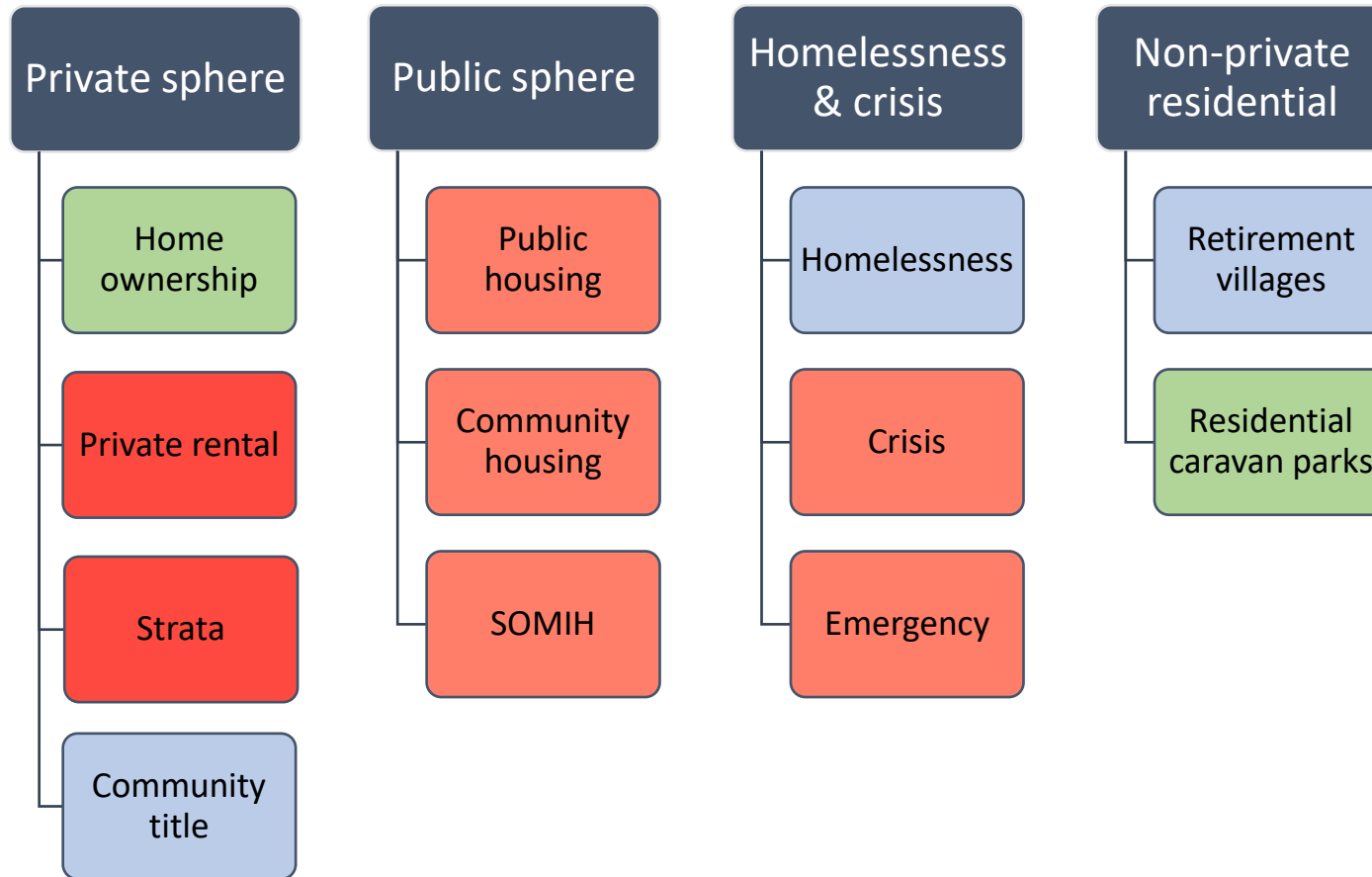


High barrier companion animal-averse contexts are those parts of the housing system in which there is most current policy attention being paid and most dynamic change underway.

This includes private rental housing, as well as in some homelessness support services or supported living contexts.



# What did we find? | Policy review across sectors



High barrier (red), discretionary (orange), low barrier (green) approaches exist across sectors.

Some innovations are apparent (blue) in some parts of the housing spectrum but are very limited.

## What did we find? | Survey & interviews with residents

- Most households reporting restrictions on their current ability to live with companion animals reside in the private rental sector.
- Close to 60 per cent of households who report having to relinquish companion animals due to residential mobility or dwelling restrictions live with very low or low incomes.
- Around half of current households living with companion animals indicate that they believe their future housing options are limited due to companion animal ownership.

# Housing pathways are restricted | Moving out of homelessness or social housing to private rental is difficult

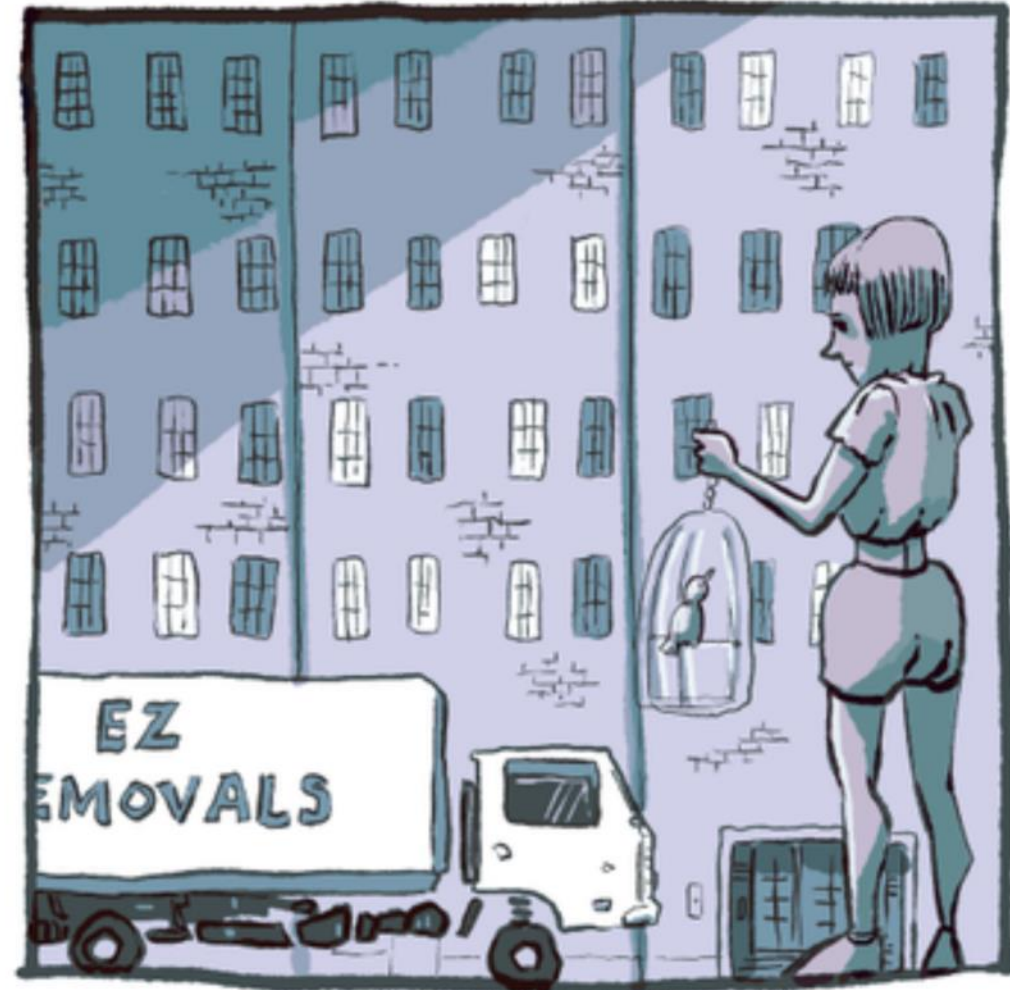


# Housing pathways are restricted | Renting privately is tough





# Housing pathways are restricted | Downsizing is difficult





High barrier approaches result in a range of individual and social costs that are overwhelmingly borne by residents and animals



*It was very hard, we have a dog, and it was almost impossible to find anywhere that we could move with a dog that had a decent rent. Eventually, I actually knocked on doors and left things in letterboxes saying we're looking, and we eventually got somewhere that way. (Female, private rental)*

# Part 4: Understanding the research findings and their implications

## Policy implications | Reframing the ‘problem’ ... systematically

- This research indicates that there is a foundational conflation of *property rights* with *human rights* and *animal welfare rights* shaping the housing pathways of households living with companion animals
- This acts to minimise the potential scaling up of *benefits* associated with companion animal ownership
- Mechanisms including legislative arrangements, insurance and financial settings and levers that are currently under-utilised have a significant role to play in enabling urban and regional contexts that are companion animal friendly
- A systematic approach to reforms is needed to reduce barriers and enable a more inclusive housing system for *everyone*

# Covid-19 has intensified the need for systematic reform

## Pets an 'important support system' for victims



Yvonne Hong says there are very few crisis accommodation options for people with pets. (ABC News: Christian Stuebe)

Yvonne Hong founded Pets of the Homeless five years ago.

## Queensland rental crisis deepens as family pets are surrendered to avoid homelessness

ABC Brisbane Quick7 By Edwina Stern  
Posted 7h ago



## Animal Justice Party calls for family violence law reform to help victims and their pets

By state political reporter [Bridget Rollason](#)  
Posted 2h ago



Jenna, pictured with her current dogs Daisy and Chad, had to leave her former pets behind when she escaped a violent relationship. (ABC News: Steven Schubert)



Nadine Hamilton says it's hard to find a home that also allows cats. (Supplied: Nadine Hamilton)

## Tenants turn to boarding pets

Nadine Hamilton has applied for '40 to 50 rentals' since September and has turned to boarding her cat Archie while she weathers the Sunshine Coast's rental market.

She is spending more money on Archie's lodgings than she is on her furniture storage while she jumps between Airbnb accommodation, friends' homes and hotels as she searches for a home.

'Once I became without a home and knew I would be moving around looking for something,' Ms Hamilton said.

"You can't drag a cat around ... so I put him into a boarding place and he's been there for over four months now."



Thank you.



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