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Housing and housing assistance pathways with companion animals: risks, costs, benefits and opportunities

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Acronyms and abbreviations used in this report

ABC	Australian Broadcasting Corporation
ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
ACT	Australian Capital Territory
AHA	Animal Health Alliance
AHA (2018) Survey	Australian Housing Aspiration (2018) Survey
AHURI	Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute Limited
AIHW	Australian Institute of Health and Welfare
AMA	Animal Medicines Australia
CBD	Central Business District
COVID-19	Coronavirus disease
CRA	Commonwealth Rent Assistance
DCH	Department of Communities —Housing (WA)
DCJ	Department of Communities and Justice (NSW)
FACS	Family and Community Services (NSW)
NSW	New South Wales
NT	Northern Territory
PRA	Private Rental Assistance
PRS	Private Rental sector
RSPCA	Royal Society for the Protection of Cruelty to Animals
RTA	Residential Tenancies Act
SA	South Australia
SAHA	South Australia Housing Authority
SOMIH	State owned and managed Indigenous housing
VCAT	Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal
WA	Western Australia

Executive summary

Key points

- Companion animals reside in over 60 per cent of Australian households and occupy an increasingly significant role as family members.
- Pet ownership has widely recognised wellbeing benefits, not only for owners but also for building community, and is a conduit for connections with nature.
- Householders' rights to live with companion animals, and thus their ability to transition within and between dwellings, tenures, neighbourhood precincts and housing assistance models, are highly variable both *within* and *between* state and territory jurisdictions.
- No previous study has examined housing pathways with companion animals in a system-wide approach. In the context of significant housing and urban transition and accompanying policy dynamism, the research addresses this significant knowledge gap.
- The study has developed original concepts, definitions and approaches, such as extending the housing pathways approach to explicitly include companion animals within a 'more than human' definitional framing and established a suite of conceptual and practical methods for doing so.
- A *risks, costs, benefits and opportunities* framework for policy review is defined in this research, related to companion animal ownership in housing contexts in five jurisdictions: Victoria, New South Wales, South Australia, Western Australia and the Australian Capital Territory.

- **The focus of the policy review includes: the private sphere, the public sphere, homelessness, crisis and emergency housing, and non-private residential settings.**
- **Housing policy development contexts are identified that can be broadly characterised as ‘low barrier, companion animal permissive’ contexts, ‘highly discretionary’ contexts and ‘high barrier, companion animal averse’ contexts.**
- **To a considerable degree, current policy development changes are found in some jurisdictions in states and territories that are both characterised more traditionally as ‘high barrier’ or ‘high discretion’ as well as ‘risk averse’. These contexts are in varying ways and to varying degrees moving toward more pet-permissive policy development and practice models. However, many barriers remain in place for access, mobility/transition and exit pathways for households living with companion animals.**

Key findings

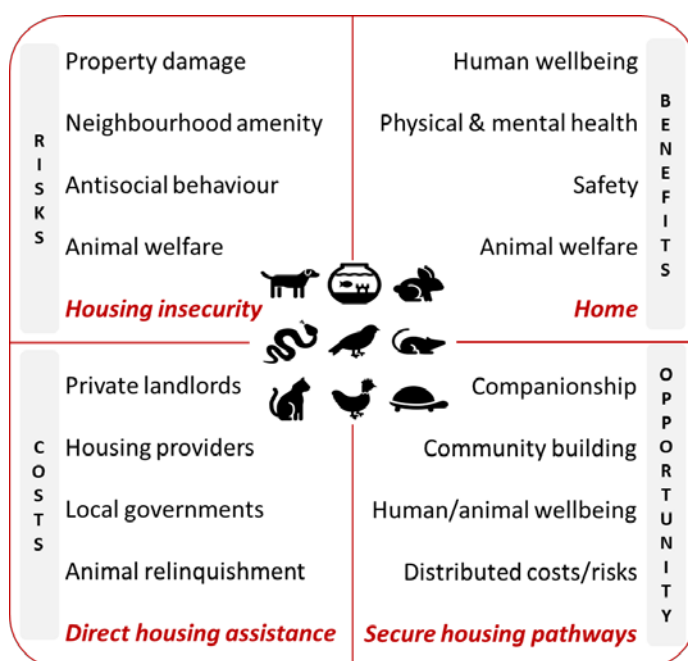
Australia is a nation of companion animal owners. Over 60 per cent of Australian households (5.7 million) include a companion animal (also known as pets; this research uses the terms interchangeably) and more than half own at least one cat or dog (Animal Health Alliance [AHA] 2013; Animal Medicines Australia [AMA] 2016). For the majority, pets are considered a vital part of the family (Franklin 2006; Power 2018).

Extensive international evidence and the emerging evidence base in Australia indicates widespread social, health and economic benefits of companion animal ownership for individuals and communities. Pet ownership is associated with enhanced outcomes for dementia patients and older persons (Gabriel, Faulkner et al. 2015; Morris 2016), lower blood pressure and cholesterol levels, faster heart attack recovery, lower mental stress (Cutt, Giles-Corti et al. 2008), and reduced asthma risk in children (Ownby, Johnson et al. 2002). Health economists have quantified these at national levels (Hall, Dolling et al. 2016), suggesting substantial on average reduction of lifetime personal and service costs.

However, despite the ubiquity of pets within Australian households, the high value that households place on pets, and evidence of the benefits that pets bring to individuals and broader society, the right of households to keep pets varies markedly depending on the housing sector and tenure within which they live.

To a large degree, this relates to perceived risks and costs associated with the provision of housing to households that include companion animals.

Figure 1: Housing and housing assistance pathways with companion animals risks, costs, benefits and opportunity summary



Source: Authors.

In high barrier, companion animal averse contexts, barriers largely relate to perceived *risks* and costs to housing providers and are borne by households, direct housing assistance/crisis response mechanisms, animals, and animal welfare agencies. *Benefits* of companion animal living fail to be optimised. *Opportunities* for significant development and innovation in response to high barrier risk averse settings are being created in some jurisdictions and housing sectors. Crisis points, such as homelessness or COVID-19, can facilitate change and innovation.

Policy development options

Our research indicates that there is a foundational conflation of *property rights* with *human rights* and *animal welfare rights*. This shapes the way that some—not all—households living with companion animals can become and remain housed, and how they are able to transition between dwellings and tenures in their housing pathways. Furthermore, this conflation acts to minimise the potential scaling up of *benefits* associated with companion animal ownership. Problematically, it also acts as a barrier to progressive use of currently available mechanisms and levers, which could fruitfully *reduce risks* and *better distribute costs* associated with housing and housing pathways with companion animals.

Opportunities for progressive reform away from high barrier, companion animal averse housing settings and practices are likely to increase benefits of companion animal 'lifestyles'. They are also likely to provide increased avenues for better use of existing settings and the development of new settings towards risk and cost reduction and distribution.

Broader institutional housing reform opportunities, such as rent fair enactments and the growth of the build-to-rent sector, are also likely to increase the opportunity for progressive companion animal policy and practice, as well as assist positive outcomes for households generally. Similarly, urban design that includes the presence of companion animals in densifying cities and in regional area developments will support these measures and aid culture and practice change.

Reducing risks of companion animal housing and housing pathways with pets

To a large degree, perceived risks associated with housing companion animals introduce barriers to entry and transition points in housing pathways. Risk perception is potentially the most entrenched problem facing households who do not own their own home and wish to be housed with companion animals. This is most apparent in privately rented housing where high barrier, companion animal averse settings remain in place in several Australian jurisdictions. Recent reform in some jurisdictions has not yet had time to influence cultural change, nor the full range of settings in place to support this. The perceived risks in this case primarily relate to future costs of any required property reparation.

Similarly, risk averse practices introduce barriers within some discretionary contexts including all social housing settings, retirement villages and residential parks. Where crisis, emergency and homelessness services use any of the high barrier or highly discretionary settings, these same barriers and challenges act to block the potential rehousing or safe housing of homeless persons and their companion animals.

Risk-averse housing settings put housing pathways and animal welfare at considerable risk, both in mainstream as well as in crisis and specialist homelessness service settings.

Optimising benefits of companion animal housing and ownership

Attending to the risks and costs associated with housing and housing pathways with companion animals—in a way that levels out the associated rights, responsibilities and potential costs involved across government, agency, industry and private actors—will provide the opportunity to increase the potential benefits of companion animal ownership in housing and residential contexts. While not the direct focus of the present research, the specific benefits of such reforms include institutional and cultural changes toward more secure housing pathways for households with pets.

These kinds of reforms would also provide opportunities for households to enjoy companion animal ownership benefits. Benefits include increased health and wellbeing; greater links between home and green space (depending on species of companion animal); and the opportunity to improve community cohesion. Urban design opportunities become more possible in areas that currently do not cater for pet owners, including in vertical living, inner city and higher density contexts.

Benefits for animals are the likelihood of reduced rates of animal relinquishment and more secure housing options through life.

Opportunities and innovation for households including companion animals

Recent policy debate that seeks to manage perceived risks has come to the fore in relation to tenancy reforms within the private rental sector. In some jurisdictions there has been a suggestion that tenancy reforms could introduce an additional 'pet bond', paid by tenants before their entry into a property or when they bring a new companion animal into the home. This is a highly contested area of reform, but it does draw attention to the potential use of new and existing mechanisms and levels to manage perceived and actual costs.

One of the problems identified with such bonds is that vulnerable households who bear the existing costs of housing transitions and potential homelessness or homelessness risk also have to bear the additional upfront housing costs.

[This model is] also a profound misunderstanding of moving into a place where you've got to find the rent in advance, the bond, buy some new things, move the stuff, get connections on. It's actually a super expensive time. To just layer on a pet bond as if that's nothing is incredibly silly. (Rental Commissioner of Victoria)

In addition to progressive housing policy reforms, existing mechanisms that have attracted less publicity include greater use of financial and legal intermediaries already available to housing providers, including for landlords (of any type). Such intermediaries include:

- enhanced use of existing insurance industry organisations for property investment insurance
- growing the Australian build-to-rent sector to increase the range of institutional investor actors in Australian property, who are already well-placed to absorb costs from any given property across a larger and long-term portfolio of properties
- financiers and bankers lending in ways that include explicit 'ability to pay for and manage' insurances associated with any property damage related to occupants' companion animal ownership within investment properties
- reframing and education for would-be investors that as they invest in the private rental sector (PRS) they are entering a relational arrangement in which they are a housing provider (including to households with pets)
- better use of existing urban legislation presents opportunities for consistent and effective responses to potential antisocial behaviours/threats to neighbourhood amenity associated with pets, applicable to all households equally within local areas, and
- greater recognition of the changing nature of relations between humans and companion animals in high and medium-density areas, and an associated cultural shift in the way open spaces are designed and managed to reduce risks and costs to amenity.

The study

Companion animal ownership poses challenges, risks and potential costs and opportunities for housing owners, managers and households across the housing system. This includes government and community housing providers, home owners, private landlords (within informal and formal letting markets), crisis accommodation and residential care facilities. It also includes residents navigating actual and desired occupancy and mobility within and between tenures, sectors, market segments and housing and related service systems. A national housing system with markedly varying housing affordability, accessibility and models of housing assistance compounds the challenges for governments, housing providers and households.

In this research we examine the policy and regulatory settings that shape housing options and housing pathways available to households that include companion animals. We assess the extent to which private housing (ownership, private rental housing), public housing (public, community and State Owned and Managed Indigenous Housing), homelessness, crisis and emergency as well as non-private (other) (retirement villages and residential parks) are companion animal permissive, discretionary or averse. Our research is undertaken at a time of highly dynamic policy change with regard to housing companion animals, which is highly variable across state and territory jurisdictions as well as housing tenures and sectors.

An analytical framework focused on risks, costs, benefits and opportunities is used to explore opportunities for policy development and innovation.

The overarching research question addressed by this mixed-method research is:

What are the implications of differential companion animal policies and practices across housing tenures and sectors, including for residents, private landlords, housing organisations and governments?

This question is addressed via four interrelated sub-questions, with research undertaken in five integrated parts.

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?

In this research, housing pathways with companion animals were investigated across four stages, entailing a literature review, a policy and practice review, an analysis of resident experiences, and stakeholder interviews. Each phase was conceptually oriented around a four-part framing geared to identify the benefits, risks, costs and opportunities of companion animals across Australia's diverse housing sectors from the perspective of housing owners, managers and households. The focus of this work was a policy and practice review scoping the regulation of companion animals across diverse sectors of the Australian housing system.

The final stage of the research, presented at Chapter 5, considers the implications of differential companion animal policies and practices across the Australian housing system. It identifies policy development options, addressing Research Question 4.

1. Introduction

Companion animals reside in over 60 per cent of Australian households and occupy an increasingly significant role as family members.

- Pet ownership has widely recognised wellbeing benefits, not only for owners but also for building community, and is a conduit for connections with nature.
- Householders' rights to live with companion animals, and thus their ability to transition within and between dwellings, tenures, neighbourhood precincts and housing assistance models, are highly variable both *within* and *between* state and territory jurisdictions.
- No previous study has examined housing pathways with companion animals in a system-wide approach.
- In the context of significant housing and urban transition and accompanying policy dynamism, the research addresses this significant knowledge gap.
- Using a mixed-methods approach, the research focuses on policy analysis, resident experience, policy development and innovation opportunities.
- The research includes commentary on how the various risks, costs, benefits and opportunities associated with housing and companion animal ownership play out in crisis contexts, including the COVID-19 pandemic.

Australia is a nation of companion animal owners. Over 60 per cent of Australian households (5.7 million) include a pet and more than half own at least one cat or dog (Animal Health Alliance 2013; Animal Medicines Australia 2016). For the majority, pets are considered a vital part of the family (Franklin 2006; Power 2018). Extensive international evidence and an emerging evidence base in Australia indicates widespread social, health and economic benefits of companion animal ownership for individuals and communities. Pet ownership is associated with enhanced outcomes for dementia patients and older persons (Gabriel, Faulkner et al. 2015; Morris 2016), lower blood pressure and cholesterol levels, faster heart attack recovery, lower mental stress (Cutt, Giles-Corti et al. 2008) and reduced asthma risk in children (Ownby, Johnson et al. 2002). Health economists have quantified these at national levels (Hall, Dolling et al. 2016), suggesting substantial on average reduction of lifetime personal and service costs.

However, despite the ubiquity of pets within Australian households, the high value that households place on pets, and evidence of benefits that pets bring to individuals and broader society, the right of households to keep pets varies markedly depending on the housing sector and tenure within which they live. These variable rights have the potential to not only impact some households' ability to choose to obtain a companion animal, they also significantly influence the housing trajectories of households that already include companion animals.

Emerging evidence shows that some tenures, such as the private rental sector (PRS), bring particular challenges for pet owners (Power 2017). There are challenges not only for those already in the sector, but also for those seeking access to the sector such as those leaving home ownership, launching from the family home, or seeking to move out of social housing.

To date, while there is some sector-specific analysis (Carlisle-Frank, Frank et al. 2005; Graham, Milaney et al. 2018; Power 2017; 2018), there has been little analysis of the intersection between *housing pathways* and *companion animal ownership*. Scarce evidence exists about the institutional relationships between regulatory, policy and practice responses to companion animals across tenures, market segments, assistance options and practice responses. No previous Australian study has considered the housing and housing pathways of residents living with companion animals in a system-wide approach in Australia, or how these relationships might be supported by further policy development. This research is designed to address this significant evidence gap.

1.1 Why the need for an evidence base about housing and companion animals in Australia?

This research is being undertaken at a time of rapid urban transition and transformation in Australia. This is related to the long-term and dynamic impacts of housing affordability pressures that have challenged the housing aspirations and opportunities (Stone, Rowley et al. 2020a; Yates 2016 of increasing proportions of Australian households (Burke, Stone et al. 2014; Burke, Nygaard et al. 2020), across more than two decades. Transitions include changed housing pathways and increasingly long-term occupancy, for growing proportions of Australians, in housing tenures that have previously been considered transitional pathways to home ownership—most notably privately rented housing (Stone, Sharam et al. 2015; Burke, Stone et al. 2014; Hulse, Martin et al. 2018; Muir, Powell et al. 2020). Transitions also include the growing density of the built form in urban and regional Australia which is bringing people closer to their own companion animals within the household, and to those owned by others in their neighbourhood.

The place of animals within our lives is also in transition. Once both legally and culturally accepted as property, pets are now more likely to be included in understandings and practices of family (Power 2008). Companion animals arguably represent a household form of a broader global adaptation to the value of human relationships with nature and the additional benefits for human, animal, community and environmental sustainability that stem from these. Companion animals can be a conduit for residents to engage in neighbourhoods, local green space and nature (Cutt, Giles-Corti et al. 2008; Higgins, Temple et al. 2013; Wood, Giles-Corti et al. 2007; Wood 2009)—practices increasingly central to liveability planning in Australia and internationally.

1.1.1 Changing housing opportunity and housing assistance impacts

Housing opportunity change in the form of home ownership decline (Burke, Nygaard et al. 2020), and an increased significance of Australia's private rental sector in particular, draw into sharp relief differential property rights associated with each of these majority housing tenures, as well as the normative cultural practices, institutional settings and legislative frameworks that support them (Hulse, Martin et al. 2018). The private rental sector (PRS), in all of its forms, represents an increasingly important part of the housing system in relation to housing pathways for households living with companion animals. In general terms, the PRS now houses around a third of all Australian households (ABS 2019).

The PRS is home to increasing proportions and numbers of a diversifying population range of households (Stone, Burke, et al. 2013; Hulse, Parkinson, et al. 2018). Evidence indicates it is not only the proportion of households living in the sector at any one point that increases the sector's overall importance in the Australian housing system: it is also the increase in the overall proportion of Australians who are long-term renters—those who rent for 10 years or more (Wulff and Maher 1998 Stone, Sharam et al. 2015; Hulse, Morris et al. 2019). The population of renters includes high-income households, however the PRS is more likely to house moderate- to low-income households, including younger adults and an increasing proportion of aged tenants (Stone, Sharam et al. 2015).

Part of the PRS is comprised of those in receipt of direct forms of housing assistance, including Commonwealth Rent Assistance (CRA) and Private Rental Assistance (PRA) (schemes such as bond support and transitional support mechanisms for tenants moving within and into or out of the sector (Muir, Powell et al. 2020). Residential mobility rates within private rental remain higher than for either social housing (which now houses approximately only 4% of households) or home ownership (approximately 67%). With the heightened mobility associated with the PRS comes an increased probability of households in private rental, relative to home owners, moving into or out of other tenures and living arrangements, including public and community housing (Muir, Powell et al. 2020; Baker, Leishman, et al. 2020).

Hulse, Martin et al. (2018), in their analysis of the changing institutional and governance context of the PRS, identify the need for, and proliferation of, a range of intermediaries—including dedicated financiers, brokers and agents—coupled with new regulatory agencies to oversee the sector. Affordability pressures and digital technology mean that an increasingly large component of private rental is practiced and managed online, resulting in both innovation in existing segments of the PRS and a digitally-enhanced proliferation of informal segments of the sector, including share-housing. While there are 'high end' and quality rentals, there are also discriminatory practices, the potential for predation and widespread relative insecurity of housing occupancy within the Australian PRS.

Residential parks, boarding houses and other parts of the housing system have become increasingly significant as part of overall rental pathways. Additionally, they feature in the housing pathways of people who live with risk of homelessness or who experience homelessness. These numbers in Australia are increasing as a total proportion of the population and now include rising proportions of older persons who do not live in secure housing in later life (from 'young old' ages of 55–64, 'mid old' (65–74 years) and older years of late life).

Australian housing pathways are polarised between those whose pathways include property ownership and the associated rights this entails, and non-owning households.

1.1.2 Densification of urban and regional living

Transitions that are currently in play also include changes to built form and urban and regional design that intersect with tenure opportunity change, and which are geared toward affordability pressure mitigation, responses to climate change, and the population pressures facing all of Australia's cities. These transformations have seen substantial densification including in the form of vertical living in apartment and high-density housing (Easthope, Crommelin et al. 2020; Newton, Rogers, et al. 2020).

As increasing proportions of households in any given metropolitan area in Australia reside in high or medium density dwellings. The need for a wider range of dwelling and design options both within high rise apartment buildings as well as within high and medium-density residential areas will become more urgent and eventually mainstream (Randolph 2006; Randolph and Tice 2013; Randolph, Eslami Afrooz, et al. 2018). Accommodating families and other households that include multiple generations within them, needs for children and/or older persons, people living with impaired mobility or other needs, is likely to become increasingly well catered for with time. Companion animal 'lifestyles' are part of such an adaptation, either within a dwelling context and household scale or at the scale of neighbourhood, precinct or regional centre. Planning for companion animal living and mobility within areas is part of the cities of the future as households adapt to closer proximity to their own and/or their neighbours' companion animals.

1.1.3 Just urbanism, nature, non-humans and companion animals

Urban transitions and city planning are increasingly influenced by principles of just, healthy and sustainable urbanism. For households with pets this may mean an increase in the opportunity to live close to green space, neighbourhood dog parks or natural spaces, as well as engage in events such as 'Walk for Paws' and other festivals in support of animal welfare. More broadly, these principles are in turn being influenced—to some degree—by new ways of imagining and reconfiguring the place and space of nature and non-human animals within our cityscapes, precincts, home lives and lifestyles. Increasing the spaces, places and practices of interactions between human residents and non-human animal residents in urban geographies constitutes a significant rethink of the types of housing designs, dwellings, neighbourhoods, open and shared spaces, green spaces and nature that residents require access to and which is part of a broader societal challenge toward greening cities and urban living (Carter and Charles 2018).

Drawing this emphasis on green space, animals and housing together, policy challenges emerge as well as inequalities based on property rights. Notably, while home owners increasingly consider companion animals as members of the family, legal, physical and social structures in relation to housing do not thoroughly reflect this change, with implications for owners and their companion animals (Rook 2018). Further, renters and other households in less secure housing often do not have this same opportunity.

1.1.4 Housing, housing pathways and home lives in transition

The transitioning housing landscape in Australia has direct relevance for the ways that companion animals are governed as household members in housing and housing pathways and is a significant backdrop and driver of the present research.

- It affects the tenures that companion animals are likely to be housed in (i.e. it is likely that more companion animals are living in private rental and in share-housing than in the past).
- It implies increased residential mobility of households with companion animals than previously, as more adults and families live in private rental dwellings with insecure tenure for longer periods.
- It affects the dwelling forms in which households with pets will increasingly reside, including within medium and higher density dwellings—a cultural shift in dwelling contexts of Australian lifestyles and its role in the making of home, and one that brings people and their companion animals into closer everyday contact.
- It affects neighbourhood, precinct and regional centre design considerations and interactions in densified settings.
- Overall, it implies that increasingly diverse tenures, dwelling types and urban precincts will be home to households and their companion animals, including some households that are highly mobile and/or in receipt of housing assistance of varying types.

1.2 Companion animal housing within a dynamic policy context

Against this backdrop, this research is undertaken at a time of policy development in relation to the housing of companion animals. This policy development is at variable stages across tenures, sectors, segments, population groups, legislative settings and institutional practice—and additionally, is variable within and between state and territory jurisdictions. At the time of writing, around half of all Australian states and territories had recently enacted, or were in the process of enacting, changes to housing-related legislation that improve the possibility of housing and housing pathways with companion animals. This research provides an analysis and outline of the current state of policy development in Australia as well as insights about options and opportunities for further policy reform.

This research develops a housing sector-wide analysis of housing policies operating across four Australian states and one territory: New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia, Western Australia and the Australian Capital Territory. Investigating policies across the private sphere (private rental sector, strata title and community title), public sphere (public housing, community housing, state-owned and managed Indigenous housing (SOMIH)), homelessness, crisis and emergency accommodation, and non-private dwellings (caravan parks, residential parks and retirement villages), it asks how companion animal ownership shapes housing opportunities, including the ability of households to move across tenures.

A particular focus in this research is the housing opportunities of lower income households and housing assistance recipients. Managing the *risks*, *costs*, *benefits* and potential *opportunities* of companion animal ownership in increasingly dynamic housing and housing assistance contexts is complex and challenging. How these concepts affect the development of companion animal regulation and how it is legislated and enacted—either in restrictive, conditional or enabling ways—is an additional focus of inquiry.

1.3 The project

Companion animal ownership poses challenges, risks and potential costs and opportunities for housing owners, managers and households across the housing system. This includes government and community housing providers, home owners, private landlords (within informal and formal letting markets), and crisis accommodation and residential care facilities, as well as residents navigating actual and desired occupancy and mobility within and between tenures, sectors, market segments and housing and related service systems. A national housing system with markedly varying housing affordability, accessibility and models of housing assistance compounds the challenges for governments, housing providers and households.

The aim of this mixed-method, stand-alone project is 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.

The overarching research question addressed by this research is:

What are the implications of differential companion animal policies and practices across housing tenures and sectors, including for residents, private landlords, housing organisations and governments?

This question is addressed via the following four interrelated sub-questions, with research undertaken in five integrated chapter parts (see Table 1).

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?

The multiple sources of data and the analysis of each to address the overarching and supporting questions are as follows:

Table 1: Research questions, data sources and methodology

Research question	Data sources	Methodology (including data sources)
How can companion animals be understood and conceptualised in housing and housing assistance pathways?	Grey and academic literature and jurisdictional legislative review: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Victoria, NSW, SA, WA, ACT 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Select review of literature focused on key terms in national and international contexts: risk, cost, benefits, and definitions (e.g. assistance/companion animals)
What are the experiences and needs of residents in relation to companion animals in the context of housing and housing assistance pathways?	Secondary analysis of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Australian Housing Aspirations</i> (2018) (AHA) Survey data Secondary analysis of qualitative interviews with lower income households (<i>Housing Aspirations Inquiry</i>, N=15) Media analysis of companion animal narratives and policy changes (recent/current) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Descriptive statistical analysis of incidence of companion animal ownership among low/higher income households; perceived barriers to mobility; assistance/companion animal arrangements NVivo analysis of existing, coded data sources across age cohorts (young, mid-life, older) of lower income households, focused on perceived benefits, barriers and risks
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?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Policy/practice review of publicly available information across tenures, housing assistance types, residential care, crisis/homelessness National, state/territory, select international contexts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Policy and practice review framed by concepts of risks, cost, benefits and opportunities, focused on accessibility, allowances, residential transitions, reform
What opportunities exist for policy and practice development in Australia in relation to companion animals within housing and housing assistance contexts?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interviews with key informant organisations (N=9) across jurisdictions, tenures and sectors (ACT, Vic, NSW, SA, WA) and comparison with national and international contexts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Policy practice comparison and focus on policy development opportunities

Source: Authors.

1.4 Research approach

In this research, housing pathways with companion animals were investigated across four stages entailing a literature review, policy and practice review, analysis of resident experiences and stakeholder interviews. Each phase was conceptually oriented around a four-part framing geared to identify the benefits, risks, costs and opportunities of companion animal ownership across Australia's diverse housing sectors from the perspective of housing owners, managers and households. The focus of the work was a policy and practice review scoping the regulation of companion animals across diverse sectors of the Australian housing system.

1.4.1 Literature review and conceptualisation

Part 1 involved a review of existing evidence across tenures, sectors, population groups and companion animal types, to identify the ways in which *risks*, *costs*, *benefits* and *opportunities* connected with companion animals are conceptualised. This review responds to Research Question 1 and underpinned the conceptualisation of housing pathways with companion animals (Chapter 2).

The literature search was conducted using Google Scholar alongside institutional libraries. Key terms were 'companion animals' and 'pets' in conjunction with related housing terms. Broad-scale searches included 'companion animals AND housing'; 'companion animals AND home'; 'pets and housing'; 'pets and home'. More targeted searches incorporated housing-specific terminology including renting; apartments; condominiums; units; retirement villages; homelessness. All papers that included reference to permissions to keep or not keep pets across diverse housing forms were included. In addition, the reference list of each relevant paper was cross-checked.

1.4.2 Policy and practice review

Part 2 is the substantive contribution of the research project: a review of policy and practice settings in four Australian states and one territory. This review first summarises key policies and practices relating to companion animals in housing across diverse tenures, sectors and assistance models. It then reflects on the *risks*, *costs*, *benefits* and potential policy *opportunities* that operate across these settings for housing owners, managers and households.

The Australian jurisdictions that are the focus of the review are New South Wales (NSW), Victoria, South Australia (SA), Western Australia (WA) and the Australian Capital Territory (ACT) where a majority of changes were occurring at the time of proposing the research. The review addresses policy and practice across key components of the housing system in these jurisdictions, including: the private sphere (private rental sector, strata title and community title), public sphere (public housing, community housing, SOMIH), homelessness, crisis and emergency accommodation and non-private dwellings (caravan parks, residential parks and retirement villages). Many of these sectors are subject to state legislation (including, for instance, the various 'companion animal' Acts, residential tenancies Acts, strata title and community title Acts). Others are regulated only at the scale of the housing provider (e.g. emergency accommodation and retirement villages). All state legislation relevant to keeping pets within these sectors were sourced for review. Additional policy from housing and accommodation providers was also sourced.

Analysis entailed three phases:

- **Phase 1** sought to identify the rights and responsibilities of housing providers/managers/households in relation to companion animals, as well as permissions and restrictions relating to the keeping of companion animals (following Power 2018).
- **Phase 2** sought to examine the extent to which policies understand the place and value of companion animals within households, and the degree to which risks/costs and potential benefits/opportunities of companion animals for housing owners/providers and tenants are considered.
- **Phase 3** synthesised this policy review through a housing pathway mobility analysis. This analysis traces key typical housing pathways across tenures, sectors and assistance models to consider how companion animal policies enable or constrain cross-sectoral mobility, including exits from homelessness, by identifying low barrier, discretionary and high barrier contexts and housing transition points.

1.4.3 Resident analysis experiences

Part 3 focuses on the housing experiences and assistance pathways and aspirations of a wide range of lower income households (lowest two equivalised disposable income quintiles) in comparison with middle/higher income households, via analysis of newly available national survey data.

The AHURI Inquiry into the housing aspirations of lower income Australians (Stone, Rowley et al. 2020a) includes design and collection of primary survey data (2018) used for this analysis (see Stone, Rowley, et al. 2020b). While it is not the central focus of the Inquiry, the *Australians' Housing Aspirations (AHA) Survey* includes dedicated companion animal ownership items, enabling analysis of:

- national incidence of assistance/pet ownership
- current housing descriptions of households living with companion animals

- a household estimate of relinquishment of companion animals in recent residential moves, whose most recent move was restricted by pet retention, and who would prefer to have pets but cannot
- housing preferences of those who think their companion animal ownership will restrict future residential mobility, and those who do not, and
- descriptive analysis of how these factors relate to recent/current homelessness, Indigeneity, disability/caring and other factors related to housing assistance eligibility and/or housing-related hardship.

Qualitative, semi-structured interviews with households in metropolitan/regional areas of Victoria, NSW and WA (collected as part of the same Inquiry) have been transcribed and coded in NVivo format for analysis. Where participants have referred to experiences of housing with companion animals, the analysis examines insights into experienced/perceived impacts of companion animal ownership in the context of low-income housing.

A total of 15 resident interviews are included in the analysis presented here. For more details of interview and focus group participant characteristics included in the original research, see Stone, Rowley et al. (2020a).

1.4.4 Media analysis

A selection of publicly-available media stories (including from major news outlets as well as smaller relevant blogs) was included in the methodology to provide wider policy and cultural context for the policy changes underway during and prior to the research period. This includes a select collection of recent media about the housing of companion animals during the COVID-19 pandemic and how this has been responded to by households, agencies and government.

1.4.5 Key informant interviews

To explore the policy and practice implications of the project conducted within Parts 1–3, a selection of key informant interviews focused on policy development options was undertaken in the final empirical stage of the research.¹

A total of nine interviews with leaders/senior representatives of key organisations/peak agencies were conducted using a structured template around themes of *risk*, *cost*, *benefits*, *opportunities*. Interviews were conducted either in-person or over Zoom. Organisations/peak agencies included:

- the Commissioner for Residential Tenancies (Victoria)
- community housing providers
- domestic and family violence services
- Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA)
- animal crisis care providers.

Research advice from three key informants from select international contexts (Canada and Spain), where approaches to companion animals significantly differ from those within Australian jurisdictions, was also sought.²

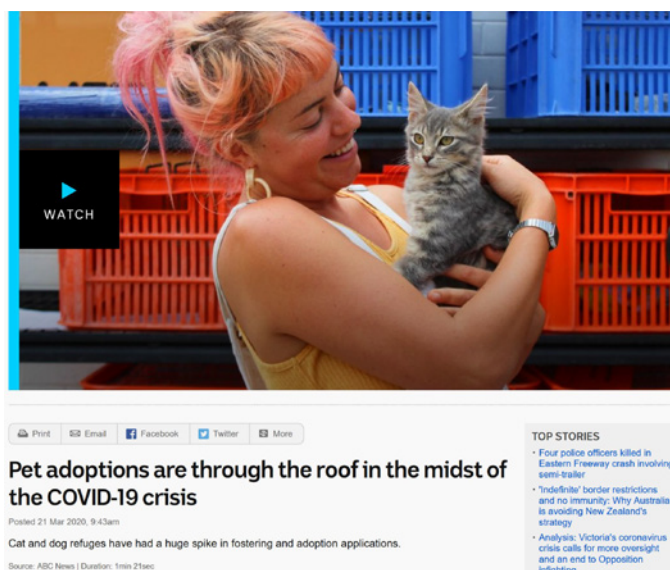
¹ The total number of planned interviews was reduced by the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and the need for many senior members of policy and practice organisations to be involved in direct crisis responses to its housing impacts at the time the research fieldwork was underway.

² Country context selection followed the method used by Hulse, Milligan et al. (2011) regarding analysis of secure occupancy.

1.5 COVID-19 context

At the time this research was being completed, Australia, along with the rest of the world, experienced the COVID-19 pandemic. This context acted to intensify the issues we outline in this research in existing and sometimes new ways.

Figure 2: COVID-19 and companion animals



Source: ABC Just In, March 2020 (ABC News).

Early news reports such as the one above, suggest that one of the unforeseen effects of the COVID-19 crisis as it unfolded in Australia concerned companion animal housing. Specifically, the adoption of pets and an expected spike in what are affectionately known as ‘foster fails’ and, simultaneously, a rapid burst of pet relinquishment. Similar news reports suggest pets coming in one door and literally, almost just as quickly, out the other of animal welfare shelters, nationally. Animal shelters have reported, in some cases for the first time, success of rehoming 100 per cent of all animals in their shelters. Pets living with rough sleepers on city streets are being housed indoors in some cases for the first time.

Companion animals’ residential mobility, security and overall wellbeing is anticipated to mirror that of their household in this context: those with secure property rights, typically in the form of home ownership, appear to have experienced little change (apart from having their human companions home more often during the lockdown period). Those animals in high barrier, companion animal-averse tenures, including private rental, are anticipated to have more insecure outcomes. Those living with homeless persons were, in some cases for the first time, housed in crisis-triggered innovations towards rapid housing.

We reflect briefly on this context in Chapter 5, in the conclusion of the report.

1.6 Structure of the report

This first chapter has provided an overview of the project including the need and rationale, the policy development change context, and the methodology.

Chapter 2 presents the conceptual framework, addressing Research Question 1: *How can companion animals be understood and conceptualised in housing and housing assistance pathways?* It first provides a definition of companion animals used across the research before reviewing their place within housing. This involves identifying the risks, costs, benefits and opportunities of companion animals across diverse segments of the housing system and for different household types. It then sets out the ‘more than human housing pathways’ approach that frames the analysis.

Chapter 3 presents a policy review across housing sectors and the five focus jurisdictions, addressing Research Question 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?* For each sector it identifies whether pets are permitted and how pets are regulated. It summarises the key risks, costs, benefits and opportunities connected with companion animals in each policy framework.

Chapter 4 focuses on residents' experiences of companion animal ownership in the housing system, with insights about potential barriers and enablers of housing pathways with companion animals. This addresses Research Question 2: *What are the experiences and needs of residents in relation to companion animals in the context of housing and housing assistance pathways?*

Chapter 5 considers the implications of differential companion animal policies and practices across the Australian housing system. It identifies policy development options, addressing Research Question 4: *What opportunities exist for policy and practice development in Australia in relation to companion animals within housing and housing assistance contexts?*

2. Housing pathways with companion animals

An analysis of companion animals within housing pathways requires the development of original concepts, definitions and approaches:

- This research uses a ‘housing pathways’ approach, focusing on institutional settings, material aspects of housing and home and housing pathways at household scales, as well as the meanings held by residents that shape their housing practices and pathway decision-making.
- In an original contribution, the research extends the housing pathways approach to explicitly include companion animals within a ‘more than human’ definitional framing and establishes a suite of conceptual and practical methods for doing so.
- A *risks, costs, benefits and opportunities* framework for policy review is defined in this chapter in relation to companion animal ownership in housing contexts.
- Finally, a consistent animal definition that cuts across the multitude of legislative approaches used within states and territories is required: we use the term ‘companion animal’ as a broad term referring to *all animals that are kept or serve a role as a companion or pet within a household*.

The research is conceptually framed through a focus on what we term 'housing pathways with companion animals'. This framework draws on a housing pathways approach (Clapham 2005) together with understandings of human-companion animal relations emerging from multidisciplinary animal studies (Franklin and Tranter 2011; Philo and Wilbert 2000; Power 2008). This framing considers the housing trajectories of households that include companion animals. It takes seriously the relationships and connections that people have with their companion animals and the ways that these relationships interconnect with housing choices and opportunities over time. This chapter first introduces the approach to 'housing pathways with companion animals'. It then reviews existing research on the place of companion animals in housing and identifies the risks, costs, benefits and opportunities connected with companion animals in the context of housing for housing owners, managers and households.

2.1 'Housing pathways' as a conceptual framework

This research is informed by the 'housing pathways' approach developed by Clapham (2005). The approach is useful here as it provides a broad means of focusing on institutional settings that shape housing systems and their administration, as well as resident experiences of interaction with the housing system. It also enables an analysis of housing assistance programs within the housing system. Further, it includes a focus upon resident experiences of becoming housed, being housed, and transitioning into, within and from various sectors within the broad housing system. Consistent with the analytical focus on the intersection of institutional settings and housing, the housing pathways approach brings attention to the practices and experiences of occupants and those involved in the housing system as a whole, such as housing officers or urban planners at local government level, with respect to the occupancy of households.

A housing pathways approach 'foregrounds the meanings held by households and the interactions which shape housing practices as well as emphasising the dynamic nature of housing experience and its inter-relatedness with other aspects of household life' (Clapham 2005: 64). Alongside opportunities and constraints within the housing system, housing pathways approaches attend to the meanings that a house may hold for its inhabitants, including relating 'to its use as a home and the patterns of interaction within in it' (Clapham 2005: 64).

Housing pathways approaches attend to the aspirations and practices of households, as well as the opportunities and constraints that are produced through the housing system and the diverse sets of relationships that households navigate as they move through the housing system. These can include relationships with individual property managers and mortgage brokers, for instance, as well as more structurally inflected relationships that are a product of different tenured, classed, gendered and racialised positions.

Housing pathways approaches recognise the ways that housing consumption is entwined with other dimensions of household need and experience. In his conceptual outline, Clapham (2005: 65) raises issues of employment and family structure, personal identity and lifestyle.

In this research we both use and extend the pathways approach, by introducing the element of co-housing with non-human animals into our institutional and resident analysis. To undertake our inquiry, there is a need to consider companion animals within housing pathways research.

2.1.1 Housing pathways with companion animals

The last century has witnessed a growing emotional and spatial proximity between people and their companion animals. In the 1950s, companion animals were largely regarded as property and understood as pets that were distinct from their human owners (Franklin 2006). From the 1970s onwards there was a growing shift to recognise animals as part of the family and on a similar level to humans within the family structure (Franklin 2006). Today pets are widely recognised as part of 'more-than-human' family configurations (Power 2008; Borthwick 2009). This change is reflected in pet naming trends, with dog-specific names of the 1950s increasingly replaced by human names from the 1970s (Franklin 2006).

The growing emotional closeness of people and their companion animals is paralleled by a growing spatial proximity that has re-shaped domestic practice. Since the 1950s, pets have been increasingly allowed into human spaces within the home and are less often restricted to kennels and similar spaces outside the home (Franklin 2006; Power 2012). These changes to living practices have reshaped the expectations placed on companion animals, as well as impacted domestic practice. Companion animals are increasingly expected to behave in ways that reflect domestic norms of cleanliness and hygiene—for example, new breeds of dog that do not shed hair are increasingly popular (Power 2012). At the same time, domestic practice has transformed to accommodate companion animals. Within households, informal regulation includes designating pet-friendly and pet-free areas of the house, retrofitting doors to allow dog and cat mobility, the incorporation of pet-specific furniture (beds, climbing posts, ramps and boxes), new pet-focused routines such as training, walking and socialising, and so on (Franklin 2006; Power 2012).

While past research considered pets as symbols of human attachment, since the 1990s burgeoning bodies of research, under the loose banner of multidisciplinary animal studies, have established that companion animals actively co-constitute their relations with people. Companion animals actively solicit human attention, co-defining the nature of the companion relationship that they share with people (Franklin 2006; Power 2008; Power 2012). People develop strong bonds with their companion animals that are vital to their everyday routines, their sense of self and their wellbeing.

Companion animals also affect homemaking practices (Power 2012) and, as Franklin (2006) and Smith (2003) establish, the form of the house itself, including 'housing choice and design, furnishing and the internal configuration of space' (Franklin 2006: 154).

Animals also have particular physical needs in housing such as space for eating, sleeping and access to appropriate toileting. However, beyond this, the physical attributes of a dwelling that are appropriate for animal occupancy are to a large degree culturally constructed and contextualised. The Australian quarter-acre suburban block, for example, is often conflated with a family or pet-loving lifestyle, but what does this mean for households living with companion animals in medium or high-density dwellings? With relevance to this study, these basic physical—as well as normative—expectations about the housing requirements of animals are likely to influence the ways in which institutional settings are constructed and executed, as situated in policy-making practice.

2.1.2 Implications of housing pathways with a companion animals' approach

For the purposes of this research, we determine that addressing housing pathways with companion animals requires at least four conditions. First, it requires taking seriously the important place of animals within many households and being attentive to the ways that the needs, behaviours and practices of companion animals might intersect with housing trajectories—shaping both housing needs and domestic practice at a household scale. Second, it requires attending to the opportunities and constraints that are produced through the housing system in regard to companion animals. This includes how settings within the housing system shape the ability to access secure housing and exercise choice within housing pathways for households that include companion animals. Third, it requires attention to how companion animals are addressed within housing policy, including through the regulation of households' behaviour and responsibilities in relation to their companion animals. Fourth, it requires widening the institutional view within the housing pathways approach to include a focus on the range of actors, intermediaries and contextual elements influencing the ways in which to conduct housing pathways that can include companion animals.

2.2 Housing assistance and living arrangements continuum

At the scale of the housing system, housing regulations designate between pet-friendly and non-pet-friendly housing as well as regulating access within communities, such as within a strata or community title context (Power 2017; 2018). Within this varied changing housing and housing assistance context, households make decisions relating to their animal assistance/care needs, family/household requirements, finances and wellbeing. Evidence from the settings described, as well as institutionalised residential care contexts (such as disability services and aged care), indicates that residents actively manage housing around companion animal ownership where possible—sometimes making extreme trade-offs of housing security or safety to do so (Wiesel, Laragy et al. 2015; Burke, Neske et al. 2004).

For non- or potential pet owners, restrictions can constitute a barrier to pet ownership, creating health, wellbeing and inclusion impacts. There are also animal welfare concerns about how companion animals are considered in the housing market. Strong connections exist between pet-restrictive tenures/policies and high rates of animal relinquishment. Power (2017) notes that 'housing (including rental access) [is] recognised as a key factor motivating accelerating levels of pet relinquishment' (Power 2017; New, Salman et al. 1999; Shore, Petersen et al. 2003). An estimated 15–25 per cent of pet relinquishments are related to rental mobility/access and pet restrictions (Costigan 2018).

Urban densification means that social housing providers may own/manage a wider range of dwelling types than previously, and hence support a wider array of potential pathways across and between dwellings, neighbourhoods and assistance forms. In addition to affecting households in receipt of housing assistance, urban densification affects outright owners' ability to downsize with companion animals (Morris 2016). Indeed, it is suggested,

[the] shift towards higher-density housing in urban areas of Australia to manage population growth is the biggest current threat to pet ownership in Australia—particularly in the current environment of strict body corporate or strata rules that exclude pets in multi-dwelling developments (AMA 2016: 8).

Despite the growing closeness of people and their companion animals, companion animals are still considered in law as property that can be disposed of—owners are within their right to relinquish pets if they choose. For households that regard their pets as family members, this option can be emotionally distressing and is a poor animal welfare outcome as many of these animals will be euthanised. However, pet relinquishment remains widespread. Research shows that moving house and difficulties securing pet-friendly housing are one of the most significant factors driving the decision to relinquish companion animals, particularly for low-income households and those facing housing uncertainty (New, Salman et al. 1999; Shore, Petersen et al. 2003).

2.3 Defining companion and assistance animals for housing and housing pathways research

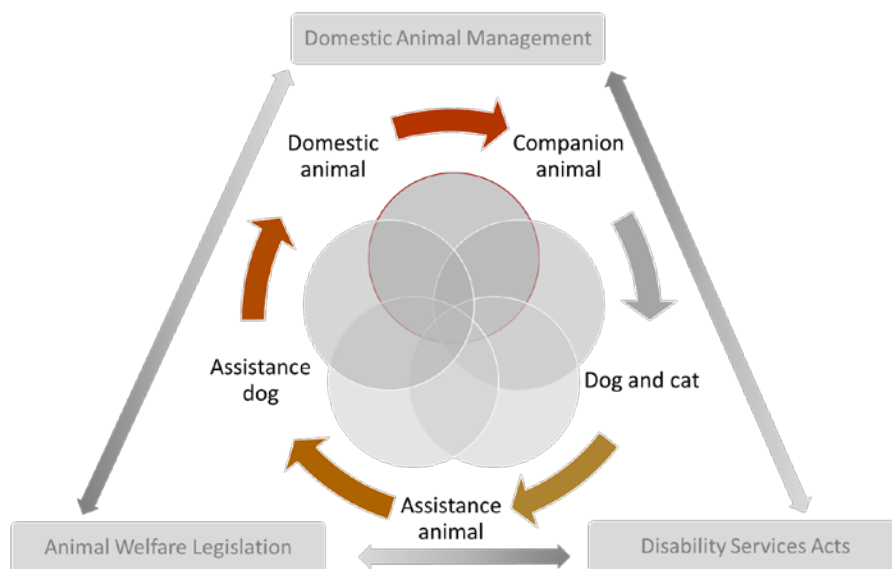
In this research we use the term 'companion animal' as a broad term referring to all animals that are kept or that serve a role as a companion or pet within a household. We use the term 'assistance animal' with reference to animals referred to in Appendix 1 (Disability discrimination—guide dogs, hearing assistance dogs and trained animals) of the Australian Government's *Disability Discrimination Act 1992*.

Most Australian legislation does not use the term 'companion animal'. For example, in South Australia, the *Dog and Cat Management Act 1995* refers primarily to cats and dogs, and Western Australia has separate legislation that refers specifically to cats (*Cat Act 2011*) and dogs (*Dog Act 1976*). ACT legislation refers primarily to cats and dogs within the *Domestic Animals Act 2000*, and cats, dogs, horses and other prescribed animals come under the definition of 'prescribed class of animals' in Victoria's *Domestic Animal Act 1994*. New South Wales legislation (*Companion Animals Act 1998* Part 1, Section 5) refers specifically to companion animals as a term, meaning a dog, a cat or any other animal under the corresponding Regulations. Under the *Companion Animals Act 1988* dogs can be considered a companion animal even if their primary purpose is not companionship, such as rural working dogs, police and guard dogs and service dogs. Full details of the range of legislative terms and uses has been compiled for the focus jurisdictions within this research: Victoria, New South Wales, South Australia, Western Australia and the ACT (Appendix 1).

The various terms in legislative framings are used in interactive and variable ways with housing and urban governance legislative frameworks, institutional settings and organisational practices—in some cases, in highly variable ways across state and territory jurisdictions. In short, a complex interaction between legislation and organisational contexts exists in relation to housing and living arrangements. This interaction of law and practice plays out in varying ways within and between housing sectors, including with varied interpretations and applications across state and territory jurisdictional boundaries.

Key actors that must navigate these layers of varying legislative and institutional complexity include households; housing providers; residential property industries, including investor finance and real estate industries; local governments, planners, health and disability organisations, and animal welfare organisations.

Figure 3: Companion animal definitions and terms used in legislation across state and territory jurisdictions



Source: Authors.

Analysing the extent of policy development and innovation occurring across housing sectors and jurisdictions leads to a focus on two types of legislative and institutional interactions: what we describe as 'companion animal-permissive' and 'companion animal-averse' housing occupancy contexts. Within a housing pathways framing, our focus is on the settings that create low barrier housing opportunity pathways for households that include companion animals, and those settings that represent high barrier or highly discretionary housing pathway conditions.

2.4 Analytic framework: risks, costs, benefits, opportunities

Housing is undoubtedly designed with humans as priority occupants. However, changing human-companion animal relations drive a need to consider how we can better accommodate the increasing 'multi-species households' that are so important to many Australians.

Housing pathways with companion animals are shaped by the ways that companion animals are regulated in housing. The regulation of companion animals intersects in turn with the ways they are framed by policy makers, housing owners, managers and households. The remainder of this section considers how the contemporary housing system accommodates the shift in values regarding companion animals from property to family members. The discussion of this shift begins by considering the risks, costs and benefits of pet ownership in contemporary housing systems from the perspective of housing owners, managers and households. It then ends with a consideration of opportunities for allowing and encouraging pet-friendly housing. These four key concepts (risks, costs, benefits and opportunities) are returned to in Chapter 5, the conclusion of this report.

2.4.1 Risks

In this section we briefly overview the housing-connected risks that companion animals can bring to housing owners, managers, and households with companion animals. Risks relating to different housing contexts are discussed in Chapter 3.

In Australia and other home owner nations like the United States and the United Kingdom, housing systems typically restrict pet access. Pet-restrictive policies are typically justified through the perceived risks of pets to the broader community as well as to the material fabric of housing. In a rental context, property damage is cited as a concern for landlords offering pet-friendly rental accommodation (Carlisle-Frank, Frank et al. 2005; Power 2017). However, evidence for this damage is limited as detailed in Section 2.3.2 (Carlisle-Frank, Frank et al. 2005).

Noise and nuisance complaints caused by pets are also cited as a risk in some studies of renting and strata (Carlisle-Frank, Frank et al. 2005; Power 2018). Some companion animals can cause disturbance and noise to neighbours, particularly when living in close quarters such as multi-owned dwellings (Borthwick 2009; Power 2013; 2015; 2018). Companion animals are also connected with health risks (Cutt, Giles-Corti et al. 2007). These include injury risks to others if companion animals bite or are aggressive (Rock, Adams et al. 2014) as well as broader risks such as dog faeces hosting zoonoses that transfer infections from dogs to humans or toxoplasmosis in cats. Pet-ownership in multi-residential buildings can be a concern for other residents who are allergic or afraid of animals. These property, noise and health-connected risks can be conceptualised as risks to housing owners, managers, households that include companion animals and their local communities. These risks highlight the need to consider how pet-ownership affects others living in close proximity (Rock, Adams et al. 2014).

Households that include companion animals also face a broader set of housing-specific risks that are created by pet-based housing restrictions. These restrictions can force multi-species households to make compromises in their housing situation and reflect a substantial way that housing pathways with companion animals differ from those that do not include companion animals. First, companion animal ownership is identified as a pathway to housing insecurity among renters in a number of studies (Graham, Milaney et al. 2018; Power 2017; Soaita and McKee 2019) and is recognised as a key driver of pet relinquishment in another (Shore, Petersen et al. 2003). Landlords frequently cite concerns about property damage, though there is little evidence to support this (Carlisle-Frank, Frank et al. 2005). Second, pet restrictions in multi-ownership housing, such as strata and community title, engender housing risks to home owners and renters. Even in pet-friendly buildings, pet owners experience hurdles for pet approval, such as submitting application forms with breed type, measurements, registration documents, vaccination records or even temperament referees from veterinarians or building managers from previous residences (Power 2018). There is typically little consistency between approval processes in strata and community title schemes. Renters in these contexts navigate two layers of approval: requiring consent from both landlords and the strata or community title committee.

Already vulnerable populations are at an even greater risk of housing instability when owning pets. These populations can include the elderly, low-income groups, the homeless and victims of housing crises, natural disasters and domestic violence. Retirement villages, homeless shelters or public housing services that do not allow pets can dissuade potential residents, or cause emotional distress to incoming residents who are required to relinquish their pets (Mee 2009; Irvine 2013; Rook 2018; Rhoades, Winetrobe et al. 2015). This is especially problematic as high-support accommodation is typically most restrictive to pet ownership, even though they service groups that would benefit greatly from pet companionship (Rook 2018). Pet relinquishment has been shown to spike at times of housing crisis (Nowicki 2011's 'Sad Puppy Indicator') and in the aftermath of natural disasters, where housing options become more constrained due to pet restrictions in emergency housing (Graham and Rock 2019). Alternatively, individuals may remain in unsafe and precarious living situations in order to keep their pets after a natural disaster (Graham and Rock 2019) or in the instance of domestic violence (Cabral Jones 2008). Victims may choose to remain in violent households if they cannot find safe housing with their pets due to the fear that the violent perpetrator might retaliate on the pet (Cabral Jones 2008; Arkow 2008).

Tensions and conflicts arise where pets do not fit into existing domestic space arrangements and structures (Power 2008), particularly for animals more likely to cause nuisance, such as through damage to furniture or noise (Power 2012). Tensions also sometimes emerge within neighbourhoods, for instance, when dogs bark excessively or when cats and dogs roam (Borthwick 2009).

2.4.2 Costs

In this section we overview housing costs that relate to companion animal ownership for both their owners and the broader community.

The housing-connected costs of pet ownership are diverse and often tenure-specific. For renters, there can be fees associated with keeping pets in rental housing, such as a pet bond at the start of a tenancy or cleaning fees at the end of a tenancy (Power 2013). In some markets, tenants report offering higher rent to encourage landlords to approve pets in an otherwise no-pets property or to be considered as a potential applicant (Graham, Milaney et al. 2018). There can also be hidden costs, for example, there is some evidence that pet-friendly rentals cost more than equivalent quality properties that do not allow pets (Carlisle-Frank, Frank et al. 2005; Power 2017). It is likely that suitable apartments or houses will cost more if the pet requires a large space to roam, backyard, fencing or to be located where noise will not travel to neighbours (Power 2014). It is also likely that these costs pose particular difficulties for low-income households.

Pets can both add and reduce costs for others beyond the pet owner. For example, in a rental context there are concerns about the risk and cost of property damage among landlords, which are discussed later (Carlisle-Frank, Frank et al. 2005; Graham, Milaney et al. 2018). Companion animal covenants can also affect property prices in multi-owned properties. In the US, it is context-specific whether allowing pets increases or decreases property values. Hopkins (2016) found that allowing pets decreased property values, while a study in Florida showed that people (likely retirees) would pay a premium for condominiums with fewer pet restrictions (Lin, Allen et al. 2013). There is some evidence that housing costs are pet-specific. In various studies allowing cats has been found to add value, while allowing dogs can lessen property values (Hopkins 2016; Cannaday 1994; Carlisle-Frank, Frank et al. 2005).

2.4.3 Benefits

In this section we overview the benefits of living with companion animals for owners and the broader community.

First, despite the housing risks and costs connected with pet ownership, there is evidence that companion animals also bring many benefits to both pet owners and the broader community. Commonly stated benefits to pet ownership are the emotional and physical health benefits of companion animals. Animals can have therapeutic physiological benefits, such as improving cardiovascular health and blood pressure among owners (Wood, Giles-Corti et al. 2005; Mubanga, Byberg et al. 2017), particularly when owning dogs that require walking (Cutt, Knuiman et al. 2008; Cutt, Giles-Corti et al. 2008; Higgins, Temple et al. 2013). Companion animals can also provide many psychological benefits, such as relieving stress and anxiety (Wood, Giles-Corti et al. 2005). The physiological and psychological benefits are especially strong for people suffering from mental illness (Luck 2014; Brooks, Rushton et al. 2016) or the elderly (Knight and Edwards 2008; Toohey, Hewson et al. 2018). Pets may also provide owners with a sense of home (Soaita and McKee 2019; Fox and Walsh 2011), and young people experiencing instability with a routine. Pets can reduce feelings of loneliness, particularly for people living alone (Duvall and Pychyl 2010; Franklin 2011), older adult primary care patients (Stanley, Conwell et al. 2014), and the homeless (Irvine 2013; Rew 2000; Rhoades, Winetrobe et al. 2015). Irvine (2013) found that pets have been reported to prevent homeless and formerly homeless individuals from taking their lives. However, there is also some research that suggests that the positive impacts of pets on psychological wellbeing may be overstated (Herzog 2011; Parslow, Jorm et al. 2005). Regardless, given the close emotional bonds between pets and their owners, it is important to try to maintain these relationships.

Pet ownership can also have many wider social benefits. Allowing pets in housing can benefit landlords, as there is some evidence that tenants with pets have longer tenancies with shorter vacancy periods, pay higher rents, and pet-friendly housing needs less marketing on average (Carlisle-Frank, Frank et al. 2005) and can add marketing appeal (Power 2018). There is evidence to suggest that the physiological and psychological benefits of pet ownership result in less medical expenditure, which in a US study came to a significant saving of government expenditure (Headey 1999). Pets are also beneficial at fostering social interaction as 'social facilitators', as they make owners more likely to go outside and use common or public spaces where dog walking is required (Wood, Giles-Corti et al. 2005; Wood, Giles-Corti et al. 2007; Power 2013), and make owners appear more approachable (Power 2013). These effects have social benefits beyond the pet owner and for the wider community and can cause groups to interact that otherwise would not have contact (Wood, Giles-Corti et al. 2007; Mayorga-Gallo 2018).

2.4.4 Opportunities

In this section we identify broader opportunities that may relate to supporting pet-friendly housing. There are connections between housing policy and animal welfare outcomes, with evidence that housing restrictions are a primary driver of pet relinquishment. These connections point to the potential animal welfare opportunities of pet-friendly housing systems. First, a greater supply of pet-friendly housing across all tenures would potentially reduce the number of pets relinquished and euthanised (Carlisle-Frank, Frank et al. 2005). Second, a greater supply of pet-friendly housing may support greater pet adoption from animal shelters. Animal shelters typically have strict policies for adoptions of their animals that include housing requirements so that their animals are suitably re-homed and not returned to shelters (RSPCA 2018). Adoption rates are therefore restricted by the stock of available pet-friendly housing; consequently, prospective pet owners may seek out animals from pet shops and puppy farms that have no policies or restrictions for pet buyers (Graham, Milaney et al. 2018).

Furthermore, supportive housing contexts that consider pets could improve housing opportunities and broader wellbeing outcomes for vulnerable populations. Programs such as 'Safe Havens for Animals' could help pet owners who are homeless and/or domestic violence victims to access emergency housing with the knowledge that their pets are being looked after and will not be left behind (Cabral Jones 2008; Rhoades, Winetrobe et al. 2015). In NSW, there are programs run through the RSPCA to house animals for domestic violence victims, and this program could be applied elsewhere (RSPCA NSW 2020). Some family violence shelters have been able to accommodate pets by having pet-friendly floors or designated spaces, and separating these from no-pet zones for those residents with allergies or fear of animals (Rhoades, Winetrobe et al. 2015). For domestic violence victims, collaboration with police to understand the links between pets and decision-making of victims to remain in unsafe environments could help persuade victims to move to more suitable housing (Cabral Jones 2008).

Finally, pet-friendly housing policies may bring benefits to housing providers and landlords. There is some evidence that pet-friendly rentals are leased more easily, with lower market costs and shorter vacancies (Carlisle-Frank, Frank et al. 2005). Openly providing pet-friendly housing also directly addresses issues with illegal pet keeping. When pets are kept illegally, landlords and owners' corporations are less able to regulate or monitor companion animal practices, for example, through requiring bonds or including property cleaning and maintenance requirements in property agreements. Graham, Milaney et al. (2018) also suggest that landlords and property managers could partner with local dog behaviour schools and dog walking and grooming companies to approach pet-owning tenants, thereby reducing nuisance pet behaviour, before starting a tenancy and if necessary before considering terminating a tenancy. Providing dog runs in local areas can foster greater social interaction in the community, and pet-friendly areas make local areas more desirable (Wood, Giles-Corti et al. 2007; Tissot 2011).

The consideration of all risks, costs, benefits and particularly opportunities for policy development and innovation toward increasing companion animal-permissive secure housing options and pathways is discussed in the concluding Chapter 5.

2.5 Towards a framework for analysing housing pathways with companion animals

This chapter has outlined evidence of the close connection between households and companion animals, with household pets increasingly likely to be considered family members, relative to previous eras.

In this chapter we have:

- identified transformative cultural, housing and urban practices that influence how households, policy makers and legislators understand the human-animal relationship in contemporary Australia
- established that highly variable definitions of companion animals in current state and territory legislation influences housing and housing pathways with companion animals
- created an original approach of housing pathways with companion animals, including identification of an analytical framework for undertaking our analysis
- outlined a housing continuum in which we will examine policy development in the context of companion animal regulation in housing contexts, and
- drawn on existing evidence to identify the risks, costs, benefits and opportunities that are likely to influence companion animal permissive or averse policy and practice, and how these might apply to the present research.

This close relationship between humans and non-human animals raises significant questions about how to understand the divergent policy and legislative frameworks, settings and practices that exist in relation to companion animal ownership and housing. These issues are explored in Chapter 3.

3. Institutional settings shaping housing and housing assistance pathways with companion animals: policy review

- For the purposes of the research, ‘companion animal legislation’ includes a range of terms, definitions and varied applications, with a lack of overall coherence nationally and across different purposes.
- In housing, housing assistance and urban/neighbourhood management contexts, definitions are also varied and interact with organisational actors in varied ways.
- Legislative and policy contexts and the way they are practiced across five jurisdictions are examined. The jurisdictions are Victoria, New South Wales, South Australia, Western Australia and the Australian Capital Territory.
- The policy review focuses on the private sphere (home ownership, private rental, strata and community title), the public sphere (public housing, community housing and SOMIH) homelessness, crisis and emergency housing, and non-private residential settings (retirement villages and residential parks/caravan parks).
- The way that perceived risks, costs, benefits and opportunities are engaged with in these various housing spheres and across jurisdictions are identified.
- Housing policy development contexts that can be broadly characterised as ‘low barrier companion animal permissive’ contexts, ‘highly discretionary’ contexts as well as ‘high barrier companion animal averse’ contexts are identified.

- **To a considerable degree, current policy development dynamism can be found in some jurisdictions that are both characterised more traditionally as ‘high barrier’ or ‘high discretion’ as well as ‘risk averse’. These contexts are in varying ways and to varying degrees moving toward more pet-permissive policy development and practice models. However, many barriers remain in place for access, mobility/transition and exit pathways for households living with companion animals.**

This chapter presents an overview of key policy and practice relating to companion animals across the housing systems in New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia, Western Australia, and the Australian Capital Territory. Companion animal legislation is outlined which applies to each part of the housing system in its jurisdiction, and key policies and practices that intersect with having companion animals are examined in each sector—the private sphere, public sphere, homeless, crisis and emergency, and non-private dwellings (focusing here on retirement villages and residential parks/caravan parks). Within each section a state-by-state summary is provided. A brief analytical note at the end of each sectoral report reflects on the opportunities and constraints experienced within that housing sector by households that include companion animals.

3.1 Companion animal legislation

Across Australia, the keeping and management of companion animals within households is regulated at a state and territory level. This legislation applies to companion animals that are kept across every housing sector within the state, operating as a platform set of regulations that underpin rights and responsibilities in relation to keeping pets.

3.1.1 Policy review

Australian Capital Territory (ACT)

In the ACT, the *Domestic Animals Act 2000* (Republication No 41) requires that all dogs be registered and the registrar be notified of details including change of address.

Permission is required for owners to keep four or more dogs or four or more cats on residential premises. Property issues such as size and nature of the premises, security of the premises, suitability of facilities, etc., are considered when approval is sought.

Animals cause nuisance under the Act if they cause ‘(i) damage to property owned by a person other than the keeper; or (ii) excessive disturbance to a person other than the keeper because of noise; or (iii) an unacceptable risk to the public or another animal’ (section 109). If keepers of animals are found guilty of causing an animal nuisance offence the court may order the animal to be destroyed or sold (section 110). People affected by animal nuisance can complain to the registrar in writing about the nuisance; the registrar can then investigate the complaint. If the registrar believes that the animal is causing a nuisance, they may issue a written notice to the keeper of the animal, or a person who occupies the place where the animal is causing the nuisance. Factors such as the ‘number of people affected, or potentially affected, by the nuisance; the damage, disturbance or danger resulting, or likely to result, from the nuisance’ and any precaution that the keeper has taken to minimise or avoid the nuisance and its adverse effects are taken into account when making decisions about nuisance animals. Nuisance notices can be revoked if ‘adequate steps have been taken to reduce the nuisance or stop the nuisance from happening again’ (section 113). In some circumstances, nuisance animals can be seized and impounded.

Dogs:

- can be declared dangers if they have attacked or harassed a person or animal, or if the dog is a guard dog. Owners must have a licence to keep a dangerous dog and fulfil requirements for keeping the animal, such as warning signs at the property entrance.
- must be kept restrained by a leash when in public places, unless the place is a designated off leash area.
- must also be kept restrained by a leash when on private premises; owners must also have permission from the owner of the premises to be present with the dog. [This reads as though it could apply to people with pets on shared common property of a strata scheme].
- may not attack, harass or menace people or dogs. ‘(1) A dog is taken to *harass* a person if, because of its behaviour, the person reasonably fears that the dog is about to attack the person without provocation; (2) A dog is taken to *harass* an animal if the dog hunts or torments the animal’ (Division 2.6, section 49). It is the owner’s responsibility to ensure that this does not occur and owners are held responsible in instances where these events do occur.

New South Wales

In New South Wales, companion animal ownership is regulated via the *Companion Animals Act 1998*. Local Government is the authority responsible for companion animals within this legislation. The councils are responsible for promoting awareness of the requirements of the Act with respect to companion animal ownership, and to ensure that it is aware of any 'dangerous, menacing and restricted dogs ... ordinarily kept within its area' (section 6A).

Under the Act, the owners of companion animals are responsible for the behaviour of the animal. They are required to register the animal with the local council and notify the council of changes and events such as the death of the animal, the animal goes missing, the animal being found after being reported missing, a dog being declared 'dangerous' or 'menacing' by a court, or such a declaration is revoked.

The Act regulates most aspects of companion animal ownership. Those that most strongly connect with housing include:

- Dogs:
 - Responsibility to keep a dog secure within a property and prevent it from escaping from that property (section 12A).
 - Instances 'where dog attacks person or animal'. The definition of attack is broad, encompassing rushing, attacking, biting, harassing or chasing any people or animals other than vermin. The owner of the dog can be held responsible for these acts and the dog can be classified as dangerous or menacing. The dog may also be seized by an authorised officer. Exceptions to this include instances where the person or animal was trespassing on the property in which the dog was kept, or the dog was acting in reasonable defence of a person or the property, or the dog was being 'teased, mistreated, attacked or otherwise provoked'.
 - Can be declared a nuisance if they are 'habitually at large', make a 'noise that persistently occurs or continues to such a degree or extent that it unreasonably interferes with the peace, comfort or convenience of any person in any other premises' or 'repeatedly defecates on property (other than a public place) outside the property on which it is ordinarily kept'. There are other categories of nuisance, but these are the most likely to apply in relation to privately-owned and shared (e.g. strata) property.
- Cats:
 - Must have a form of identification that would enable the local authority to identify the owner of the cat.
 - Can be declared a nuisance if they make 'noise that persistently occurs or continues to such a degree or extent that it unreasonably interferes with the peace, comfort or convenience of any person in any other premises, or repeatedly damages anything outside the property on which it is ordinarily kept' (section 31).

The authorised officer must give the owner of the animal notice of intention to issue a nuisance dog or cat order, including requirements to which the owner will need to comply if the order is issued. Owners also have the right to object to the order within a specified time. The owner of the animal can be required 'to prevent the behaviour that is alleged to constitute the nuisance' (section 32A).

Dogs that are dangerous or menacing can in some circumstances be required to be kept restrained within the owner's private property, with specifications provided about the nature of restraint that is required.

The *Local Government Act 1993* further empowers Councils to restrict the number of cats and dogs that can be kept on the premises.

South Australia

In South Australia, cats and dogs are regulated under the *Dog and Cat Management Act 1995*. Councils are responsible for administering and enforcing the Act. The owners of dogs and cats are generally held responsible for the behaviour of the animal.

Dogs must be registered. Dogs are not allowed to 'wander at large', or 'attack, harass or chase a person or an animal or a bird'.

Owners can be issued with a series of control orders depending on the unlawful behaviour of the dog. These include destruction orders, dangerous dog orders (the dog is unduly dangerous, and has attacked, harassed or chased a person or animal or bird, or is likely to do so in circumstances that would constitute an offence against this or any other Act), menacing dog orders (a dog is menacing, and has attacked, harassed or chased a person or an animal or bird, or is likely to do so, in circumstances that would constitute an offence against this or any other Act), nuisance dog orders (is a nuisance and has attacked, harassed or chased a person or an animal or bird, or is likely to do so, in circumstances that would constitute an offence against this or any other Act) and barking dog orders (is a nuisance; and the dog has created noise by barking or otherwise in circumstances that would constitute an offence against this or any other Act). For each offence, owners are responsible for ensuring that the dog does not continue to perform the offence, and there are fines and penalties that can be issued where an offence continues to occur.

Victoria

In Victoria, the relevant Act is the *Domestic Animals Act 1994*. Councils are responsible for preparing domestic animal management plans and ensuring compliance with the Act. Dogs and cats must be registered.

Dogs and cats must not cause nuisance. The occupier of a premises where a dog or cat is kept can be held liable for any nuisance. A dog or cat is considered to be a nuisance if it 'injures or endangers the health of any person; or if it creates a noise, by barking or otherwise, which persistently occurs or continues to such a degree or extent that it unreasonably interferes with the peace, comfort or convenience of any person in any other premises' (section 32). The responsible person can be given orders to abate the nuisance, with penalties for noncompliance.

Dogs may not cause menace or cause injury or death by biting or attacking a person or animal. They may be declared 'dangerous' if they do so. Dogs must be kept restrained under specified conditions if they are declared dangerous.

Western Australia

In Western Australia, the most relevant Acts are the *Dog Act 1976* and the *Cat Act 2011*. The Local Government is the authority under both Acts.

Dogs must be registered. A local government may limit the number of dogs kept on premises to either two, three, four, five or six.

Dogs must be restrained in public places, such as by a lead or harness, unless in a dog exercise or other area where dogs may be off leash.

Dogs may not be in places that are not public without the consent of the occupier or other person authorised to give consent.

Dog owners are liable for instances where dogs attack or chase a person or animal whether or not injury is caused. Dogs may be declared dangerous if they have caused injury or damage by attack or chasing, or have shown a tendency to repeatedly attack, chase or threaten to attack. Dangerous dogs must be kept restrained in specified ways, including within the property that they reside on.

Dogs may not cause nuisance. Nuisance includes barking or other noise that exceeds specified levels or a prescribed frequency, or that 'unreasonably interferes with the peace, comfort or convenience of any person in any place' (Division 4, section 38). People may lodge complaints against a dog they allege is a nuisance. The person liable for the dog can be required to prevent the nuisance behaviour. There are fines that may be issued for repeat offences.

Dogs that cause injury or damage may be destroyed under the Act (Part VII, section 39).

3.1.2 Risks, costs, benefits, opportunities

Companion animal legislation across Australia is geared toward regulating the keeping of cats and dogs, and is generally permissive of these animals, though the number of animals that may be kept is capped in some states. It also typically frames people as owners, making them responsible for the appropriate behaviour of their animals, and focuses on the regulation of risks that companion animals may incur to individuals and the broader community.

Danger and nuisance provisions relate most strongly to the housing context. Owners of animals that are dangerous or that cause nuisance to others beyond the owning household can be sanctioned in the Act. This includes animals that cause excessive noise including barking. This is a significant regulatory overlay to the housing sector-specific policies and practices discussed next in this report. They place equal responsibility on all companion animal owners to appropriately regulate the behaviour of their animals regardless of housing tenure and form. While some housing policies (e.g. strata title) will often seek to regulate nuisance noise, provisions within companion animal legislation provides an overarching framework that makes regulation of nuisance the responsibility of a local authority. This provides for housing managers across specific housing sectors to defer to local authorities through companion animal legislation to regulate nuisance and dangerous animals.

3.2 The private sphere: private rental and home ownership

The private housing sphere consists of two dominant tenure types, home ownership and private rental. Overlapping spheres of regulation vary by state but include companion animal legislation (see 3.1), strata (see 3.2.3) and community title (see 3.2.5). Home owners in Torrens title dwellings experience the greatest freedom in the choice to keep companion animals, subject only to companion animals legislation. Home owners residing in strata or community title schemes are subject to additional regulation through the relevant Acts. Private renters are subject to the residential tenancies Acts in each state. They can also be subject to overlapping regulations through strata and community title.

There is some existing research addressing rights and responsibilities of households that include companion animals in the private rental sector and within strata title communities.

A growing body of research addresses the place of companion animals within the private rental sector. Within this sector there is growing evidence of widespread restrictions that limit the capacity of households with companion animals to secure pet-friendly housing. Companion animal ownership is identified in one study as a pathway to housing insecurity among renters (Power 2017). In this study, households in Sydney, NSW, reported the limited availability of pet-friendly housing. They also reported that pet-friendly housing was often of a lower quality or less suitable to the needs of human members of the household. In Canada, a country with a culture of home ownership that parallels that in Australia, Graham, Milaney et al. (2018) similarly found that pet owners can feel discriminated against in their rental searches and landlord negotiations, choosing to remain in substandard housing situations out of concern about not being able to find a better housing alternative.

Pet owners are sometimes driven to keep pets illegally to access housing, risking their tenancy should the pets be found by the landlord and causing emotional distress (Power 2017; Soaita and McKee 2019). Renters with pets have also identified the risk of pets becoming collateral for retaliation by neighbours and/or the landlord (Power 2017; 2018). Landlords are often the cause of pet relinquishment if they deem the pet unsuitable for the housing situation (Shore, Petersen et al. 2003).

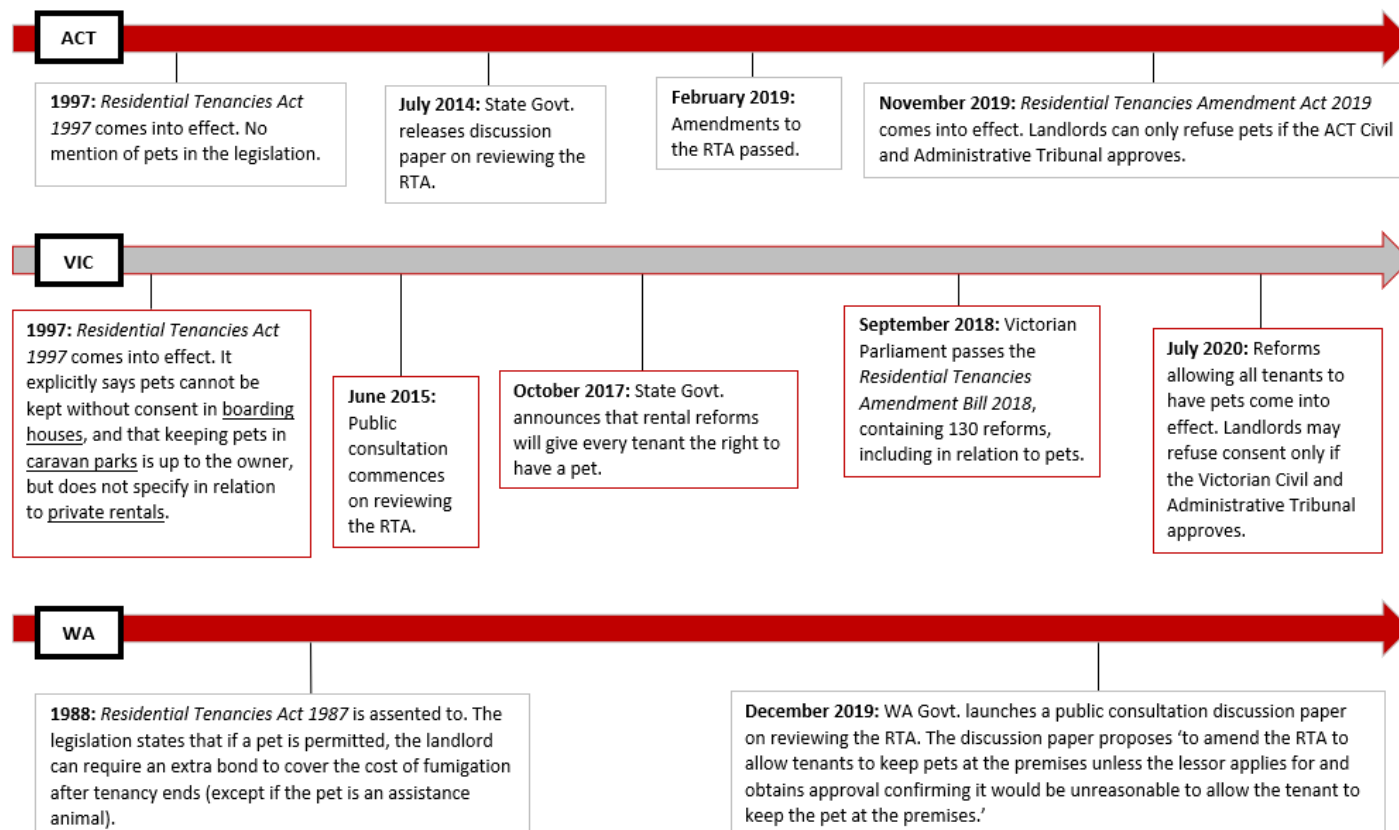
Landlords may incur the costs of damages to their property or furniture when they lease to households that include pets (Graham, Milaney et al. 2018). However, Carlisle-Frank, Frank et al. (2005) found that property damage by households with pets is no more likely than for households without pets. They also found that charging a pet deposit covered most costs, thereby shifting the cost of damages from the landlord to the tenant (Carlisle-Frank, Frank et al. 2005). Pet-friendly properties also bring economic benefits. Carlisle-Frank, Frank et al. (2005) found that pet-friendly housing charged US \$222 more on average than housing that does not allow pets in the United States. They also found that pet-friendly housing spent less time on the market than non-pet-friendly housing, meaning more time charging rent.

A second body of research attends to the place of companion animals within strata title. Strata title is the governance context for most apartment buildings, or units, in Australia. It allows for individual ownership of unit lots in a multi-owned building. In strata title, building management is the responsibility of the community of owners. Pet ownership can have unique challenges in multi-ownership housing due to the need to regulate both private unit lots and community spaces such as lifts, stairwells, corridors and gardens. It is common for strata and equivalent schemes internationally to regulate the keeping of pets. Frequently, pets are banned outright. There can be restrictions on all pets, or specific types and breeds (Cunningham 2007). In the US, many homeowners' insurers will not cover certain dog breeds that are deemed aggressive (Cunningham 2007). Pet-friendly buildings frequently include requirements for pet approval, such as submitting application forms with breed type, measurements, registration documents, vaccination records or even temperament referees from veterinarians or building managers from previous residences (Power 2018). Strata schemes also typically regulate the behaviours expected of companion animals and often hold the power to remove nuisance pets, for example, dogs that bark excessively. In one study, some pet owners reported that this provision made their pets vulnerable as targets for blackmail or retaliation for unrelated grievances (Power 2018).

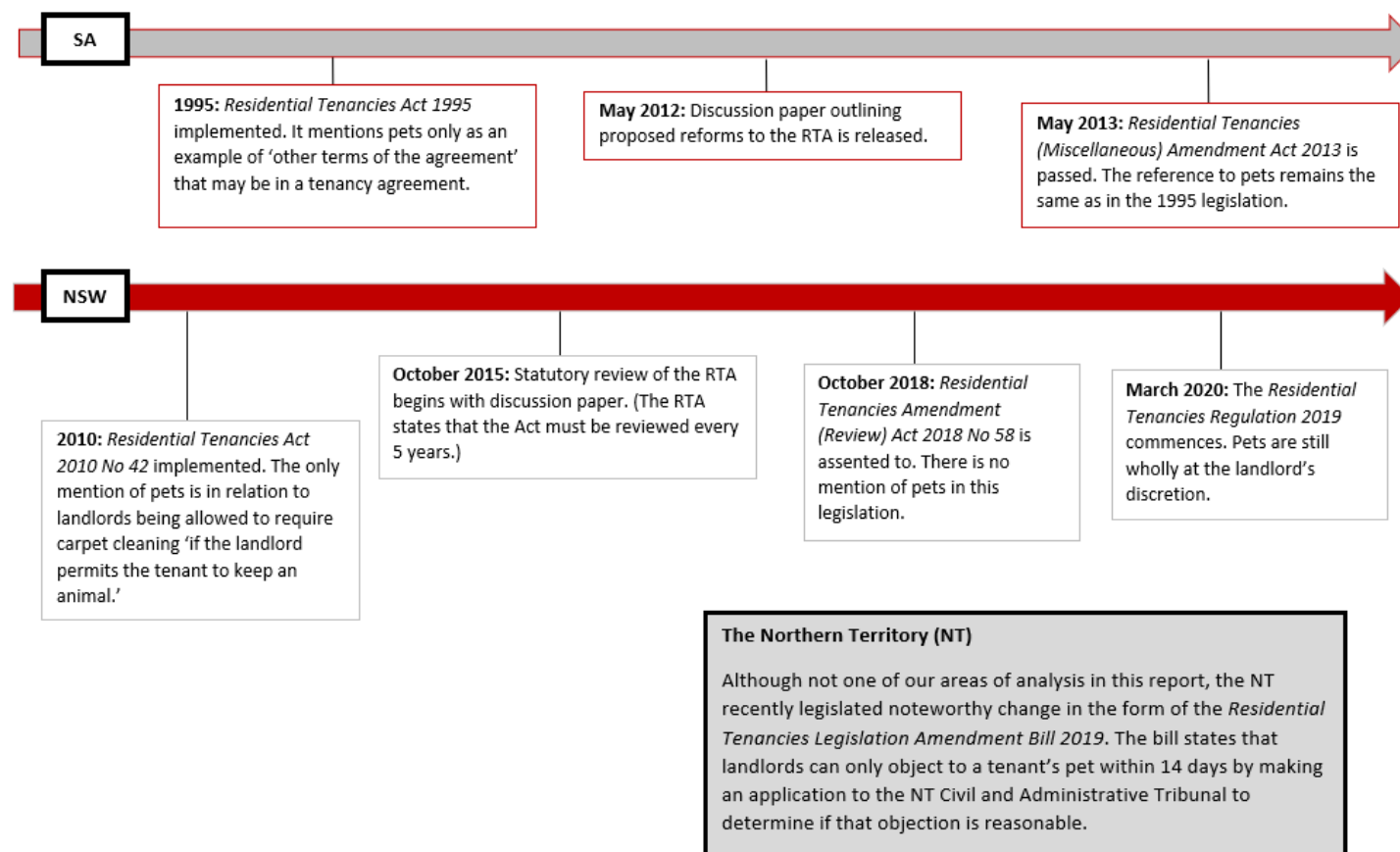
Some renters will live in strata contexts and be subject to regulation under both rental and strata legislation. In these contexts, renters will typically be required to seek approval from both the strata committee and the landlord to keep a companion animal. There is some evidence that landlords in pet-friendly buildings continue to be reluctant to allow tenants to keep pets for fear of disrupting neighbours, or due to the time taken for prospective tenants to get strata committee approval (Power 2013; Graham, Milaney et al. 2018). Renters are also sometimes more vulnerable to regulation than owners within strata contexts (Power 2013).

Responding to risks and costs to landlords/investors as well as perceived barriers, rental insecurity and rogue behaviour, multiple Australian jurisdictions are currently reviewing a range of rental conditions, including potential companion animal ownership. Notably, the Victorian Government has enacted significant change regarding pet-friendlier policy; in NSW, strata title is under review; and the Queensland real estate industry is being formally examined. A timeline outlining the pace of reform and state of play across jurisdictions is presented at Figure 2.

Figure 4: Timelines of recent residential tenancy reforms in each case study jurisdiction (Vic, NSW, SA, WA, ACT)



3. Institutional settings shaping housing and housing assistance pathways with companion animals: policy review



Source: Authors, drawing from ACT Government Justice and Community Safety Directorate (2014); Bladen (2019); NSW Fair Trading (2015); Ramsay (2019); WA Department of Mines, Industry Regulation and Safety (2019); Victorian Government (2020), as well as the relevant legislation.

3.2.1 Private rental sector

Australian Capital Territory (ACT)

- **Permission to keep pets:** In the ACT pets are permitted on leased residential premises under the *Residential Tenancies Amendment Act 2019*. However, the lessor may require the tenant to obtain prior written consent to keep a pet. The lessor may impose reasonable conditions on consent, such as the number of animals kept on the premises, and the cleaning and maintenance of the premises. The nature or extent of cleaning and maintenance are not described as they are in other states (e.g. in NSW additional clauses are limited to steam cleaning carpets).

The lessor can only refuse consent to keep an animal if the lessor has ACT Civil and Administrative Tribunal (ACAT)'s prior approval. ACAT determines whether the lessor's refusal to keep an animal is reasonable if: 'the premises are unsuitable to keep an animal; or keeping the animal on the premises would result in unreasonable damage to the premises; keeping the animal on the premises would be an unacceptable risk to public health or safety; or, the lessor would suffer significant hardship; or keeping the animal on the premises would be contrary to a territory law' (*Residential Tenancies Act 1997* Part 5AA, section 71AF).

If the premises is under a unit title, pet ownership is also subject to the rules of the owner's corporation (see Strata and Community Titles section of this report for permissions in unit title).

- **Regulating pets:** The *Residential Tenancies Act 1997* includes a series of responsibilities of tenants. These do not directly reference responsibilities in relation to pet keeping. However, regulations relating to maintenance, nuisance and noise, for instance, make tenants responsible for the behaviour of their pet, including its impact on other residents and neighbours.

Under the *RTA 1997*, tenants must look after the premises. They should not 'intentionally or negligently damage the premises or permit such damage; and notify the lessor of any damage as soon as possible; and take reasonable care of the premises and their contents, and keep them reasonably clean, having regard to their condition at the time of commencement of the tenancy and the normal incidents of living' (Schedule 1, section 63). This includes damage caused by a companion animal.

If the premises is under a unit title, the tenant is also subject to the rules of the owner's corporation (see Strata and Community Titles section of this report for pet-specific regulation in unit title).

- **Removing pets:** The *Residential Tenancies Act 1997* outlines the process for remedying a breach of the tenancy agreement and gives the tenant two weeks to remedy a breach. This can be affected through an order from the ACT Civil and Administrative Tribunal in cases where tenants keep an animal without the permission of the lessor, or where the animal breaches nuisance regulations (Part 7, section 98). If the breach is not remedied, the lessor or ACAT can terminate the tenancy agreement. As reported in the media at the time and shown in the box below, the issues are linked to strong claims in relation to both tenants and landlords.

In a fiery debate in Parliament, Liberals claimed the laws would kill the rental market and make it harder for people to find a rental.

ACT Attorney-General Gordon Ramsay said the bill helped create a fairer housing market in the ACT and balanced the rights between tenants and landlords.

'For many people having a pet is a critical part of having a home,' he said.

Liberal Mark Parton said the legislation would make the rental market tighter and force investors out of the market.

He even went as far as to suggest the bill would make people homeless.

'Labor and the Greens are again trying to outdo themselves in the progressive stakes, they are trying to convince renters that they're looking after them,' Mr Parton said.

Source: 'Rental generation shouldn't miss out on dogs: government', *Canberra Times*, 21 February 2019.

New South Wales

- **Permission to keep pets:** The standard tenancy agreement within the *NSW Residential Tenancies Act 2010* allows landlords to select from a series of clauses to either allow or refuse the keeping of pets on the premises. If the landlord permits pets to be kept on the premises they may also require the tenant to have carpets professionally cleaned at the termination of the agreement.

If the property is also under strata title, then the tenant must additionally abide by the owners corporation rules and by-laws in relation to keeping a pet on the premises (see Strata and Community Titles section of this report for permissions in strata title).

Under the *Companion Animals Act 1998 (NSW)*, it is illegal for a landlord or owners corporation to refuse a tenant applying to keep a registered assistance animal.

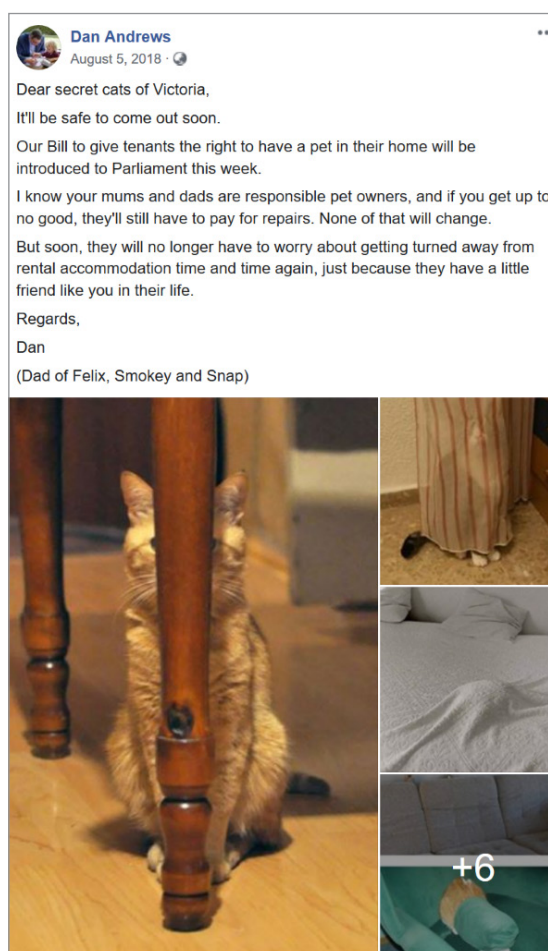
- **Regulating pets:** The *NSW Residential Tenancies Act 2010* includes tenant responsibilities toward the property as part of a tenancy agreement. Noise and nuisance provisions make tenants responsible for the behaviour and cleanliness of animals that are kept on their premises. Section 51 of the *RTA 2010* states that a tenant must not cause or permit a nuisance, interfere, or cause or permit any interference, with the reasonable peace, comfort or privacy of any neighbour of the tenant, or intentionally or negligently cause or permit any damage to the residential premises. The tenant must keep the premises in a state of cleanliness and notify the landlord of any damage. Any contravention of these responsibilities is a breach of the tenancy agreement. The tenant can be given an option to remedy the breach, which may mean addressing any nuisance or noise that an animal causes.
- **Removing animals:** The *NSW Residential Tenancies Act 2010* includes a provision for remedying breaches of the tenancy agreement, which may mean removing an animal if it is not permitted, or if it is causing nuisance or noise. The landlord may also terminate the tenancy in the event of a breach, or multiple breaches, of a tenancy agreement (section 87).

South Australia

- **Permission to keep pets:** Similar to NSW, the *SA Residential Tenancies Act 1995* does not set out laws in which pets are restricted or permitted, however the standard tenancy agreement allows the landlord to set terms which either allow or do not permit the keeping of pets on the premises.
- **Regulating pets:** There are no regulations that overtly regulate animals. However, tenants are bound to a broader set of regulations that parallel those in the ACT and NSW. For example, the *SA Residential Tenancies Act 1995* stipulates that the tenant must not cause or permit a nuisance; and the tenant must not cause or permit an interference with the reasonable peace, comfort or privacy of another person who resides in the immediate vicinity of the premises (Division 9, section 71).
- **Removing pets:** No specific regulation relates to the removal of pets. However, the *SA Residential Tenancies Act 1995* includes a provision for remedying breaches of the tenancy agreement, which may mean removing an animal if it is not permitted, or if it is causing nuisance or noise. The landlord may also terminate the tenancy in the event of a breach, or multiple breaches, of a tenancy agreement (Division 2, section 80).

Victoria

Figure 5: Victorian changes to tenancy laws



Source: Facebook post from Victorian Premier, Daniel Andrews (Andrews 2018).

- **Permission to keep pets:** Victoria recently underwent major changes to their tenancy laws in relation to pets. Under section 71A of the *Victorian Residential Tenancies Amendment Act 2018*, a tenant may request to a rental provider that they keep a pet on the premises. The rental provider will have been assumed to approve if they do not apply to the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal to refuse within 14 days after receiving the request. The rental provider must not unreasonably refuse consent for the tenant to keep a pet, and the Tribunal will consider 'the type of pet the renter proposes to keep, or is keeping, on the rented premises; the character and nature of the rented premises; the character and nature of the appliances, fixtures and fittings on the rented premises' (section 71E) in making a determination on whether the rental provider is reasonable to refuse consent.
- **Regulating pets:** Like the ACT, NSW and SA, tenants are bound to a broader set of regulations. For example, the *Victorian Residential Tenancies Amendment Act 2018* stipulates that the tenant must not cause or permit a nuisance; and the tenant must not cause or permit an interference with the reasonable peace, comfort or privacy of any occupier of neighbouring premises (section 60), and must also avoid damage to premises or common areas (section 61).
- **Removing pets:** The Tribunal may make an order 'excluding the pet from the rented premises' (section 71E of the *Residential Tenancies Amendment Act 2018*) if they believe that it is reasonable to refuse consent to keep a pet on the premises. The rental provider may also give the renter notice to vacate the premises if a pet is kept without consent (section 91ZZG).

Petra Elliott, who has been renting for 20 years and has had her cat for eight, said she had been waiting for the [Victorian] reforms to come through to find a new rental property. She has permission to keep her cat, but said many do not.

'I know so many people who have to take the day off work when they have a rental inspection to take the dog for a walk or cat for a drive so they are not discovered,' Elliott said. 'My cat is my home. He is my family. We can't put hooks in the wall so let us have a bloody pet!'

Source: 'New laws making it easier for Victorian renters to have pets come into force', *The Guardian*, 1 March 2020.

Western Australia

- **Permission to keep pets:** Similar to NSW and SA, the *WA Residential Tenancies Act 1987* does not set out laws in which pets are restricted or permitted, however the standard tenancy agreement allows the landlord to set terms that allow or do not permit the keeping of pets on the premises. If tenants are approved to keep pets, a 'pet bond' may be charged. The bond may be no greater than \$260 per week unless the weekly rent exceeds a specified threshold (*WA Department of Mines, Industry Regulation and Safety 2020b*). If the approved pet 'is capable of carrying fleas, ticks and/or other parasites, the pet bond may be used at the end of the tenancy for fumigation' (*Tenancy WA 2016*).
- **Regulating pets:** Tenants are bound to a broader set of regulations under the *Residential Tenancies Act 1987*, which stipulates that the tenant 'shall keep the premises in a reasonable state of cleanliness, shall not intentionally or negligently cause or permit damage to the premises or, where relevant, a common area or chattels in the common area' (Division 2, section 38) and 'must not cause or permit a nuisance' (Division 2, section 39).
- **Removing pets:** No specific regulation relates to the removal of pets. However, the *WA Residential Tenancies Act 1987* includes a provision for remedying breaches of the tenancy agreement, which may mean removing an animal if it is not permitted, or if it is causing nuisance or noise. The landlord may also terminate the tenancy in the event of a breach, or multiple breaches, of a tenancy agreement (Division 2).

3.2.2 Risks, costs, benefits, opportunities

The NSW, WA and SA legislation gives landlords the right to freely determine whether a property will consider renters with pets or not. There is some evidence that landlords more commonly decide against pets, likely based on evaluations of material risks and economic costs arising from the possibility of property damage (Carlisle-Frank, Frank et al. 2005; Power 2017). This creates a risk to households with pets, particularly those seeking to move between rented properties or to access the private rental sector for the first time.

Residential Tenancies Acts in Victoria and the ACT are more strongly geared than other states to support the capacity of tenants to keep companion animals. Provisions in this state and territory require that landlords do not unreasonably refuse tenants' requests to keep a companion animal. They can only refuse requests to keep pets via an application to the relevant Civil and Administrative Tribunal. In making determinations, the Tribunals in each jurisdiction considers the suitability of the proposed animal to the property. Landlords can seek the removal of animals that are not approved or that continue to contravene regulations. These Acts seek to balance the choice of tenants to keep companion animals with the risks that companion animals might bring to leased properties if they are inappropriately housed. In theory, these Acts ameliorate the risks of insecure housing that research shows can accompany the choice to keep pets (Power 2017).

In each state the regulation of companion animals in leased properties is encompassed within broader responsibilities of tenants to appropriately maintain properties and not cause nuisance to others. These regulations manage risks to property and neighbours through making companion animals the responsibility of tenants.

In NSW, there are provisions to enable landlords to include special terms relating to maintenance when pets have been approved, including professional carpet cleaning at the termination of the agreement. The pet bond in WA can similarly be used by landlords to fumigate properties. These provisions are designed to manage material risks to leased property and economic costs to landlords. They also represent an economic cost to tenants that have pets. The pet bond may act as a barrier to accessing housing for some lower income groups.

3.2.3 Strata

Australian Capital Territory

- **Permission to keep pets:** *The Unit Titles (Management) Act 2011* defines animals as amphibians, birds, fish, mammals (other than human beings) and reptiles (Part 3, Division 3.4). The Act states that animals may only be kept with the consent of the owners corporation and unit owner. However, the consent of the owners corporation must not be withheld unreasonably.

In the developer control period (prior to the owners corporation being set up) developers may not approve animals to be kept in units 'unless the right to keep an animal was reserved in each contract to sell a unit in the unit's plan' (Division 33, section 4.3).

Owners or occupiers of units can apply to the ACT Civil and Administrative Tribunal to resolve disputes with the owners corporation regarding the keeping of animals, for example, if they believe that consent to keep a pet has been unreasonably withheld. Decisions such as *Nevile v Owners Units Plan 3107* suggest that owners corporations cannot set blanket restrictions such as on large dogs, but rather must consider the particular circumstances of each pet.

Owners corporations can amend rules (section 108) (with a percentage of residents' votes).

- **Regulating pets:** *The Unit Titles (Management) Act 2011* includes a series of 'by-laws of responsibility' (Power 2018) that set out the responsibilities of owners and occupiers of a lot. These do not directly reference responsibilities in relation to pet keeping. However, regulations relating to nuisance and noise, for instance, make owners and occupiers responsible for the behaviour of their pet, including its impact on other residents and users.

By-laws of responsibility regulate uses that take place on common property and within units. Owners and occupiers must not unreasonably interfere with the use and enjoyment of common property by other owners, occupiers or users of units. They must also not use their unit, or permit it to be used, in ways that cause 'nuisance or substantial annoyance' to owners, occupiers or users of other units. Owners of dogs that bark unreasonably and that fail to manage this barking could be in breach of noise and nuisance regulations. The RSPCA suggests that 'nuisance' regulations might be read in conjunction with the *Domestic Animals Act 2000*, which defines animal nuisance as instances where animals cause 'damage to property owned by a person other than the keeper; or excessive disturbance to a person other than the keeper because of noise; or an unacceptable risk to the public or another animal' (section 109) (ACT Pet Policy FAQs for Owners Corporations of Unit Plans, and see 3.1.1 of this report).

Occupiers of units are bound by the rules of the owners corporations. Owners can also be held liable if someone occupying the unit breaches the rules of the owners corporation, 'unless the owner proves that the owner took reasonable precautions and exercised appropriate care to prevent the breach' (section 107 (3)).

If an owner or occupier of a unit is reasonably believed by the executive committee of the owners corporation to have breached the rules of the owners corporation they can be issued with a rule infringement notice. This notice must specify which rule they are believed to have breached, and to specify the timeline during which they must remedy the breach. Owners corporations can apply to ACAT if a person fails to comply.

- **Removing pets:** *The Unit Titles (Management) Act 2011* includes provisions for the forced removal of animals. This can be affected through an order from the ACT Civil and Administrative Tribunal in cases where owners or occupiers keep an animal without the permission of the owners corporation, or where the animal breaches nuisance regulations.

New South Wales

NSW has the most detailed and comprehensive set of rules and model by-laws regarding the keeping of pets and assistance animals.

- **Permission to keep pets:** The *Strata Schemes Management Act 2015 No 50* requires that animals may only be kept within the lot or on the common property with the written approval of the owners corporation.

The model by-laws for residential strata schemes, which only apply if they are adopted by the owners corporation for the strata scheme or lodged with the strata plan, provide two options for owners corporations in relation to pet keeping. In Option A, owners or occupiers of a lot may keep an animal provided they give the owners corporation written notice that the animal will be kept on the lot. This notice must be given within 14 days of the animal commencing living on the lot. In Option B, the owner or occupier must receive written approval from the owners corporation prior to keeping the animal; however, the owners corporation must not unreasonably withhold this approval. If owners corporations do not nominate a policy, Option A will apply. Owners corporations can also opt to ban pets, other than assistance animals (NSW Fair Trading 2020a). However, there is no provision for this in model by-laws.

This is a substantial change to the previous version of the Act (*Strata Schemes Management Act 1996*), where only one default model by-law relating to pet keeping was provided. This model by-law restricted the keeping of pets. Older strata schemes that adopted the restrictive by-law could move to permit pets, however, they were required to pass a special resolution supported by 75 per cent of the owners at a meeting (NSW Fair Trading 2020b).

Assistance animals can be kept on any lot and by-laws cannot prohibit or restrict the keeping of assistance animals used by the owner or occupier as an assistance animal. However, by-laws can require that the 'owner or occupier of a lot who keeps an assistance animal on the lot' to provide the owners corporation with evidence 'demonstrating that the animal is an assistance animal as referred to in section 9 of the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* of the Commonwealth'.

Half-blind, half-deaf miniature schnauzer Angus is at the centre of a bitter battle at one of Sydney's most prestigious apartment buildings between those who want to keep it pet-free, and others who think they're barking mad.

The award-winning Harry Seidler-designed Horizon in Darlinghurst has voted to spend \$70,000 on legal action to try to evict 13-year-old Angus from its premises in the latest round of the city's strata pet wars.

'When I moved into the Horizon in 2015, I'd been living in apartments for 14 years, and it hadn't even occurred to me that a building in this day and age wouldn't allow pets,' said Angus's owner Jo Cooper, a singer in her 30s. 'It's Darlinghurst! There are pets everywhere!'

Source: 'Should pets be allowed in apartment buildings? The Sydney unit owners locked in a legal battle', *Domain*, 15 October 2019.

- **Regulating pets:** The *Strata Schemes Management Act 2015 No 50* includes a series of by-laws of responsibility that set out the responsibility of owners and occupiers of a lot. These make owners and occupiers responsible for the behaviour and cleanliness of animals that are kept in or visit a lot. If default Options A and B in the model by-laws are selected, they require that the owner or occupier keep the animal within the lot, supervise it when it is on common property, and ensure that the lot and common property are cleaned if they are soiled by the animal. Owners corporations could also introduce by-laws of restriction, for example, that restrict animals from some parts of common property.

In addition to animal-specific clauses, a series of broader clauses regulate the behaviour of owners and occupants and are relevant to any animals that live in or visit the unit. These relate to nuisance and noise provisions. The *Strata Schemes Management Act 2015* (section 153) requires that owners, occupiers and other persons not use the lot in way that causes nuisance or hazard to occupiers or any other lot, or use common property in a way that unreasonably interferes with the use or enjoyment of that common property by the occupier of another lot. Owners and occupiers must also not damage any common property, including lawns and plants.

Owners corporations can give notice to owners or occupiers that require that they comply with a specified by-law if they are satisfied that the owner or occupier has contravened that by-law (Division 4, section 146). Notices can only be given when this has been approved at a general meeting of the owners corporation or by the strata committee of the owners corporation. The Tribunal can order monetary penalties if a person has been notified of a breach and continues to contravene that by-law.

- **Removing animals:** The *Strata Schemes Management Act 2015 No 50* includes provisions for animals to be removed from a strata scheme. The Tribunal may order that an animal is removed within a specified timeframe and kept away from the scheme if the animal is being kept in contravention of by-laws. The Tribunal can also make an order to remove an animal that is kept with approval if it is considered that the animal is causing a nuisance or hazard to another owner or occupier, or is unreasonably interfering with the use or enjoyment of another lot or the common property (section 158).

South Australia

- **Permission to keep pets:** Animals can only be kept in or in the vicinity of units with the permission of the strata corporation per the *Strata Titles Act 1988*. Unlike in the ACT and NSW, there are no clauses that prevent permission from being unreasonably withheld. By-laws cannot restrict assistance animals or other animals that are trained to 'assist the occupier in respect of...disability'. This applies to assistance animals owned by both residents and visitors.
- **Regulating pets:** There are no regulations that overtly regulate animals. However, owners and occupiers who own pets are bound to a broader set of regulations that parallel those in the ACT and NSW. These require that common property not be used in a way that interferes unreasonably with the use and enjoyment of that property by others (including other members of the strata community, their customers, clients or visitors). There are also restrictions on 'undue noise'. Owners and occupiers must also not damage or interfere with 'any lawn, garden, tree, shrub, plant or flower on the common property'. These set expectations about maintenance responsibilities regarding animals that might access common property.
- **Removing pets:** No specific regulation relates to the removal of pets. However, it appears that disputes can be referred to the Magistrates Court and District Court. The Court can 'order that a party take such action as in the opinion of the court is necessary to remedy any default, or to resolve any dispute' or 'order that a party refrain from any further action of a kind specified in the order' (section 41A). It is reasonable to assume that these orders could extend to requiring the removal of an animal in cases of ongoing breaches of policy.

Victoria

- **Permission to keep pets:** A 2016 ruling in the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal determined that owners corporations cannot unilaterally restrict the keeping of animals within lots (*Owners Corporation SP24474 v Watkins (Owners Corporations)* [2016]).
- **Regulating pets:** Animals are subject to a series of by-laws that relate to the responsibility of owners and occupiers in relation to their unit and the common property (*Owners Corporations Act 2006*). These include the responsibility to take care of common property and not cause damage or deterioration to common property (sections 129, 130). Owners and occupiers must also not 'obstruct the lawful use and enjoyment of the common property by another person entitled to use the common property.' Owners, occupiers and their guests are also subject to noise and nuisance controls. They must not disrupt the 'peaceful enjoyment of another person entitled to use the common property' or create noise that unreasonably interferes with that same right.

Watkins v Owners Corporation affirmed the right of owners corporations to regulate the presence of animals on common property, including to restrict the access of animals to common property. However, the decision asserts that restrictions must be made with respect to the specifics of the property. In the case under consideration, banning animals from common property would effectively prohibit lot owners from having pets which was seen to be unfair discrimination against a lot owner. In that case it was ruled that the dog must be kept on a lead when traversing common property.

- **Removing pets:** Owners corporations have the right to give owners or occupiers notice to remove animals that are a danger or are causing nuisance to common property. This rule cannot be applied to assistance animals, assisting a person in the case of impairment or disability.

Western Australia

- **Permission to keep pets:** Animals can only be kept with the approval of the strata body per the *Strata Titles Act 1985*.

The Tribunal cannot make an order to allow an animal to be kept, or that prohibits the keeping of an animal on a lot or common property, unless it is 'satisfied that the strata company has acted unreasonably'. By-laws cannot restrict the keeping of assistance animals by owners or occupiers with a disability.

- **Regulating pets:** Owners and occupiers must not use common property in a way that interferes unreasonably with the right of owners, occupiers or visitors to use and enjoy that property, or that causes a nuisance to an occupier of another lot. These are not animal-specific regulations, however, they are responsibilities of owners and occupiers that could reasonably be applied to animals kept on site.
- **Removing pets:** The State Administrative Tribunal (SAT) can make orders for a pet to be removed from a property when that animal is being kept 'on a lot or common property in contravention of the by-laws'. They can order the person 'to cause the animal to be removed from the parcel within a specified time and thereafter to be kept away from the parcel, unless the keeping of the animal on the lot or common property, as the case may be, is subsequently authorised by the by-laws'. (Part VI, Division 3 s.91)

The SAT can also order the removal of an animal that 'causes a nuisance or hazard to the proprietor, occupier or resident of another lot or unreasonably interferes with the use and enjoyment of another lot or of the common property' for a specified time, or indefinitely. They can also order the person who keeps the animal to take 'such action as is specified in the order and in the opinion of the State Administrative Tribunal, will terminate the nuisance, hazard or unreasonable interference' (Part VI. Division 3 s.92).

A common battleground [Professor Cathy] Sherry says is pets. 'An eco community in WA had a rule that if a pet was caught out at night twice, it could be shot by the body corporate manager!' she says. 'The RSPCA made them change that rule.'

It's controversial that buildings can still ban pets outright. 'Australia is hugely more intolerant of pets than Europe. They're hugely important for the elderly, lonely and visually impaired,' Sherry says.

Source: 'Shooting pets, spying and no washing on balconies: Australia's strata wars', *The Guardian*, 12 October 2019.

3.2.4 Risks, costs, benefits and opportunities

Strata title acts across each state empower strata communities to determine whether pets are permitted. Legislation is gradually changing across the country. A recent ruling in Victoria held that pets cannot be unilaterally banned. Changes to the strata title act in NSW in recent years replaced the assumption against pets in the model by-laws with two by-laws that enable the keeping of pets. These changes improve the capacity of households with companion animals to secure housing within strata schemes. However, beyond Victoria there is no clear ruling in favour of pets. Anecdotally, most strata schemes continue to be restrictive to pets, constituting a risk to households with companion animals.

In NSW, changes to the model by-laws are most relevant to new schemes. Older schemes are less likely to be pet friendly. As lower cost housing is often in older schemes there may be a larger risk borne by lower income households with companion animals.

Regulations across each jurisdiction are focused on managing the potential risk to the strata scheme and its residents through access and nuisance provisions. These enable owners corporations to restrict access by companion animals to some areas within the strata scheme, and to manage nuisance behaviour, including noise. Nuisance noise provisions overlap with the companion animals act and the associated responsibilities of the local authority, giving members of strata schemes two pathways to manage complaints.

Most Australians are inherently reasonable and do not presume to regulate their neighbours' private lives. One glaring exception is pets in strata schemes.

Many strata schemes have created by-laws that ban all pets, irrespective of whether a pet is having any meaningful effect on others. Blanket pet bans prohibit cats who never leave the house and dogs who snore on the sofa all day, leaving the apartment once for their walk (having to share a lift with a dog is not a meaningful effect on others). Blanket pet bans even prohibit goldfish who do nothing other than swim quietly around their bowl.

Source: 'Even goldfish could be banned—until now', *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 5 September 2018.

3.2.5 Community title

Australian Capital Territory

- **Permission to keep pets:** Owners of lots must not keep animals or allow animals to be kept without the written permission of the body corporate per the *Community Title Act 2001*. The body corporate may give permission to keep a pet, subject to stated conditions. The nature of possible conditions is not stated in the legislation.
- **Regulating pets:** Animals are subject to a series of non-animal-specific by-laws of responsibility that require that people who occupy a lot must not cause nuisance to the owner or occupier of another lot (Schedule 1, section 1.2). They must not 'behave in a way likely to interfere with the reasonable use and enjoyment of another lot by the owner or occupier of another lot or the invitees of the owner or occupier of another lot' (Schedule 1, section 1.5) or allow a visitor to behave in a way that might do this.

If owners or occupiers breach the by-laws of the community title scheme, the body corporate may serve them with a written notice indicating the nature of the breach and requiring that they remedy the breach within a stated timeframe.

- **Removing pets:** The Act states that the body corporate may withdraw permission to keep pets.

New South Wales

- **Permission to keep pets:** Community management statements can include by-laws that relate to keeping pets in accordance with provisions under the *Community Land Development Act 1989 No 201* (Schedule 3, section 3). However, they may not prohibit or restrict the keeping of assistance animals by people with disabilities who own, occupy or otherwise use a lot (Schedule 3, section 5s).
- **Regulating pets:** Under the *Community Land Management Act 1989 No. 202* occupiers and owners must not use association or common property in ways that interfere unreasonably with the right of others to use and enjoy that lot or property (Part 3, section 61). They also must not use their lot in a way that causes nuisance (including via noise) or hazard to any person who is using or enjoy another lot (Part 6, section 110). These are identified as 'mutual duties owed by proprietor and others'. Proprietors and occupiers who breach by-laws can be served with a notice to comply by the community association. The Tribunal may fine proprietors or occupiers who fail to comply with notices.

- **Removing pets:** The Act enables the Tribunal to adjudicate on disputes or complaints and may require the person against whom the order is sought 'to do, or to refrain from doing, a specified act affecting the scheme' (Division 3, section 71).

South Australia

- **Permission to keep pets:** In accordance with the *Community Titles Act 1996* by-laws can regulate the keeping of pets. However, they may not prevent occupants or their visitors from keeping or using assistance animals if required in relation to a disability.
- **Regulating pets:** By-laws can regulate the use and enjoyment of common property and the purposes for which community lots may be used (Part 5, section 34 (2)). Although pets are not mentioned, by-laws can regulate activity 'to prevent interference with the use and enjoyment of other lots' (section 34 (3)) and impose penalties on users who contravene by-laws. These have the potential to impact owners and occupiers who have pets that interfere with other's use and enjoyment of lots.

Part 12 of the *Community Titles Act 1996* outlines obligations of owners and occupiers. It requires that owners and occupiers not use or permit use of lots or common property in ways that cause nuisance, or that 'interferes with the use or enjoyment of another lot or the common property by another person who is lawfully on the lot or common property' (section 133). It also requires owners and occupiers to maintain lots, keeping 'the external part of the lot and... any building or other improvement on the lot in a clean and tidy condition' (section 134 (4)).

- **Removing pets:** No specific guidelines are readily available.

3.2.6 Risks, costs, benefits and opportunities

There is limited explicit mention of companion animals in community title legislation across the reviewed jurisdictions. While the legislation allows schemes to regulate permission to keep pets there is no assumption for or against pets.

There is also no direct regulation of animals, though schemes are empowered to establish policies that do so. By-laws can regulate issues such as enjoyment and use of property and issues of nuisance. Companion animals that live within community title schemes will be subject to these by-laws, with households made responsible for the animals living within their lot.

Community title legislation is focused on the amelioration of risks to property and residents within community title schemes.

3.3 The public sphere: public and community housing

According to the most recent available data (financial year 2017–18), Australia's housing system includes some 436,200 households occupying social housing. These households are split across five main social housing 'programs'—public housing (316,231 dwellings), community housing (87,819), SOMIH, including NT remote public housing (14,686 dwellings), and Indigenous community housing (17,477) (AIHW 2019). Public dwellings also include housing set aside as crisis accommodation for people experiencing homelessness.

The following section provides an overview of how pets are perceived and regulated in the public (social) spheres of the housing system. The overview notes that generally the public housing sector is the most pet-permissive, with much greater diversity in terms of pet-permissiveness in the community housing sector because of the multiple providers and their ability to exercise their own discretion around such policies. The discussion also notes, however, that the boundaries between the social tenures and between social and private tenures is increasingly blurred, adding to the complexities around pet ownership in these tenures, especially in terms of transitions between them. Head-leasing arrangements, asset-sharing and the use of privately-rented dwellings for crisis accommodation and residential care mean an increasing proportion of households receiving housing

and crisis support live in a range of private/quasi-private housing contexts with mixed regulatory regimes. Broadscale stock transfer programs—from the public to community housing sectors—add further potential complexity. Understanding companion animal policies within the multiple contexts of a dynamic social housing sector is therefore an important factor in responding to residential mobility and tenants' potential social housing entry/exit/re-entry (Stone, Sharam et al. 2015; Tually, Slatter et al. 2016; Wiesel, Laragy et al. 2015).

It was not possible in this study to locate information on specific pet-related policies for SOMIH.

3.3.1 Public housing

Public housing is managed by state governments and is longer term rental housing relative to private rental, although most jurisdictions have moved to fixed-term tenancies with review. Across Victoria, NSW, SA, WA and ACT, it is generally agreed that public housing is for people of low or moderate income who are in need of housing assistance, and jurisdictions have eligibility criteria based on income and assets accordingly. Because public housing is subject to residential tenancies legislation in each jurisdiction, pet permissiveness varies by jurisdiction. Available information about pet regulation also varies greatly, meaning prospective tenants (or prospective pet-owners) can only access limited information in some jurisdictions compared with others. Victoria, for example, has limited publicly available information, SA has only brief information on their website, ACT has an online 'Animals and Pets Policy' that outlines several aspects of tenants keeping pets (ACT Community Services 2020a), while both WA and NSW discuss pets substantially in online material.

Overall, public housing tends to be more pet-permissive than community housing, although substantial change across state and territory jurisdictions is affecting the length/nature of tenancies offered. Tenants' perceived ability to house a companion animal influences the take-up of public housing waitlists (Burke, Neske et al. 2004).

Australian Capital Territory

- **Permission to keep pets:** Tenants are allowed pets and are responsible for 'caring for their pets in a humane manner' and 'controlling their pets' (ACT Community Services 2020a).
- **Regulating pets:** Tenants are responsible for ensuring their pets do not damage the property. The Animals and Pets Policy draws on terms of the RTA 1997 and explains how it applies to pets. Tenants are required to obtain and maintain any licences/registrations pertaining to pets, including a Dangerous Dog licence if they have a dog that has been declared to be dangerous.

If tenants live in a Body Corporate property, they must follow the rules and by-laws, which may include no pets. 'Guide dogs, hearing dogs, companion animals and other assistance animals are welcome in all Housing ACT properties, including those located in Body Corporates' (ACT Community Services 2020a). These are all grouped as 'animals for therapeutic purposes'. In Body Corporates, documentation must be provided to prove the need for and qualification of the animal.

- **Removing pets:** The ACT's policy states:

Tenants are responsible for controlling their pets. Should a pet cause nuisance or display vicious behaviour, Housing ACT will investigate and take appropriate follow-up action. If complaints are substantiated, Housing ACT will:

- initiate action to remedy the problem; and/or
- involve an appropriate authority such as Environment ACT, the Domestic Animal Service, the Australian Federal Police or the RSPCA (ACT Community Services 2020a).

New South Wales

- **Permission to keep pets:** Tenants in public housing can have pets if the property is 'suitable' and the pets do not interfere with neighbours' peace and quiet.

- **Regulating pets:** Tenants are not allowed to have a dog that is 'a restricted dog' defined by the *Companion Animals Act 1998*, or a declared 'dangerous dog', and if you are a Family and Community Services (FACS) tenant in a property not owned by the government, pets may not be allowed (NSW DCJ 2020a). FACS also 'headleases' properties, meaning they lease properties in the private rental market and sub-lease them to social housing tenants. In headleasing arrangements, tenants cannot keep pets without the landlord's written consent (NSW DCJ 2020b).

- **Removing pets:** The Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ) states that:

If an animal belonging to a DCJ tenant causes a nuisance or annoyance to neighbours, or is not suitable for the property, DCJ will ask the tenant to remove it within 48 hours. Failure to remove the pet when asked to do so is a breach of the tenancy agreement and may result in action being taken through the NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal (NSW DCJ 2020c).

South Australia

- **Permission to keep pets:** Tenants are allowed pets if the housing is suitable, e.g. a dog or cat can be kept if there is a separate, enclosed yard. As with WA (discussed below), the South Australian Housing Authority's (SAHA) publicly available information on keeping pets as a public housing tenant notes that a caged bird or fish can be kept if there is no yard space (SAHA 2020a).
- **Regulating pets:** Tenants must ensure pets do not disrupt neighbours and pets must be on a lead whenever someone authorised by the SAHA visits the premises. Tenants must also 'make sure your property and yard are kept clean, tidy and free of animal waste' (SAHA 2020a).
- **Removing pets:** Information about pets in public housing is linked to web information about antisocial behaviour in public housing (SAHA 2020b). (The SAHA has recently moved to act more forcibly on antisocial behaviour in public properties, with tenant evictions a possibility in serious cases and accompanied by an enforced 12-month exclusion period for reapplying for public and Aboriginal housing.)

Victoria

- **Permission to keep pets:** Victoria has only recently added online information about pets in public housing, due to pet-related rental reforms coming into effect on 2 March 2020. Tenants can keep pets if they have asked permission in writing from their local housing office (Victorian Department of Health and Human Services 2020). A housing office cannot 'unreasonably' refuse. If they do refuse, they must lodge an application with the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (VCAT) within 14 days (Victorian Department of Health and Human Services 2020). VCAT will then decide.
- **Regulating pets:** Tenants must comply with local council rules regarding pets and prevent the pet from causing 'damage or nuisance behaviour' at the property (Victorian Department of Health and Human Services 2020).
- **Removing pets:** Information about pet removal does not appear to be readily publicly available.

Western Australia

- **Permission to keep pets:** Tenants are allowed dogs or cats only if the property has a 'separate, non-communal yard' (WA DCH 2020a). Caged birds or fish are allowed if there is no separate yard. Most local councils allow up to two dogs on a property.
- **Regulating pets:** The yard must be kept clean and free of animal waste. Tenants cannot keep any breed of dog that is listed in the Dog Regulations 2013 as dangerous (WA DCH 2020a).
- **Removing pets:** WA's policy states that, 'You'll need to make sure your pet does not damage the property or disturb the neighbours, otherwise you may be asked to remove the pet from the property' (WA DCH 2020a).

3.3.2 Risks, costs, benefits and opportunities

Public housing tenants are subject to the same rules as contained in the residential tenancies legislation of the respective state/territory, but there are often extra policies in place. For example, both SA and WA advise checking with the local council about restrictions and rules regarding pets (SA Housing Authority 2020a; WA DCH 2020a). NSW also list criteria for determining if a property is suitable for types of animals, including the amount of open space and the likelihood of damage to the property (NSW DCJ 2020d). Public housing appears to be 'low barrier' only if tenants can find a house that suits their pet. In most jurisdictions, this means a house with a fenced-in private yard. If tenants have a dog that is decreed dangerous, barriers are higher for living in public housing due to the extra rules, generally related to policies around nuisance and noise.

NSW and WA both detail specific risks relating to 'dangerous dogs' in public housing, i.e. dogs thought to pose a threat to human (or other animal) safety by nature of their breed. NSW's list of restricted dogs includes pit bull terriers, American pit bull terriers, Japanese tosas, Argentinean fighting dogs, and dogs who are guard dogs. Dangerous dogs are defined as those that have been declared dangerous by local council/court (NSW DCJ 2020d). WA's list of banned dog breeds includes Dogo Argentino, Fila Brasileiro, Japanese tosa, American pit bull terrier, pit bull terrier and Perro de Presa Canario, as well as any mixed-breed dog where one of these breeds is on the list (WA DCH 2020a). Their policy manual also states that existing tenants who, as of 22 April 2002, owned a restricted breed dog can keep the dog for the rest of its life but cannot replace it with another restricted breed (WA DCH 2020b: 60). Furthermore, tenants are responsible for keeping dogs in childproof enclosures from which they cannot escape if they are a restricted breed or 'declared', i.e. an individual dog with a noted history of aggression. The tenant is also responsible for putting up warning signs about the dog in this scenario (WA DCH 2020b: 61).

In terms of benefits, the ACT outlines the context of their pet policy by stating that they recognise 'the importance of animals in people's lives in terms of their therapeutic qualities'. This statement is listed third, after the need to ensure that pets are kept humanely, and a statement about the 'dangers inherent in keeping a dangerous or vicious animal' (ACT Community Services 2020a). The ACT is the only jurisdiction examined here, however, that specifically acknowledges the benefit of pets in people's lives in its public housing information. Opportunities relating to pets in public housing largely depend on changes in the residential tenancies legislation of each jurisdiction, as outlined in Section 3.2.1. However, there is variance regarding extra pet-related policies.

3.3.3 Community housing

As noted, community housing is the smaller component within the social housing sector, jurisdictionally and nationally. The sector has a long history in Australia, with most community housing properties now managed as part of larger portfolios held by not-for-profit organisations operating as housing associations (known as community housing organisations or providers). As at 30 June 2018 there were 552 community housing providers of various sizes operating in Australia (and a further 213 Indigenous community housing organisations) (AIHW 2019).

Notably, the community housing sector has transformed significantly over recent years. A national regulation program has arguably seen the sector become more professionalised and the number of community housing providers managing portfolios reduce significantly (AIHW 2019). The sector has also been acknowledged as central to building the multi-provider system needed to grow (via leverage) and diversify the social housing available for tenants and social housing applicants, and to help manage ever-increasing social (mostly public) housing waitlists.

The sector's focus on capacity-building intensified following the collective agreement by federal and state governments in 2008 to grow the sector to account for 35 per cent of all social housing stock (jurisdictionally and nationally) by 2014. While these clearly ambitious aspirations were not met—currently community housing comprises a growing proportion of the social housing stock nationally—plans remain to maximise opportunities for growth, primarily by stock transfers and using existing and newly-acquired portfolios for leverage.

The different tenure, asset and stock management arrangements underpinning stock transfer programs outlined here are important in the context of this research about pets and housing pathways. Different arrangements add complexity to investigations of sector policies, especially where tenants transfer from one tenure arrangement to another and policies or rules differ.

Because community housing is delivered by multiple providers, this means there is greater diversity in pet policies across the sector than in public housing. Individual community housing providers reserve the right to set their own pet-related policies, albeit in concordance with the relevant Residential Tenancies Act and local government Acts (and regulations which apply to the sector). We capture this diversity here by providing examples of both pet-permissive and pet-restrictive policies as experienced across the sector.

Permission to keep pets

As noted, permission to keep a pet or pets varies among community housing providers. While many providers note the importance of pets in people's lives, most providers have relatively strict guidelines about the conditions under which a pet or pets (in some cases) can be kept. Notably, many community housing providers stipulate that tenants may only have one pet, or a pet of a certain type or size, i.e. small lap dog.

Arguably one of the most detailed pet policies located in this review is Homes North's *Pet Policy* (Homes North 2017). Their policy states a clear purpose, worthy of outlining here for its balanced view of policy aims and tenant benefits from pet ownership:

The aim of the Pet Policy is to ensure that Homes North responds transparently and fairly to requests from tenants to keep pets. The policy encourages responsible pet ownership and supports tenants to comply with the Residential Tenancies Act in relation to pet ownership and being a responsible neighbour.

The Pet Policy is designed to clearly state tenants' rights and responsibilities about pets in Homes North managed properties. The policy outlines the approval requirements for the keeping of pets and what pets are and are not allowed. It also acknowledges that pet ownership is valued by many of Homes North's tenants.

Homes North, which provides community housing properties for more than 1,900 people across the New England region of NSW (Homes North 2020a) requires all tenants with pets to seek written approval (with a guarantee of a response regarding approval within 21 days) and complete a Pet Agreement. Failure to comply with the terms of the Pet Agreement (or having a pet without written approval) can be deemed as a breach of the tenancy agreement (Homes North 2017).

Anglicare SA, one of the six Tier 1 providers in South Australia, states that 'pets are important—they can be a big part of your family or your best friend' and that they want tenants to be able to keep their pets. However, property suitability, types of pets, potential neighbourhood impact and council regulations are the factors guiding permission (Anglicare SA 2020).

Havelock House (ACT), which offers 20 units that accommodate between two and eight single people, does not allow animals (Havelock Housing Association 2020). They also do not allow children to stay overnight, and tenants must be a single person. While they do not state the reasons for not allowing animals, this may be based on the housing being too small.

The multiple types of leases and properties that community housing providers manage are acknowledged in many pet policies, impacting pet-permissiveness.

National provider Junction Australia's (2020) publicly available pet information, for example, simply states:

Given the variety of household pets and companion animals, along with the range of properties and leases that Junction manages, we will individually consider each application on its merits.

This involves taking into account any legal or regulatory requirements, the type of property, type and size of the pet and the potential for any damage to the property or interference with neighbours.

Alliance Housing (WA) state that pets are only permitted in certain circumstances; strata rules may prohibit pets in strata properties, and tenants with short fixed-term tenancies or in group properties 'may not receive approval for pets' (Alliance Housing 2020). Metro Community Housing's Pet Policy (2020) notes similar restrictions:

The situation is far more complicated for tenants living in leasehold properties as they must abide by the rules set by the owners of the property. In many situations the keeping of pets may be prohibited by the property owner or by strata by-laws.

Homes North (2020b) provides similar guidance for tenants transferring to the provider from Housing NSW as part of a stock transfer arrangement. Their comprehensive information page for transferring tenants outlines the following:

I have pets, is this a problem? (FAQ)

Each pet situation will be assessed differently and will depend on where you live and the circumstances.

You will need to sign a Pet Agreement with Homes North.

Regulating pets

Like many community housing providers, Bridge Housing (NSW) state they will usually grant tenants permission to have pets, but the pet must be microchipped and comply with any local council regulations or other legislation governing companion animals. They also regulate the type of pet that is acceptable: they deem a 'household pet' to be 'a small pet such as a dog, cat, caged bird/s, fish in a small tank, or a small mammal like a rabbit or guinea pig' and do not consider poultry, livestock or exotic animals to have the same classification. These are therefore not permitted. Bridge Housing also 'does not encourage' owning reptiles or insects, and tenants wanting to keep these must have applicable licences and be able to prove they can care for such animals appropriately. Bridge Housing requires that tenants complete and agree to a pet contract that sets out their responsibilities as a pet owner in a Bridge Housing property' (Bridge Housing 2020).

Homes North, described above, has similar requirements around regulating pets, formalising these in a Pet Policy (Homes North 2017).

In WA, regulating pets can involve a further regulatory requirement: pet bonds. Access Housing (WA) states that a pet bond of \$260 may be required to cover fumigation costs upon vacation of the property (Access Housing 2020). WA is the only state where pet bonds are permitted. Pet bonds have been floated as an option in other states from time to time, but remain unlawful as noted by the Tenants' Union of NSW (2020b):

Landlords and agents sometimes ask for additional amounts of bond (that is, over and above the usual four weeks' bond) if you keep a pet. These 'pet bonds' are often not lodged with Renting Services and instead are kept in an account maintained by the landlord or agent. Pet bonds are not lawful in NSW.

Foundation Housing, a large Tier 1 housing provider in WA, requires a pet bond of \$250 be paid by all pet owners in their properties, with a written agreement about pet ownership (where approved) included as part of the Residential Tenancies Agreement entered into with a tenant (Foundation Housing 2016). Foundation Housing's pet 'policy' information online emphasises the costs involved in keeping pets—across the whole life of a pet and, potentially, in terms of damage to a property and cleaning at the end of a tenancy. Women's Housing Ltd (Victoria) does not use the term 'pet bond', but states that the tenant will incur cleaning costs when they vacate due to having a pet, and must have the carpets steam-cleaned every 12 months (Women's Housing Ltd 2020).

Removing pets

Link Housing (NSW) states that they may request pets to be removed if the tenant breaches the RTA or the signed pets agreement, and that failure to remove the pet when requested may result in action through the NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal (Link Housing 2019).

Other community housing providers, such as Metro Community Housing (2020) and Wentworth Community Housing (2020), both in NSW, note that the conditions under which they might remove a pet include a breach of any of the requirements for keeping a pet, which according to their policy are:

- failure to seek landlord permission (most stipulate in writing) to keep a pet (which includes an assessment of the suitability of the property to keep a pet, especially outdoor space)
- keeping more than one pet, a dangerous pet or restricted pet under the *Companion Animals Act (NSW)*, and,
- failure to register the pet with the local council and have it desexed (proof of this can be requested).

Pets may also be removed where causing an annoyance to neighbours.

Metro Community Housing (2020) warns that:

Tenants who acquire a pet without seeking prior permission may be issued with a Notice of Termination for breach of the lease and may be required to find alternate housing for the pet.

Similarly, Wentworth Community Housing's Policy (2020) states:

3.2.1 If you are a Wentworth tenant in a property not owned by the Wentworth you may not be permitted to have a pet. Pets are often prohibited by private property owners and strata by-laws.

3.3.4 Risks, costs, benefits and opportunities

There is a strong emphasis on risk in the community housing policies reviewed here. Limiting what kinds of animals constitute appropriate pets—for example, dogs being acceptable, but not poultry or reptiles—situates some types of animals as riskier than others. Some housing providers do acknowledge the benefits of pets for tenants' wellbeing, but the emphasis is largely on mitigating damage or nuisance caused by pets. As well as risks to the property, risks to pets' wellbeing are considered through providers determining whether a property size/layout is suitable for certain types of animals.

3.4 Specialist homelessness services, crisis and emergency accommodation

Pets' importance to the daily lives of homeless people, especially rough sleepers, has been acknowledged in 'end homelessness' campaigns nationally. The Adelaide Zero Project and 500 Lives, 500 Homes Project in Brisbane (among others), for example, collect information on pet ownership alongside other housing needs (location preferences, medical and disability-related needs, etc.) as an accompanying pet has clear implications for secure housing allocation. For people with experience of homelessness their pets are much more than companions. In Irvine's (2013) study, homeless people described their dogs as life-changers and lifesavers, encouraging a sense of responsibility, and providing the witnesses some people need to keep them from falling back into

risk behaviours. Homeless young people have also described dogs as ‘companions that could provide safety, unconditional love, and a reason to keep going because they needed care in return’ (Rew 2000). Specialist homelessness services, animal welfare and advocacy organisations alike all report that homeless people and/or those experiencing violence can be reluctant to access housing options when pets cannot be accommodated.

The multi-layered importance of pets for people with lived experience of homelessness and/or family and domestic violence is reflected in the significant and ongoing innovations and adaptations around practice and service delivery nationally in homelessness, crisis and emergency accommodation, as noted in this section.

Permission to keep pets

Traditionally, homelessness accommodation has not been pet friendly, especially in the shorter-term crisis and emergency accommodation options. Generally, this has been because of the strict policies of accommodation providers who, in the homelessness space, may be specialist homelessness services themselves, benevolent or social housing providers or private landlords in the case of some rooming or boarding houses. The fact that accommodation options for the homeless are often congregate has generally been the justification for broadscale pet-restrictive policies.

As noted above, however, homelessness services is an area where there has been significant innovation in pet-friendly practice. While these examples are limited in scale and scope, they clearly align with recognition of the importance of pets to people with lived experience of homelessness and/or family and domestic violence.

Victoria’s Launch Housing typifies leading edge practice in the homelessness space, having piloted and continued with the innovative Pets in Crisis Accommodation Project to better understand and assist pet owners in crisis services (Aerlic 2018). Launch Housing’s initiative recognises that ‘the majority of homelessness support services don’t allow people to bring their animal companions into crisis accommodation, meaning many pet lovers fall through the cracks of the housing system’ and *‘for rough sleepers this project hold[s] special significance as pet ownership rates are quite high’* (Launch Housing 2018). The change in practice has seen a small number of Launch Housing’s crisis accommodation rooms/units made pet friendly (Launch Housing n.d), alongside the coordination of vet care and other supports for pets and their owners.

The Launch Housing website carries examples of the clear benefits for people supported (transitioning) through the initiative (Launch Housing 2019):

[My dog] Penny has been amazing, but also the biggest hindrance to getting a roof over my head. When I first came here Penny was staying in a car I rented for a while. I couldn’t give her to my parents...Originally, I had tried to find a pet sitter and all my spare money was going to support her. Then I got the pet-friendly room on-site...I have never been shown that much kindness and humanity from people before. Between the staff on-site and the team from Lort Smith Animal Hospital...people worked overtime to make sure I could move in with Penny as soon as possible. She [Penny] unifies people. Pets have got that unconditional love. Penny has been the one force to elevate me; she gives me a reason to get up daily. A reason to hope for a better tomorrow.

Notably, the Pets in Crisis Accommodation Project has some interface with their groundbreaking Lived Experience Advisory Group, who has clearly articulated the importance of pet-friendly crisis accommodation to a range of audiences and influenced Launch’s service practice in this area (Launch Housing 2018). Nine pet owners and their animals were supported through the Pets in Crisis Accommodation Project in the first approximately nine months of the program (Launch Housing 2018), with more owners and their animals supported since.

Innovation in crisis

Launch Housing started a pilot program in 2018 which allows people to bring their pets into their crisis accommodation services. This is significant as most homelessness services do not allow pets in their accommodation. Pets entering Launch House accommodation are given a vet check by Lort Smith Animal Hospital, who also fund any health treatment the animals require (Aerlic 2018).

Figure 6: Launch Housing accommodation with pets innovation program

The majority of homelessness support services don't allow people to bring their animal companions into crisis accommodation, meaning many pet lovers fall through the cracks of the housing system.

Pets tend to encourage higher rates of positive social interactions as well as help people when they are feeling isolated. The housing crisis has affected so many individuals, with limited homes available so it's important to embrace existing sources of strength to help people during difficult and vulnerable times.



Source: Screenshot from Launch Housing website (Aerlic 2018).

A similar example of innovative practice in supporting people experiencing homelessness with companion animals is evident in Adelaide. The Adelaide Zero Project end homelessness campaign has designed an accommodation option that supports rough sleepers with accompanying animals. 'The Waymouth', has been deliberately designed to be a low(er)-barrier 'shelter', providing a short-term (3–4-month duration) accommodation option on the path to permanent housing for up to 22 people. The facility is the Adelaide Zero Project's response to specific recommendations from the Institute for Global Homelessness (Casey and Brennan 2019; Brennan, Rowley, et al. 2020) to address known barriers to supporting people to move on from rough sleeping, per international best practice (Depaul 2016). In the Adelaide context, such known barriers include accommodation options where there are accompanying pets and accommodation for couples sleeping rough. On a practical level, pets are accommodated in rooms with residents, with kennels provided directly outside rooms for dogs and scratch pads for cats. As an organisational informant interviewed in this research indicated:

What I have been hearing were people were sleeping in cars because they couldn't find anywhere to take a pet before we came along and in winter we get them presenting to us with hypothermia because they just haven't been able to keep warm in a car and although we suggested campsites such as Brownhill Creek, it hasn't been particularly successful for them. I think their problem is trying to keep a dog and a tent together, so they really didn't have too many options. So this has worked. I think, as I said, I think we've had four pets since we really started in early November which isn't bad. (Homelessness organisation informant)

Residents at the Waymouth are supported in their forward journey to permanent housing with the help of a case worker to navigate to pet-friendly accommodation. Four people with pets have been accommodated in the facility (thus far, all with smaller dogs) and successfully supported into more permanent housing since its opening in November 2019.

We'll try not to split up a man—and it's only been men so far—a man and his pet because we do understand that it is part of their mental health regime. (Homelessness organisation informant)

Further innovation in pet-friendly practice in homelessness accommodation is also evident in South Australia, with the very recent move (April 2020) in all Family and Domestic Violence accommodation (under the Women's Safety Services banner) to progressively move to 50 per cent pet friendly accommodation. This evolution in practice is grounded in recognition of:

- the links between pet abuse and family and domestic violence
- the significant proportion of women and their children who remain in an unsafe home or return to an unsafe home because of their pet(s), and
- the central importance of pets in/to families.

Women's Safety Services have partnered with a number of organisations in the delivery of this new mode of practice, including the RSPCA and local volunteer-run organisations, like Safe Families, Safe Pets, who together have developed a series of resources to support the move to pet-friendly practice in the family and domestic violence sector. Such resources include:

- For women/families:
 - safety planning resources for women/families (i.e. planning to leave with pets), and
 - support to move on to other housing options with pets and tools and protocols to support.
- For providers:
 - a range of tools and practice guides around supporting women and families with pets.

Key to the latter has been embedding a series of questions about pets in intake and safety planning. Services are also able to offer emergency boarding for pets (limited) where other options are exhausted to ensure the safety of women, families and their pets. Women and their families are also provided with a range of other pet-related supports through the RSPCA and the offerings of Safe Pets, Safe Families. These supports include free or discounted vet care, pet resettlement packs and educational resources on responsible pet ownership (Women's Safety Services 2020; Clisby, A., pers. comm. 29 April 2020; Howard, J. pers. comm, 21 April 2020). Notably, Safe Pets, Safe Families provide this support to people in need beyond those impacted by family and domestic violence, including rough sleepers, people with (often severe) mental health challenges and people entering institutions, particularly hospitals or aged care. The volunteer-managed and staffed organisation has a significant bank of foster carers to draw on for pets while owners get back on their feet and into pet-friendly accommodation. Volunteer staff are also increasingly playing a direct advocacy role on behalf of pet owners, especially in terms of housing. In rare instances, the charity has funded motel stays to keep people and their pets together and safe. The organisation has also broadened their remit to quite intensive case management support on behalf of individuals, including rough sleepers, successfully finding accommodation for people and their pets. Such work is highly relational, time and resource-intensive (Howard, J. pers. comm, 21 April 2020).

Safe Pets Safe Families program statistics

- Fostered 257 animals in 2019
- Helped 187 clients
 - 33% of cases due to mental illness
 - 27% of cases due to domestic violence
 - 27% due to homelessness
- 96% of pets reunited

Source: Adapted from Safe Pets Safe Families (2020)

Organisations like the Pets of the Homeless in Victoria provide similar support, although arguably not quite of the broad remit of Safe Families, Safe Pets, who hold ambitions to expand nationally to meet expressed need for this support and services.

Regulating and removing pets

As with other tenures, regulation and removal of pets is largely at the behest of, or undertaken by, landlords or services, in accordance with policy and practice or via legislated mechanisms. Because of the close ties between some services and animal welfare organisations, such partnerships are also relied upon where advice is needed on the regulation of pet accommodation and removal, although removal usually only occurs where other options are exhausted. It is notable that in the course of interviews with animal welfare organisations, there was a clear inclination to expand their work with specialist homelessness services to co-design and co-deliver better outcomes for people and pets, especially in relation to housing pathways.

3.4.1 Risks, costs, benefits and opportunities

Accompanying pets remain a significant challenge and well-recognised barrier to securing housing for people experiencing homelessness, especially among people rough sleeping. There are emerging examples of innovation in practice in this space, particularly in homelessness related to family and domestic violence. Select examples of innovative practice have been included here to show the possibilities and opportunities occurring at the practice/service level, but certainly not to downplay the extent of the challenges that remain for individuals, specialist homelessness services and animal welfare systems. Much more needs to be done in the space of homelessness and pets, and this will require further resourcing. To date, resourcing of the innovative approaches clearly needed and described has been predominately via philanthropic and charitable channels, notably juxtaposed with significant referrals to these services to assist vulnerable groups by government agencies themselves, including state housing authorities and health departments.

As with other tenures, risk remains the dominant discourse, related to antisocial behaviour and keeping pets with owners in accommodation that is by design temporary or transitional and/or congregate. Accommodating larger animals, especially dogs, remains a challenge. Some strange 'quirks', even perversities, also exist in relation to owners and companion animals in the homelessness space, as the case in the box below identifies (and others were relayed to us in interviews as well as review of other media). Clearly, these need attention as they frustrate services and cement animal owners' distrust in the systems that are supposed to support them and value their wellbeing and social inclusion.

Transition points remain a key challenge for people with lived experience of homelessness as they move through the system to (hopefully) more permanent housing. The benefits afforded to very vulnerable people such as rough sleepers or women/families who have been impacted by domestic violence are quickly undone where the move from pet-friendly crisis accommodation cannot be followed up with a move to more permanent accommodation that is also pet-friendly. Movement to private rental accommodation was repeatedly raised as particularly concerning in this regard, as the sector is simply pet unfriendly in most instances and many people with lived experience of homelessness are already at a distinct disadvantage in a competitive market which values rental readiness and 'suitability' as described in past AHURI reports (Short, Seelig et al. 2008; Tually, Slatter et al. 2016).

A women's housing provider has slammed the 'shitty' funding model that saw a domestic violence survivor's cats given secure safe accommodation while she was forced to sleep on the streets due to a lack of options.

...

Safe Haven director Denise Hunter said while the woman had been sleeping rough, as well as couch surfing and staying in an unsuitable caravan park, her three cats were able to be taken in to a shelter under a government funding arrangement.

While the cats were looked after, the woman could not secure an emergency accommodation option for herself, and was left to find her own housing solution.

Source: 'Woman left homeless, but her cats get emergency accommodation', *10 Daily*, 26 July 2019.

3.5 Non-private dwellings: retirement villages and residential parks/ caravan parks

3.5.1 Retirement villages

Retirement villages in the past were likely to have a 'no pets allowed' policy, but this is changing. Retirement villages are increasingly recognising and acknowledging the importance of pets for overall health, for ameliorating loneliness and progressively now even as a determinant as to whether an older person buys into a village or not. 'Older' villages are likely to have a no pets policy, but modern new retirement villages generally are accepting of pets, and some are even facilitating pets in the village by helping residents build cat runs or providing dog parks and play equipment.

There has been a growing demand in Australia for pet-friendly aged care accommodation, with many people moving into a nursing home wanting to take their beloved pets, but have been unable to due to aged care home restrictions.

A University of South Australia study has found that animals in aged care have an increased economic and health benefit to older people, with the lead researcher asking for a greater acceptance of animals in aged care settings.

Source: 'A pet makes a world of difference in aged care', *Aged Care Guide*, 2019

The *Retirement Village Act* in each state does not have a statement or ruling on pets—pet policies are set generally by individual retirement village operators and managers. These policies are often devised generally in consultation with the residents' committees at each particular site and in line with the guidelines of village contracts. Therefore, the conditions around permissions to keep pets, regulating pets and removal of pets, vary. However, most contracts have stipulations about occupants' rights to safety, quiet and an uninterrupted lifestyle. Pet policies have to fit within these conditions, consequently these policies generally comprise four major elements: the type and size of pet; rules about controls around the pet; when a village can 'evict' a pet; and the replacement of the pet when it dies. These details can be very specific and vary depending on the type of pet. Examples of some of the rulings are listed below but to view the specific details of some policies, see the website <https://petfriendlyagedcare.com.au/how-to-be-pet-friendly/#retirement-village> for pet policies for a number of aged care and retirement villages.

- **Permission to keep pets:** Permissions can apply only to new residents or to existing residents depending on the specific retirement village; permission must be obtained prior to the pet being brought to the retirement village; permission is only granted to new residents with existing pets; when a pet dies it cannot be replaced by another pet; cats, dogs and birds are permitted and all other pets will be assessed for suitability on a case-by-case basis.

What happens if you need to move into a retirement village, hostel or nursing home but your dog isn't welcome? This heartbreaking decision is faced by many people every day. But it doesn't have to be this way. Find out how to make sure your dog comes with you!

Canberra-based volunteer community organisation, Pets & Positive Ageing, is working to do just that. Its mission is to help older pet owners and their beloved pets stay together.

Source: 'Canberra pet friendly aged care', *Canberra Dog Walks*, 2019.

- **Regulating pets:** There are many rules around regulating pets including: a pet must be registered with the relevant local council; cats will be permitted within interior of units and only permitted outside if on a harness or leash or within the confines of a cat run. Dogs will only be permitted within units that have a fenced courtyard, birds are permitted in all units but must be kept inside during the hours of 6pm and 8am; dogs must be house-trained and well behaved; dogs must be trained not to bark unnecessarily; dogs must not weigh more than 13 kilograms; a cat must have a bell on its collar; the resident must provide the village manager with the contact name of someone who will take care of the pet in case of an emergency.
- **Removing pets:** The retirement village can revoke or withdraw consent for a pet to remain at the village at its absolute discretion. This withdrawal can occur under a number of conditions such as the pet creating unreasonable noise or nuisance, attacks or threatens people or other animals within a village, causes damage to other residents or village property; was not approved by village management.

Retirement villages reserve the right to offset any cost associated with any damage caused by a resident's pet or companion animal by offsetting it against the Companion Animal Bond (if any) or by billing the resident directly or applying the damage costs against the refund of the resident's exit entitlement.

3.5.2 Residential parks/caravan parks

The information on keeping pets and the rules relating to this are very sparse in the legislation or information about residing in residential parks. Only South Australia and Tasmania mention pets in their legislation.

- **Tasmania:** Item 64B of the *Residential Tenancy Act 1997* (1 July 2019) pertains to Keeping of Pets. Here it is specified that (1) 'A tenant is not to keep a pet on residential premises (a) without permission of the owner of the premises; or (b) unless permitted to do so under the residential tenancy agreement, (2) This section does not apply to a guide dog as defined by the *Guide Dogs and Hearing Dog Act 1967*'.
- **South Australia:** Part 6 of the *Residential Parks Act 2007* (1 October 2019) states under park rules: '(1) the park owner of a residential park may make rules about the use, enjoyment, control and management of the park; (2) However, rules may be made only about any of the following with item (g) the keeping of pets'.

A South Australian mother says her children were left 'completely traumatised' after her family's assistance dog was refused entry to a holiday park in Adelaide at the weekend.

Murrianna Reese said her family had organised to stay at the Marion Holiday Park, in Adelaide's south, but had to cancel their plans after staff denied entry to their assistance dog.

The mother-of-three from Murray Bridge said the family's labrador, named Hunter, was a vital support for all three of her children.

Source: 'Autistic children left "completely traumatised" after holiday park refuses entry to assistance dog', *ABC News*, 29 July 2019.

Other organisations, such as tenants unions and Residential Tenancies Authorities provide some minor advice about pets.

More and more caravan parks around Australia are now welcoming dogs but there is one park that has a sign out the front declaring 'For entry you must have a pet'.

"To come in here you have to have a dog or a cat," Broome PCYC park manager Wayne Rowles said.

Mr Rowles said the restriction meant he had to be on the lookout for fake pets.

“Stuffed pets. [We] don't let stuffed pets in. We've seen a pretend cat,” he said.

“Some people come in and say they've got a dog and they don't want to show us the dog.”

The Shire of Broome allows the PCYC to take in campers during periods of high demand when permanent caravan parks are not able to accommodate travellers with pets.

Source: ‘The pet-friendly caravan park in Broome where only those with a dog or cat can stay’, ABC News, 22 June 2017.

3.5.3 Risks, costs, benefits and opportunities

Housing arrangements that do not fit into the major forms of public or private regulatory spheres such as retirement villages and residential or caravan parks are an often-overlooked segment of the housing system. They are, however, an increasingly used housing option for lower income households and households entering retirement with a low (or no) asset base. How the operators and regulators of these housing options view companion animals in policy and practice is therefore of increasing importance.

Different regulations can apply to non-private dwellings, including specific Acts. As noted, however, finding specific information about pet-permissiveness or pet-restriction for these housing options is difficult. The specific Acts do not specify companion animal regulations, leaving these decisions to the owners/operators of individual sites framed around how operators see their site management responsibilities and preserving residents' right to peaceful enjoyment of their home and immediate surrounds (i.e. freedom from animal-related disruption). These realities specifically apply to residential and caravan parks, although there is at least anecdotal evidence of some pet-friendly permanent residential/caravan parks in operation.

In retirement villages, the situation is more mixed, with evidence of an emerging change in practice. Some newer villages are setting themselves up as pet-friendly from the outset and others are switching to permitting (small) animal ownership with (majority) resident approval. Again, the extent to which this is a broadscale trend is not clear. However, it is clear from industry associations that pet-permissiveness is something older residents are increasingly considering in their later life housing decisions. Animal welfare organisations, however, continue to report that moves to retirement villages, and especially aged care facilities (a non-housing sector), are a driver of pet relinquishments.

3.6 Policy development in transition: low barrier, high barrier and discretionary companion animal-permissive housing contexts

Across the housing settings and living arrangements we define here in terms of private, public, homelessness, crisis and emergency and non-private (other) dwellings, we find considerable variation in two key areas affecting housing and housing assistance pathways with companion animals (Figure 5).

First is the degree of pet-permissiveness within any given housing tenure, context or living arrangement across the state and territory jurisdictions focused on in the study. Specifically, we identify the following:

- The private sphere comprises a low barrier and a high barrier realm—home ownership and private rental as the major tenures.
- Strata title tends to be discretionary and high barrier, while community title is variable.
- The public sphere includes a very high degree of discretion by public housing and community housing organisations including within SOMIH sectors, in highly variable ways.

- Homelessness, crisis and emergency housing is also highly restrictive typically, primarily due to the way discretion is used by agencies and/or in combination with the use of housing sectors such as private rental or hotel/motel accommodation that is high barrier for households living with companion animals.
- Non-private residences, such as resident caravan parks, are generally highly discretionary and can be more permissive, low barrier contexts for residents. Retirement villages are highly discretionary and restrictive although innovative examples can be found.
- Households with companion animals that attempt to access, move within or between sectors or move face considerable risk points in terms of either their inability to secure appropriate housing and become homeless or having to consider pet relinquishment at these junctures.

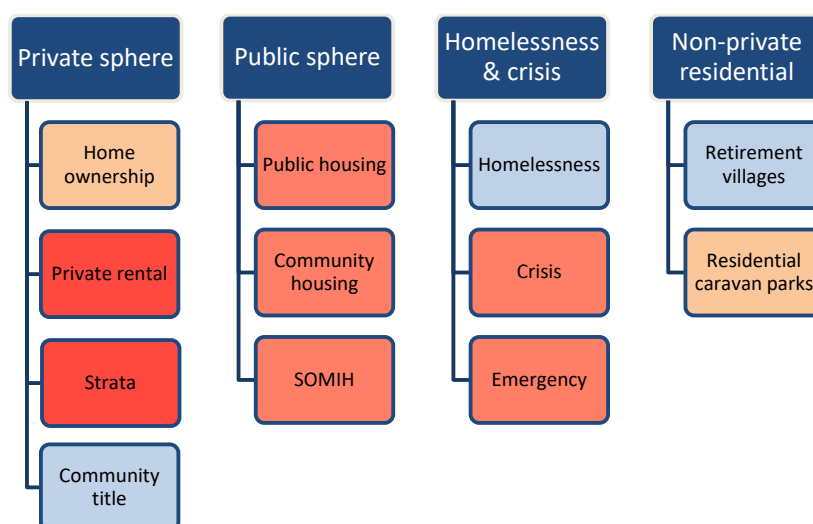
Second, we observe differences in the extent to which policy development and innovation stagnation or dynamism exists in each of these various housing and living contexts.

Interestingly, 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, where change is taking place in some jurisdictions, as well as in some homelessness support services or supported living contexts that operationalise their discretionary powers in pet-permissive ways.

The most innovative practices tend to occur where housing providers or building managers have a high degree of discretion. This includes within some parts of homelessness services as well as within a small minority of discrete non-private residential contexts—in some instances, this includes models that reconsider the relationship between risks, costs, benefits and opportunities at the local level to promote more supportive companion animal living.

Homelessness providers take innovation for households living with companion animals to the most progressive level, within a generally restrictive sphere, by linking with animal welfare agencies and other services that are supportive and can assist with difficult housing transition points for these households.

Figure 7: Housing and living arrangements that are high barrier (red), low barrier (beige), discretionary (orange) and currently-identified spheres of innovation (blue)



Source: Authors.

4. Resident experiences of housing and housing assistance pathways with companion animals

- **More than half of Australian households reside with at least one companion animal, with many of these (over 60%) living in suburban areas of major metropolitan areas or within regional cities or towns.**
- **Original analysis presented here indicates households living with companion animals are more likely to a) live in houses rather than flats, units or apartments and b) are more likely to be home owners (around two-thirds of animal owners) or private renters (more than a quarter of pet-owning households) than living in other tenures.**
- **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.**

This chapter focuses on the housing experiences and housing pathways of a wide range of Australian households. These households live across housing tenures and receive differing degrees of financial support—from none to high degrees of assistance. This chapter considers how the changing patterns of housing occupancy, broad demographic and cultural shifts and varied policy settings outlined in Chapters 2 and 3 affect residential experiences of housing and housing pathways with companion animals. It uses data from the national Australian Housing Aspirations 2018 Survey (Stone, Rowley et al. 2020a) which, while not focused primarily on the topic of companion animals, included a small, dedicated companion animal ownership survey item module. This enabled analysis of:

- the incidence and distribution of assistance/pet ownership across population groups
- current housing descriptions of households living with companion animals
- household estimate of relinquishment of companion animals in recent residential moves caused by the restriction of pet ownership; and who would have preferred to have pets
- housing preferences of those who think their companion ownership will restrict future residential mobility, and those who do not.

Qualitative, semi-structured interviews with households in metropolitan/regional areas of Victoria, NSW and WA (collected as part of the same Australian Housing Aspirations research, see Stone, Rowley et al. 2020b) have been transcribed and coded in NVivo format for analysis. Where participants have referred to experiences of housing with companion animals as part of their housing pathway experience or housing aspirations, their narratives are included in the analysis to support the focus upon experienced/perceived impacts of companion animal ownership in the context of low-income housing.

A total of 15 interviews undertaken in the original research are included in the present study. This comprises two young adults aged 18–34 years, 10 mid-life adults aged 35–54 years and three later life Australians aged 55 years and over.³

4.1 Understanding companion animal ownership

The Australian Housing Aspirations (2018) survey collected responses from 7,343 Australians nationally, including 2,477 young people aged 18–34 years, 2,544 mid-life Australians aged between 35 and 54 years and 2,422 later life Australians aged 55 years and over. The survey captured the current housing and household circumstances of these respondents as well as the housing required to meet their changing needs. It also included questions on the presence and impact of companion animals on their housing options, experiences and decisions.

Only those households who had moved out of the family home received the questions relating to pets. A total of 6,788 respondents were asked if they had any pets. Around half, 3,504 (51.6%) indicated that they had pets or a companion animal, a figure lower than current national estimates of 60 per cent (AHA 2013; AMA 2016). This may be due to the non-inclusion of non-English speaking households and the use of online data collection, which may exclude some groups, notably older pet owners. Both these groups may be under-represented in the sample. Nonetheless, the survey provides some useful population group insights into housing with companion animals and the enabling or restricting conditions associated with housing pathways with pets.

The suite of items about companion animal ownership included in the AHA (2018) survey enabled the delineation of four main household groups, in relation to their experience of living with companion animals.

- households that do not own a companion animal and have not previously had to re-home a companion animal due to housing restrictions
- households that used to have a companion animal, but had to relinquish the animal/s due to residential mobility
- households that are unable to have pets in the housing they currently reside in, and
- households currently living with companion animals as part of their household.

³ For more details of interview and focus group participant characteristics included in the original research see Stone, Rowley et al. (2020b).

Table 2 presents basic demographic, income and housing characteristics for the four groups outlined in more detail below, as well as brief information about their residential location. In the sections following the table we examine these results and draw on interview data to illustrate key pathway and related animal ownership themes.

Table 2: Household, housing and locational summary characteristics of AHA (2018) sample

	No	No, but I/we used to but had to re-home because I/we moved dwelling	No, I/we cannot have pets where I/we currently live	Yes, including companion animals
	%			
Age				
18–24	8	19	12	10
25–34	20	28	28	20
35–44	16	17	18	18
45–54	15	11	12	20
55–64	17	5	12	17
65–74	18	16	12	12
75+	6	3	7	2
Within State location				
Within a regional city or large town	14	15	18	21
Within a remote community	1	3	1	2
Within a small, regional town	9	11	7	13
Within the CBD of a capital city	11	15	9	8
Within the inner suburbs (excluding CBD) of a capital city	25	23	28	16
Within the middle/outer suburbs of a capital city	39	31	35	40
None of these	0	0	1	1
Household type				
Couple living together, no children	36	27	26	31
Couple living with children (dependent and/or independent)	23	27	19	36
Single person living with child(ren) (dependent or independent)	6	13	5	10
Single person no children	36	33	50	24
Current tenure				
Ownership	59	40	19	67
Private rental	35	52	70	27
Social housing	5	9	7	6
Retirement village	1	0	3	0

4. Resident experiences of housing and housing assistance pathways with companion animals

	No	No, but I/we used to but had to re-home because I/we moved dwelling	No, I/we cannot have pets where I/we currently live	Yes, including companion animals
	%			
Income level				
Very low income	22	28	28	19
Low income	26	29	26	23
Moderate income	20	15	23	21
High income	16	17	10	20
Very high income	6	3	3	8
Not prepared to say	11	8	10	8
Current dwelling type				
Ancillary dwelling (granny flat)	0.6	2.0	0.0	0.5
Boarding house	0.4	0.7	1.5	0.2
Caravan/mobile home	0.5	0.7	0.0	0.3
House	69.5	62.7	48.5	86.1
Apartment	19.6	24.7	35.8	10.4
No permanent accommodation	0.3	0.0	0.0	0.1
Studio	7.5	9.3	11.9	1.7
Other	1.5	0.0	2.2	0.8
Total per cent	42.2	2.2	4.0	51.6
Total (number)	2,867	150	268	3,504

Source: Original analysis of Australian Housing Aspirations (2018) (AHA) Survey (Stone, Rowley et al. 2020).

4.1.1 Households living with companion animals

As shown at Table 2, households living with pets were aged mainly between 25–64 years. Pet owners were more likely to live in couple households without children (30.9%) or couple households with dependent or independent children (35.6%). By contrast, single person households living with children (9.9%) were less likely to have pets. Those households with pets were more likely to have a low or very low income (42%) or have a moderate income (21%).

Pet owners were more likely to be living within a regional city or large town (20.8%) or in the inner suburbs of a capital city (39.5%). They predominantly owned their homes (67%), while 27 per cent were in the private rental sector. Only 6 per cent of the respondents with pets were in social housing. The importance of pets is substantial for the wellbeing of some households, including one interviewee who explained that:

I've already minimised myself down to so little. I don't know how much more compromising I can actually do. I will not give up my dog. She's my reason for getting up every day. I just won't give her up. She's 10. I don't know how much longer she's got. (Female, transitional housing tenant)

Another tenant explained the impact of her cat passing away, the challenge imposed by being in the private rental sector, and the importance of having a pet:

I do pine the loss of that cat and that companionship. And renting, unfortunately, it's difficult to have animals anyway. There's always a problem. So that was a bit of a big loss, which I still—I hanker for a cat. I'd love nothing more than having a cat—a lap cat that sits on your lap and talks to you and so on. (Female, private renter)

Pet owning households are most likely to live in three (40.7%) or four-bedroom houses (28.8%), followed by those in two-bedroom houses (9.1%), and were less likely to live in apartments than those without pets. Pet owners have generally had low mobility trends with 51 per cent reporting that they have been in the same dwelling for five years or more. Around a third (34%) however, were potentially more transient, having been in their home for less than three years. Interviewees describe the relationship between pet ownership and high mobility; in some cases they opted to relocate or continue to move regularly, including in insecure and potentially inadequate housing, rather than forego pet ownership. In the following case, a desire to be near family and friends and retain pets left a female tenant with limited affordable options leading to short-stays, insecurity and heightened mobility while she managed with very low income:

I did live in [township half an hour from current location] for a while, but I was just too isolated. I was on a thousand-acre property in the middle of nowhere, and my car broke down and died, and then I was completely isolated. So I came back and I've lived in caravans and I've lived in all sorts of situations as you do when you've got no money, and you know what it's like. So I've lived in caravans on people's properties. I had a little caravan I bought for \$300. (Female, private rental)

4.1.2 Households surrendering pets or companion animals

Those households most likely to have surrendered their pets were in mid-life aged between 18 and 34 years (47%), living within the inner suburbs (23%) and the middle/outer suburbs of a capital city (31%) (Table 2). These households consisted of couples (27%), couples with dependent or independent children (27%) and lone person households (33%). Just over half of the households that surrendered pets are in the private rental sector (52%) compared to 40 per cent that are home owners. Households that had surrendered their pets because they moved dwelling were most likely to have low (29%) or very low (28%) incomes. Where pet owners did indicate a level of disability, it was likely to be a physical (32%) or mental (28%) long-term, ongoing disability or health condition, findings which were also higher than for other cohorts.

Most of those households forced to rehome their pets were in houses with between one and five bedrooms (69.5%) or apartments with two or three bedrooms (24.7%). More than half of these households had been in their current dwelling for less than three years (65%). Half of these households were in the private rental sector (52%), however, 40 per cent were home owners, which may indicate the impact on pet ownership of strata by-laws in apartment complexes.

Interviewees described both the impact of having to surrender their pets when they moved, and the tactics they used to keep their pets with them:

I had to re-home her which broke my heart but she's living with my best friend on a farm and she's got her own pig. She's got her own pig and her own kitten and horses and Coco's fabulous, I just was devastated. (Female, private renter)

I chose to leave that [I had a dog] out [of the property application] to give us a better chance at initially being accepted for the application. And then after a month or so I said, 'Hey I've got this dog that I look after sometimes' and eased it in like that. (Female/male, private renter)

In some cases, interviewees, particularly in rented dwellings, described the difficult emotional decision of pet relinquishment as the alternative to potential eviction.

It was heartbreaking. No, I'm a cat person and I'm not allowed a cat. The landlord is dead against cats. I had one visiting me that was jumping through the window and when he found that out, he put flyscreens on the windows. And the real estate even said to me 'We know you had a cat [name], if you take that cat with you we will evict you'. Oh my god, so yes, I had to get rid of my cat and he will not let me have one and I hate it, I miss a cat so much.... It was awful, I cried for days. (Female, private renter)

4.1.3 Households unable to have pets or companion animals

Respondents unable to have pets where they currently live were mainly aged between 25 and 44 years (46%) and most likely to be single person households (50%) or couples with no children (26%) (Table 2). Half of the households unable to have pets had a low or very low income (54%) or a moderate income (23%). Only 13 per cent of those living in a dwelling where pets were not allowed had high or very high income.

Most of these households did not report a physical or mental health condition or disability. Where a physical (21%) or mental (14%) condition or disability was reported, it was most likely to be long term and ongoing.

Pet ownership formed part of a long-term housing and life aspiration for some households in these groups. Interviewees in several cases indicated an awareness of their current need to wait to attain pet ownership rights and saw this as a longer-term rather than short-term goal or strategy:

If I could have a dog, I would in a minute. ... I definitely can't have one at the moment and my dog passed away a couple of years ago and renting was more difficult with a dog. But it is a huge factor in moving, as well. To get closer to the beach and a dog, would be my goal. (Female, private renter)

Households unable to have pets were more likely to be living within a regional city or large town (35%) or in the inner suburbs of a capital city (28%). This cohort were predominantly in the private rental sector (70%). Only 7 per cent of the respondents without pets were in social housing. Those unable to have pets were most likely to live in two-bedroom apartments (29.5%) or three-bedroom houses (23.5%). Households unable to have pets had not resided in their current dwelling for long, with over half having been there for three years or less. Around a third (28%) however, were potentially more stable, having been in their home for five years or more.

4.1.4 Companion animal ownership among households with a self-reported health condition or disability

Seventy-one per cent of those with pets reported that they had no physical health conditions or a physical disability, and 80 per cent had no mental health condition or disability, that would impact upon their housing choice (Table 3). Where pet owners did indicate a level of disability, it was likely to be a physical (25%) or mental (17%) long-term, ongoing disability or health condition.

One of the interesting results in the survey data is that people living with either physical or mental health conditions or disabilities are more likely to report having had to previously relinquish a companion animal due to residential mobility or dwelling restrictions, relative to those without ongoing health conditions.

Table 3: Self-reported health conditions and disability by pet ownership

	No	No, but I/we used to but had to re-home because I/we moved dwelling	No, I/we cannot have pets where I/we currently live	Yes, including companion animals
	%			
Physical health				
No	77.0	61.3	76.1	71.4
Yes, long-term , ongoing disability or health condition	20.4	32.6	21.2	25.3
Yes, short-term illness/accident/health condition or other	2.6	6.1	2.7	3.3
Mental health				
No	86.6	67.3	83.6	79.9
Yes, long-term , ongoing disability or health condition	11.7	28.0	14.5	17.1
Yes, short-term illness/accident/health condition or other	1.7	5.7	1.9	3.0

Source: Original analysis of Australian Housing Aspirations (2018) (AHA) Survey (Stone, Rowley, et al. 2020a).

4.1.5 Housing aspirations of companion animal-owning households

A majority of survey respondents were living in dwellings that met their short-term aspirations. As shown in Table 4, those who had to surrender, or could not have pets where they lived, were in homes meeting their aspirations to a lesser degree than pet owners or those who don't have pets. These cohorts were also less likely to aspire to stay in their current dwelling in the short term when compared to those households with or without pets.

In the longer term, fewer households indicated that they were living in a dwelling that met their long-term aspirations. Again, those who cannot have pets, or had to surrender them, were even less likely to be in a dwelling meeting their long-term aspirations.

The ability to have pets, or the presence of pets, was, for some, part of their broader housing aspirations to have a home. As these tenants explained:

... so ideally my two-year plan is a nice little place that I've got now. And it's got a small backyard, but enough for the dog to do her business and a spare bedroom, and it suits me just fine. It's perfect. I can have friends over. I can have a life. (Female, transitional housing tenant)

Home to me is I need a small space because a really big space and I just fill it with junk. A small space where I can go outside and there's a garden and a dog and other people. (Female, private renter)

In some cases, as in the experience of the following interviewee, animals were a critical component of 'making home' for themselves and their children following periods of family violence and associated lengthy stints of insecure housing:

I've been able to clean it and make it look nice and all that sort of stuff, as well as I can. It's become a home for the kids as well. I've got their bedrooms and all that sort of stuff, and they're here on the school holidays and weekends, so definitely—I'm able to have a cat and stuff like that, so it's good. (Female, transitional housing tenant)

Other tenants shared the way in which pets were linked to their housing aspirations. For one interviewee, the needs of their pet defined the type of spaces they were looking for in the short term:

I'm never too fussed getting the small room in the share-house. So space doesn't mean an awful lot to me. Like I said with the dog, she needs space ... [outdoor] or a communal space... (Female, private renter)

One single parent explained that 'I would like to have my dogs with me, which I can't do here so...'. The dogs were temporarily re-homed with her mother and also with a friend, as her current accommodation was not suitable for pets. The inability to have the dogs with the family shaped the households' short-term aspiration as it was 'the main reason for wanting to find somewhere else, otherwise I'm happy here' (Female, private renter).

Table 4: Current housing meeting short and longer term housing aspirations

	No	No, but I/we used to but had to re-home because I/we moved dwelling	No, I/we cannot have pets where I/we currently live	Yes
	%			
Current housing meets short-term aspirations				
No	12	21	19	13
Yes	88	79	81	87
Current housing meets long-term aspirations				
Don't know	17	15	20	16
No	24	36	37	23
Yes	58	48	43	62

Source: Original analysis of Australian Housing Aspirations (2018) (AHA) Survey (Stone, Rowley, et al. 2020a); p. < 0.05.

Survey respondents largely aspired to live in the middle to outer suburbs of a capital city (Appendix 3). Those households with pets were less likely to aspire to live in the inner suburbs of a capital city and indicated a greater preference for living in large and small regional cities compared to other cohorts in the long term. The same households were more likely to aspire to reside in separate dwellings and had much lower preferences for living in apartments of any type than non-pet owning households. Preferred dwellings were also larger homes, with greater long-term aspirations for four and five-bedroom homes than other cohorts and less interest in smaller one or two-bedroom dwellings. As the cohort of pet owners is of a younger age group (25–45 years) it is reasonable to surmise that these aspirations respond to the broader housing needs at this stage of life.

Tenure preferences were dominated by ownership options either as outright owners or owned with a mortgage, with more than 60 per cent of all respondents aspiring to these options in the long term (Appendix 3). Pet owners were slightly less likely to aspire to living in the private rental sector in the long term (8%) when compared to those households without pets (14%).

4.2 Companion animals as barriers to mobility

Pets only had an impact on the selection of their owner's current dwelling for around one-third (36%) of those with pets (Table 5). However, half the respondents said that having pets would impact the options available to them for their next dwelling choice. The housing decisions of younger households were more likely to be influenced by having a pet when compared to those 55 years and over. The pets of 45 per cent of those aged 18–24 and 49 per cent of those aged 25–34 shaped the selection of their current dwelling. For example, one tenant explained that although they had been successful in finding pet-friendly private rental tenancies in regional Australia, having a pet directly affects their property searches:

... So, I'm not going to consider somewhere where I can't have Ellie, my dog. So, like, that is—it's not an option. So, in terms of any time I'm searching on the computer, or anything like that, I don't consider anything else. (Male, private renter)

Younger households, aged 18–34, were more likely to anticipate that having a pet would reduce the housing options available to them when choosing their next dwelling compared to those aged over 55 years.

Pets had an impact on dwelling selection for one-third of those who had previously had to surrender their pets when they moved house.

Table 5: Impact of companion animal ownership on housing decisions

	No, but I/we used to but had to re-home because I/we moved dwelling	Yes, including companion animals
	%	
Did having a pet have an impact on the selection of your current dwelling?		
Yes	30	36
No	70	64
Total	100	100
Do you think having a pet would impact on the choice of your next dwelling?		
Yes, it will reduce the options available to me		50.4
No		49.6
Total		100

Source: Original analysis of Australian Housing Aspirations (2018) (AHA) Survey (Stone, Rowley, et al. 2020a).

Respondents were asked: 'What are the potential barriers stopping you moving to a different dwelling in the next 1–2 years?' From 6,789 responses, 231 people selected *pets* as being a barrier (3.4%). Of those who indicated that pets were a barrier to mobility, 13.8 per cent identified it as the only barrier (Table 6). When pets were identified as a barrier, they were generally one factor among others such as affordability, cost of moving, or education.

Among those who indicated that pets were a barrier to mobility, 90 per cent were currently pet owners. However, if all pet owners are considered, only 6 per cent thought they would be a barrier to moving to a new dwelling in the next 1–2 years.

Table 6: Perception of companion animal ownership as a barrier to residential mobility

	No	No, but I/we used to but had to re-home because I/we moved dwelling	No, I/we cannot have pets where I/ we currently live	Yes, including companion animals	Total
Total 'Do you have pets'	2,867	150	268	3,504	6,789
Pet included as a 'Barrier to moving'	14	2	6	209	231
% of those who think pets are a barrier to mobility	6	1	3	90	100

Source: Original analysis of Australian Housing Aspirations (2018) (AHA) Survey (Stone, Rowley, et al. 2020a).

4.2.1 Strategies of companion animal owners to become and remain housed

For some participants to the research, expectations about future mobility patterns and housing options with pets were based firmly in current or previous first-hand experience with the challenges of remaining or becoming housed with pets.

Literally everything that is advertised is no pets so unless you're prepared to give up your pets for housing, which we, my daughters and myself made the decision we weren't going to do that. We didn't know what we were going to do but we weren't going to give up the animals. At that point as well, we didn't have—it wasn't a matter of us saying—being offered rental accommodation and being knocked back because we had animals. There was nothing. We couldn't find anything that we could afford. (Male, private rental)

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)

Pets had a larger impact on the selection of their owners' current dwelling for 74 per cent of pet owners who considered them a barrier to mobility. One tenant explained that despite the pets having their own CV, 'I feel like because I have so many pets it's not really working in my favour' (Female, private rental). The CV includes details on:

[B]oth my cats and both my dogs and their microchip numbers and their desexing certificates and a little photo and a little background. My dog lived with me when I did a working job so he has a reference that I have as well, and that doesn't seem to do anything" ... I haven't [hidden the fact that I have pets] before, but I haven't got a house so... I feel like it might be easier if I just pretended that I didn't have them. (Female, Vic, private renter)

Owners also thought their pets would reduce the options available to them when moving dwellings (89%). These households were looking for separate dwellings, with two to three bedrooms, in a large regional city or town, or alternatively in the middle/outer or inner suburbs of a capital city. Among those with pets who felt that the pets were a barrier to their housing, there remained a preference for home ownership.

Interviews with private rental tenants illustrate that in some cases households employ a range of strategies and tactics to remain or become housed with their companion animals. In some cases, interviewees described their tactics to remain housed with their pets in their current housing. This included minimising the stated extent of pet ownership to avoid pet relinquishment or greater challenges finding affordable, accessible housing.

To us they're family. I know they're only dogs to some people but to us they're family and they went through that with us. So, just to say, 'Well no, you got to go,' we couldn't do it. And as it stands, when I moved into this place, I told them I only had one dog. And the lady who rents the other side, she did the same. She told them she only has one dog and she has two too. We both lied. (Female, private renter)

Scrutiny of rental properties including pet ownership was mentioned in several cases in the interviews and focus groups and could lead to further tactics to avoid full disclosure of pet ownership and subsequent potential eviction. As the following private rental tenant explains in relation to repeat visits from a landlord:

They came over and they said, 'Where's the big dog?' And I went, 'The big dog?' I said, 'That's my mother's dog. It only comes here to visit.' And they kind of know there's two dogs here. I think they're pretty relaxed. (Male, private rental)

Tenants had learned from experience that the act of being a 'good tenant' could also improve their overall chance of being allowed to live with pets, in a small number of cases. In the following case, a tenant who suspected a landlord wished to sell the house quickly adopted the role of 'good tenant' to prolong his living arrangements and remain housed while living with a pet:

So they might be happy to keep a good tenant. (Male, private rental)

The new landlords were renting to us with a cat, then when they put the rent up by \$100 a week. I spoke to the real estate agent who went, yes, we know you're good and we know you've been good with the cat, and moved us to another place, or helped us find a place that let us have the cat, and then we bought this one. But for the years beforehand we would not have had any pets whatsoever. (Female, home purchase, formerly private rental)

In some situations, being a 'good tenant' can also mean being subjected to illegal or unusually stringent forms of rental control when it comes to private rental tenancies. In the case of the following interviewee, requests for additional payments due to pet ownership were not able to be readily refused in the context of a tight housing market with limited vacancies.

Well, the landlord knew about it. I'm always honest and I let them know. I know now that they're not supposed to discriminate against pets. But I understand the concern and there is a pet rental or something or pet fee that a lot of the real estates are charging. I know that when I was applying for one of the properties, they said, 'Would you be happy to pay,' I think it was an extra \$50 or \$60 a week or something, 'to cover your pets?' And I said, 'Yes sure, I'm thinking about it'. But I'm thinking: well, they're going to up the rent because I've got a dog. (Female, home purchase, formerly private rental)

4.2.2 Housing outcomes of companion animal owners who think that pets will be a barrier to future mobility

The cohort who had pets and felt that they would be a barrier to mobility were generally younger households with 43 per cent aged below 34 years and only 20 per cent aged 55 years and over. The remainder were in mid-life aged 35–54 years (36%). These households were mainly living in the middle/outer (38%) or inner (20%) suburbs of a capital city. Few were in the CBD (11%) and the remaining third were outside the metropolitan region. These households were likely to be couples (35%) or single persons (32%) without children. This cohort is more likely to have a long-term ongoing physical (37%) or mental (31%) health condition or disability than the broader population.

Almost half of those respondents that considered pets to be a barrier to mobility were living in three (47%) or four-bedroom (23%) houses. Only 13 per cent of these households were living in an apartment. Indicating a reasonably mobile cohort, almost half of these households had lived in their current home for three or less years (48%). Moreover, in the next 1–2 years a similar proportion would like to move to a different dwelling in the same area (45%) or remain within a 10 kilometre radius of their current home (28%). No respondents with pets that indicated them to be a barrier to mobility would like to remain in their current dwelling in the short term. The primary reason to move was to access better employment opportunities (16%); followed by a desire to live in a better location (13%); live in better-quality dwellings (11%); or purchase a dwelling (12%).

There are minimal differences in housing preferences of pet owners who think their companion animal ownership will restrict future residential mobility and those who did not indicate that pets are a barrier to their mobility (Appendix 3). Slightly more of those who felt their pets might be a barrier to them moving house ideally wanted to live in the CBD of a capital city or in an apartment or semi-detached dwelling. Fewer of this cohort ideally wanted to live in large four-bedroom dwellings, while there was a greater preference for two-bedroom homes compared to those that felt having pets would be a barrier to mobility. The preference for home ownership continued to be the dominant preferred tenure, although this was to a lesser extent for those indicating that pets would be a barrier to their mobility. Again, the profile of pet owning households should be considered, as many are younger or in mid-life facing experiences or life values that sway their preferences towards these ideal housing outcomes.

4.2.3 Resident perceptions of policy and legislative changes in relation to living with companion animals

In several cases, interviewees explicitly mentioned their views about housing policy changes they were aware of or thought ought to happen in relation to housing and pets. The views of the lower income participants included in the study focused on removal of discrimination for households living with pets, affordability pressures and enhanced policy responses to this, as well as access to secure housing, either private or supported, for households that included pets. In some cases, participants expressed their views about pets in the same terms as they did about children and other family members—particularly in relation to the reduction of housing discrimination and affordability pressures.

So, we have two dogs. So, we had the dogs there as well and having pets always made it just that much harder to get a rental. So, I'm a big advocate for the rules changing around rental accommodation and pet ownership. (Male, private rental)

Policy changes to make it easier for people to live with their pets were outlined in detail in a handful of cases in which there was an expressed recognition of the risk to landlords and an attempt to mitigate such risks via changes to housing legislation and practice, potentially including an increased bond or 'some sort of guarantee'. In the following instance, the interviewee outlined how such changes may make homes more secure overall, including for pets:

I often ask myself what would make it easier for people and look, I understand that there are bad tenants out there and I understand that property owners and investors have to have protections as well, but I kind of feel that it's kind of all stacked their way. Even now, it can't rest. They could put this property on the market at any moment. They could just for whatever reason say, 'We want you to leave.' There is no guarantee if you're renting apart from a lease but even then, if you have a lease, as long as they give you 90 days' notice or whatever it is, they can have you out. There's no stability. I think that's what is difficult. Once again, the laws around pets I'd like to see changed and whether that involves paying an extra bond or some sort of guarantee. I don't know. But people shouldn't have to get rid of their animals. (Male, private rental)

However, support for pet ownership also relates to various forms of housing assistance and supported living. Pets are identified in this research as being related to the experience of risk of homelessness or actual homelessness. In these cases, the potential role that well-targeted forms of housing assistance can play in enabling households to remain housed is identified as highly significant for current and future housing pathways, as well as for overall wellbeing. In the following case, a household that sought support from a homelessness service was assisted to become housed in a headleased private rental tenancy, in which pet ownership was possible:

We were in accommodation. And then when we accepted this place, it's one thing I asked the real estate, 'Can I please bring my dog?' And they went away, spoke to the landlord and the landlord came back and said, 'Yes.' So, we were all crying our eyes out, because we were reunited. We'd been separated for two weeks...So, that's another issue a lot of people have is with the pets. (Female, private rental)

4.3 Policy development implications: toward housing security and supported pathways with companion animals

To a significant degree, the resident experiences examined here align with the policy analysis in Chapter 3. Findings show restrictions on companion animal ownership are unevenly distributed across housing tenures as well as dwelling types—and are most likely to be experienced by households residing in private rental housing and/or small and high-density housing.

Companion animal ownership is implicated in the housing pathways of owners in complex ways in regard to residential mobility, acting simultaneously as a driver of potential housing precarity and heightened mobility for some households, while for others potentially restricting desired future mobility.

The analysis is also consistent with the literature described in Chapters 1 and 2 that indicate companion animals play a role in the lives of households that is more akin to family membership than that of property. The uneven restrictions and burden of potential relinquishment, therefore, is also found in these data to be borne primarily by those without secure housing in the form of ownership or social housing, as well as by low to very low-income households.

Insights from quantitative data indicate that housing pathways with companion animals are more fraught for households living in renting tenures—particularly privately rented dwellings—rather than ownership tenures. This is confirmed in qualitative data. Here, insights additionally point to the significant challenges associated with tenure and dwelling transition points. Further, such challenges are unequally felt by lower and very low-income households as well as those with physical and mental health conditions. While indicative only, these findings point to significant housing management issues and avenues that warrant further investigation.

5. Policy development options: securing housing, home and housing assistance pathways with companion animals

The analysis of housing and housing assistance pathways with companion animals undertaken in this research highlights previously evidenced complexities and inequalities within and between sectors of the contemporary Australian housing system as well as illuminating challenges faced by residents. It also brings to the fore the challenges facing housing organisations and industries, planners, designers and local governments, as well as the legislative realms that govern these, in regard to companion animals and housing. The analysis also indirectly highlights the risk points in housing pathways at which companion animal relinquishment increases and the additional burden that this places on households, animals and animal welfare authorities and agencies.

This research represents the first wide-ranging, multi-tenure housing and companion animal study of its type. To undertake this research, we have:

- identified transformative cultural, housing, and urban practices that influence how households, policy makers and legislators understand the human-animal relationship in contemporary Australia
- established that highly variable definitions of companion animals exist in current state and territory legislation that influence housing and housing pathways with companion animals
- created an original 'housing pathways with companion animals' approach, including identification of an analytic framework for undertaking our analysis
- outlined a housing continuum in which we examine policy development in the context of companion animal regulation in housing contexts
- drawn on existing evidence to identify the risks, costs, benefits and opportunities that are likely to influence companion animal permissive or averse policy and practice, and how these might apply to the present research
- undertaken a housing system-wide analysis of housing and housing assistance pathways within Victoria, NSW, SA, WA and the ACT
- presented an original analysis of resident experiences of housing pathways with companion animals, and
- considered how the various issues we have identified in this research have manifested in intensified ways as well as new ways in the COVID-19 pandemic context.

The following question has been addressed:

What are the implications of differential companion animal policies and practices across housing tenures and sectors, including for residents, private landlords, housing organisations and governments?

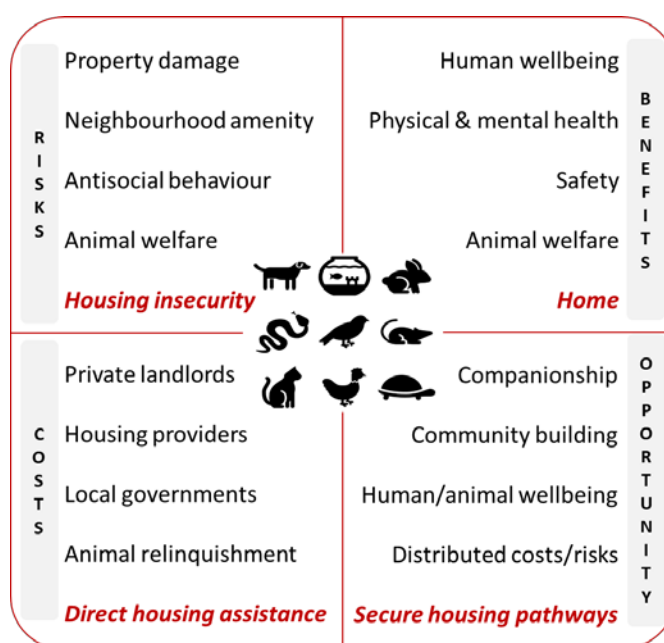
In this section we draw the findings of the research together using the framework underpinning the analysis: *risks, costs, benefits and opportunities*. In the above chapters, particularly in Chapter 3, we used these concepts to examine companion animal ownership in private housing (ownership, private rental sector), public housing (public, community, SOMIH), homelessness, crisis and emergency housing, and select non-private (other) dwellings (retirement villages and residential parks/caravan parks). This chapter considers the commonalities and divergences for housing pathways and housing assistance pathways with companion animals across these various living arrangements—concluding with a focus upon opportunities and future directions.

5.1 Understanding risks, costs, benefits and opportunities in relation to housing pathways with companion animals

Chapter 2 presented evidence about the perceived and actual risks, costs, benefits and opportunities associated with housing and companion animals in existing evidence and developed an approach for applying these to the analysis of policy settings and resident experiences in the present study. These were explored in Chapter 3 in relation to policy settings and legislation and in Chapter 4 in resident experiences.

These are summarised below and briefly recapped here in relation to policy development and innovation opportunities.

Figure 8: Housing and housing assistance pathways with companion animals risks, costs, benefits and opportunity summary



Source: Authors.

- **Risks:** Within housing supply, and housing and housing asset management focus, risks focus on potential property damage. Neighbourhood impacts that can detract from urban amenity including antisocial behaviours, animal toiletry and aggressive animals in urban contexts form part of the risk focus at neighbourhood levels. Risks are also posed to companion animals who may be relinquished or become used in violent housing contexts such as in the case of family violence.

For housing occupancy and pathways, risks include challenges accessing affordable, appropriate, safe, secure housing; maintaining housing; and transitioning smoothly and safely between dwelling and housing tenure contexts.

- **Costs:** The costs associated with housing and companion animal pathways tend to directly mirror the risks and the burden or distribution of costs associated with actualised risks. Hence, there is a focus upon who bears the financial cost of property reparation and how any neighbourhood damage can be paid for or pre-emptively mitigated by neighbourhood design that additionally has associated costs. There is also concern about the financial impact of neighbourhood costs associated with companion animals in local shared spaces. All of these cost issues shape the policy making, legislating and practice in local areas and within housing management contexts.

For housing occupancy and pathways, costs are borne primarily by households that may go without appropriate housing, become homeless or live with risk of homelessness. Housing and crisis assistance for these households may increase. The welfare costs associated with pet relinquishment are borne by networks of volunteers and funded agencies with a mix of public and donated funds.

- **Benefits:** The benefits of companion animal ownership within private households has not formed the primary focus of this research. Existing evidence indicates benefits include health, wellbeing, community and longevity impacts for both humans and neighbourhoods.

Additional to this, *housing and homelessness research* suggests that animals play a highly significant role in the safety and companionship of those experiencing homelessness, particularly rough sleepers. Consistent with this is the importance of providing safe alternative homes that include options for companion animal care.

That's right, and in our work with Women's Safety Services I have personally met women who returned to violent homes because they couldn't take their pet with them and, you know the DV workers were well aware of this happening...you know and it's an absolutely heartbreaking story when these pets are absolutely part of the family, they help children adjust to change and they're great for all sorts of reasons and that the idea that the victims of domestic violence are returning to violence because they can't find an affordable, suitable home and/or they can't take their pet, is just horrific and we've got to do something about it. (Dr Alice Clark, Shelter SA)

- **Opportunities:** In a similar way to risks and costs, to some degree the opportunities associated with housing and companion animal ownership identified in this research mirror the benefits. However, we also suggest that opportunities and innovations associated with these play an equally important role in how we conceptualise and respond to risks and costs in policy development, legislation and in the practices associated with housing provision, management, assistance and occupancy.

Specifically, our research indicates that there is a foundational fusion of *property rights* with *human rights* and *animal welfare rights* that shapes the ways that *some—not all*—households living with companion animals can become and remain housed and how they are able to transition between dwellings and tenures in their housing pathways. Furthermore, this fusion acts to minimise the potential scaling up of *benefits* associated with companion animal ownership. Problematically, it also acts as a barrier to progressive use of currently available mechanisms and levers that could fruitfully reduce risks and better distribute costs associated with housing and housing pathways with companion animals.

Opportunities for progressive reform away from high barrier companion animal-averse housing settings and practices are likely to increase benefits of companion animal 'living'. They are also likely to provide increased avenues for the better use of existing settings and the development of new settings towards risk and cost reduction and distribution.

Broader institutional housing reform opportunities, such as rent fair enactments, are additionally likely to achieve opportunity for progressive companion animal policy and practice as well as enhanced outcomes for households generally.

5.2 De-risking and distributing the costs associated with housing and housing assistance with companion animals

To a large degree perceived risks associated with housing of households with companion animals introduces barriers to entry and transition points in housing pathways. Risk perception is potentially the most entrenched problem facing households wishing to be housed with companion animals who do not own their own home. This is most apparent in privately rented housing where high barrier, companion animal averse settings remain in place in several Australian jurisdictions and where recent reform in some jurisdictions has not yet had the time needed to influence cultural change nor the full range of ancillary settings in place to support this (such as increased use of private insurances).

Similarly, risk-averse practices introduce barriers within some discretionary contexts including all social housing settings as well as many retirement villages and residential parks. Where crisis, emergency and homelessness services use any of the high barrier or highly discretionary settings, these same barriers and challenges manifest, and act to block the potential rehousing or safe housing of homeless persons and their companion animals.

Risk averse housing settings put animal welfare as well as human housing pathways at considerable risk, both in mainstream as well as crisis and specialist homelessness service settings.

It [housing-related relinquishment] is a very significant issue for us because it puts a lot of pressure on our resources. The RSPCA national data shows that between 15 and 30 per cent of surrenders to our shelters actually are from owners who couldn't keep their pets with them when moving into a new [rental] property. And I also have some data regarding the numbers of animals that we accepted to our Lonsdale shelter in the last financial year—it was 259 animals surrendered to our shelter because people just couldn't take them with them to new homes. (RSPCA SA Safe Kennels program)

Well, the other thing they can't get is temporary accommodation. So, they can't even start getting that first step into anything off the street. It's not just the hostel; it's also—and even most of the temporary accommodation, a lot of it's not ideal premises, but most motels will not allow a dog on the premises. (Homelessness NSW)

That's right. I just wanted to add regarding domestic violence as well that obviously like I said, we've seen some positive changes with emergency housing so they are online, but unfortunately they're just temporary. So I guess the reason I'm interested in private rentals as well with this particular project is that those people need places to go to, so what good does it do if they can keep their pets with them for three months/six months when they have to move on and be able to find private rentals. It's already hard because I guess people being in domestic violence are already discriminated against within the rental industry. Obviously everyone wants to have a tenant with a history of high income, apparent employment and all that. So when they have pets that just puts them at a further disadvantage in that context. (RSPCA SA Safe Kennels program)

Recent policy debate that seeks to manage perceived risks has come to the fore in relation to tenancy reforms within the private rental sector. In some jurisdictions there has been a suggestion that tenancy reforms could introduce an additional 'pet bond', payable by tenants prior to entry into a property or at the time of starting new companion animal ownership. This is a highly contested area of reform as it is argued, on one hand, that pet bonds paid by tenants can act as an enabler of private rental pathways, however, on the other hand, that additional financial burden placed on tenants is unfair given other potential risk distribution and reduction mechanisms in the context of tenants' rights. One of the problems identified with such bonds is that households who bear the existing costs of housing transitions and potential homelessness or homelessness risk, in some cases, are the actors bearing additional upfront housing costs in such a model.

And also, a profound misunderstanding of moving into a place where you've got to find the rent in advance, the bond, buy some new things, move the stuff, get connections on. It's actually a super expensive time. To just layer on a pet bond as if that's nothing is incredibly silly. (Commissioner for Residential Tenancies (Victoria))

Despite the contestation related to pet bonds, the debate usefully draws attention to the potential use of *new* as well as *existing mechanisms* and regulatory levers to manage perceived and actual costs. Existing mechanisms that have attracted less publicity include greater use of the range of financial and legal intermediaries already available to housing providers, including for landlords (of any type). These include:

- enhanced use of existing insurance industry organisations for property investment insurance as a mandatory form of coverage for small and large-scale investors in privately-rented dwellings (or other residential models)

- growing the Australian build-to-rent sector to increase the range of institutional investor actors in Australian property that are already well-placed to absorb costs from any given property across a larger and long-term portfolio of properties
- financiers and bankers lending in ways that includes explicit 'ability to pay for and manage' insurances associated with any actualised property damage related to companion animal ownership by occupants within investment properties
- reframing and education for would-be investors that as they invest in the PRS they are entering a relational arrangement in which they are a housing provider (including to households with pets)
- more broadly for all households and housing providers (private, public or non-private (other)), there are opportunities for reliance on existing urban legislation re antisocial behaviours, neighbourhood amenity, etc., and applied to all households equally within local areas, and
- greater recognition of the changing nature of pet relations in high and medium-density areas and an associated cultural shift in the way that open spaces are designed and managed to reduce risks and costs to amenity.

This final point includes within strata title arrangements, in which shared property can be restricted for pets under some current high barrier settings. New residential tenancy laws in some jurisdictions are likely to address the law, even if not the practice, of such barriers for occupants.

Just a clarification about the strata. So, as you know or as you probably know, in Victoria, the law is pretty clear that no owners corporation can make a blanket rule that you can't have pets in your property and at some point in time, I suspect owners corporations that are now saying things like, 'Well, the pet is not allowed to touch the common property,' will be told that they can't do that either.

It's like making a rule that a person is not allowed to walk across the common property and of course, you can't do that, so I suspect at some point, they'll be told that as well. I think it's interesting that that has created a much stronger sense for owners at least, even in flats, that you're entitled to have a pet. So, no owner in an owner's corporation has to go through and tell the owners corporation, 'Here's my six chickens,' or whatever the case may be, it's just a given that they're entitled to have a pet. (Deputy Commissioner for Residential Tenancies (Victoria))

5.3 Optimising benefits for housing and housing pathways with companion animals

Attending to the risks and costs associated with housing and housing pathways with companion animals in a way that levels out the associated rights, responsibilities and potential costs involved across the range of government, agency, industry and private actors involved in housing provision and occupancy will provide the opportunity for scaling up the potential benefits of companion animal ownership in housing and residential contexts. While not the direct focus of the present research, the specific benefits of such reforms include institutional and cultural changes toward more secure housing pathways for households with pets.

Such reforms additionally provide more equitable opportunity for households living across housing tenures and dwelling forms to enjoy companion ownership benefits including: increased health and wellbeing; greater links between home and greenspace (depending on species of companion animal); as well as the opportunity to improve community cohesion. Urban design opportunities become more possible in areas that currently do not cater well for pet owners, including in vertical living and inner city and higher density contexts.

Benefits for animals are the likelihood of reduced rates of animal relinquishment and potential for more secure housing options through life.

Q: If you're able to describe how significant or how much are animals or pets considered in the kind of work or the policy realm that you work in, just to start off?

A: Look it's—I think it is one of the important initiatives for us when we're looking at delivering our social housing in particular ... our tenants are some of the most vulnerable members of our community. So we really recognise that our applicants and tenants are dependent on companion animals or pets rather than physical wellbeing and companionship. So we have a one pets policy which guides us through those processes in supporting our public housing applicants and tenants who have companion animals.

And so under that policy we don't require tenants to seek approval from Housing ACT to keep pets or animals. However, tenants are [inaudible] for any other kinds of registrations or licences they may have in relation to their pets. And one of the things I think highlights that importance in terms of our service delivery to our tenants and having a look at companion animals, we've actually recently revised our property allocation policy to take into account the full circumstances including pets at the time of allocation of the property.

So, we want to make sure that the property we're allocating is not a one-bedroom flat on the top floor where the family has a large dog. So, we really recognise the needs of the family including their pets and companion animals so that's sort of our—largely our—how much significance we place on companion animals and pets. (ACT Housing)

Well, we know there's a whole lot of benefits of people having pets. There's a whole lot of health benefits and social benefits. And you're right, there's lots of benefits then for the community, because a happy tenant is a good tenant. A tenant who actually is pleased with their place and likes staying there and feels welcome is a better tenant. (Homelessness NSW)

Pet ownership and management can additionally provide inroads and opportunities for development of life skills and for supported tenants or homelessness services clients to be supported to develop their own appropriate companion animal management plans and pathways, as part of an overall capability development strategy.

I think there probably needs to be some policy work or some thinking as a provider around, rather than just having it as a pets policy, but as a type of pet. As we talked about earlier, there's a huge difference between having a budgerigar or a canary in a cage, to having a St Bernard. Again, so it's not a one-sized policy, actually to say, 'Well, we want to work with tenants,' and if they want to have a pet, encourage them to have a pet, work with them, but a pet that's appropriate for what they can afford, because again, we know many people in social housing, despite the \$750 one-off payment, that cannot go a long way. But they're not well off, and so a pet that's appropriate to people's financial needs, and a pet that's appropriate to their housing requirements. (Homelessness NSW)

5.4 Innovation: reframing for opportunity

To some degree the regulatory reform that has occurred in some Australian jurisdictions in recent years toward more permissive companion animal living arrangements reflects changing societal norms about the place of non-human animals in our lives. In the ACT, for example, legislative reforms that see animals recognised as sentient beings reflect this general trend toward government recognition of housing pathways with animals as forming a significant aspect of the way Australian households live. Such regulatory reform represents a substantial reframing of the way companion animals may be included in housing reform in future, across multiple jurisdictions, tenures and sectors.

Q: I'm conscious that in the ACT you've also had just a broader law around recognition of sentient beings—so animals are sentient beings. Did that play into the property change? Or the residential—the housing strategy change at all? Or did you see that as—is that a quite separate sort of arm of legal change around a similar time?

A: Yes it wasn't necessarily part of that conversation. But I think it's just really reflective of the ACT government's view of the importance of, you know, companion animals. And pets in the community. It really helps with that community cohesion and connection and emotional support. So I think that it was just—not necessarily connected—happened separately. But just a recognition of how the ACT government views pets in its policies basically. (ACT Housing)

Recognition of the ways in which rights associated with property, usual freedoms enjoyed by individuals and households, animal welfare and management settings blur together in law, policy and practice is a first and foundational step toward optimising opportunities for more coherent, transparent, equitable and manageable housing and housing pathways for households with companion animals.

To a large degree, the range of housing management policies related to housing with companion animals duplicate and/or add complexity and layering to existing policy settings and legislation that is in operation. Examples of this are numerous in the provision and management of housing assistance such as in public, community and SOMIH housing, where these duplicative applications often lead to highly discretionary local and contextualised practices, for example.

There is one important thing though. The thing to remember is tenants are already subject to requirements about damage to the property. They already pay a bond for the purpose of damage and the landlord is entitled to claim compensation for any damage that goes over and above that, so it's not like it's a frontier zone where there's no requirements on the tenant, so the idea that tenants would just have pets and let them go crazy is deeply misguided and that there was no protection for the landlord was just wrong. Having said that, it hasn't stopped the industry organisations still running around saying that there should be an extra bond. (Deputy Commissioner for Residential Tenancies (Victoria))

For households living in private dwellings, the conflation of these various rights and laws leads to the problematical differential treatment of private renter households living with companion animals relative to home owning or purchasing households living with companion animals. These act to additionally disadvantage households living in other high barrier or discretionary housing settings due to the influence of practice and use of shared dwellings—such as, for example, the headleasing of private rental dwellings by a homelessness services organisation for short or longer term accommodation.

Innovative responses to offset these inequalities and discretionary practices exist, but 'hard' barriers are emerging in response.

So, St Johns Youth Service, they've got a program called 'Keeping My Place' and so what we've done with the youth services, we've sort of said, like as soon as you get, like a youth sort of signed on to the 'Keeping My Place', or whatever, or as soon as one of your youth clients buys a new puppy or a new kitten or anything like that or whatever, they refer them straight to us. Generally we will work with them for about 12 months and so then what we will do is, like with these youth homes, we will help them get their animals like de-sexed, vaccinated, micro-chipped and we do it on a discount, like we get discount prices and then we put them on a low-payment plan because we like to make them responsible because it helps them be proud and knowing that they have done this or whatever and we help them get access to like puppy training and we've got volunteers, like behaviourists and things like that if we need more intensive-type stuff. But yeah, generally we help them be responsible pet owners so that's like I suppose, because they're youth, most of these youth clients have either come out of the system or sometimes they've come out of DV situations or whatever, so they've come from trauma but us sort of educating, getting in there and educating them about pets and things like that and whatever, it's sort of setting them up for success... (Safe Pets, Safe Families (SA))

...We do visits as well, so when their pets are in foster care, we do weekly visits—not with cats though, only with dogs because cats are too hard to do that with, but we do even videos and things like that. So we keep them connected, like we keep them emotionally connected to their animals; yes, and I think that's a huge part of it. (Safe Pets, Safe Families (SA))

This guy was so vulnerable, like mental, like he had a mental illness, like he had his dog and he couldn't—so there were so many barriers to him accessing services. Like he can't just walk into Housing SA because then he's got his dog; he can't just walk into a homeless organisation because he's got his dog—like there's so many things and then obviously sort of getting around and stuff. So it took, yeah, it took a lot of sort of intensive case management from us to help him get into housing and we won't sort of stop there, we'll help him like, we'll still support a bit longer-term once he's in that housing. (Safe Pets, Safe Families (SA))

I am aware Women's Safety Services are doing a lot of work to make their Domestic Violence shelters pet-friendly, so they're talking to the RSPCA about how do we, you know, what rules do we need if there are pets here. So that's great. They have actually raised with Shelter SA that when they can get people out of the Shelter into some sort of housing, often it's housing where you can't take a pet. So, you know, they are creating a way for people to stay with their pets and then if they are going into transitional housing often there's a no-pet rule and then if they can get something more stable after that, there may or may not be a pet rule—so they can have their dog, they can't have their dog, they can, they can't...I guess at the end-point, which you hope is stable housing, you can have your pet back. If that housing outcome was private rental, obviously—so few private rentals are pet-friendly or landlords, you know, want dogs, that can be the case of not having your pet again. So it's really very haphazard out there. (Shelter SA)

The de-coupling of property rights from human occupancy rights and animal welfare rights in policy and practice paves the way for an opening of opportunities and innovation in the way households are enabled to live with companion animals across dwellings, tenures and urban precincts and regions.

In the state of Victoria, in which tenancy laws have recently been reformed toward more companion animal progressive settings, challenges remain. As outlined by the Renting Commissioner and Deputy Commissioner, these changes do not in and of themselves reform practice. Further, to some degree they remain flawed as they impose additional (conflated) laws and restrictions on some households but not others.

A1: Why does the landlord need to know? Let's seriously think about why they need to know. If I've got an owners corp overlay and there can be some pretty zany rules in owners corps that aren't quite right but as the landlord, I should give you a copy of those rules and you can have a read through that and decide whether that means you can or can't have the pet but you should have that disclosed before you've decided whether you apply for the property.

You should go to whichever the local government area is and work out how many roosters you can have or whatever it is but apart from that, I really can't quite see why the owner needs to know and any damage is dealt with in the condition report process all over and over, isn't it?

A2: Yes, exactly. If you're breaching the council by-laws, the council will come and deal with you as they should.

A1: I think that by continuing this notification strike application process, it continues this messaging that, 'I'm a landlord, I get to know about this, I get to have an opinion about this,' so I think you should go all the way and just not treat it as an issue and if there's damage for whatever reason, it might've been a golf putting practice and made a hole in the carpet and one of my daughters was very keen on straightening her hair at one stage and there were little burn marks all over the carpet, all sorts of reasons that there's damage.

Q1: So, in your opinion, there's a conflation of animal rights, probably ownership of animals and renting, tenancy, housing?

A1: Yeah. It's an unnecessary, mistaken conflation.

A2: I think that is primarily symptomatic of renters being considered second-class citizens. (Commissioner for Residential Tenancies (Victoria) (A1) and Deputy Commissioner for Residential Tenancies (Victoria) (A2))

Extending current reforms to all sectors is an important plank in the secure pathways for lowest income households and some of those households most at risk of homelessness.

A1: It [Victorian reforms] doesn't extend to rooming houses, so you can't have a cat or a bird or a small dog or anything in a rooming house which is a shame because that's often where a single person is who's got a special other and can get a lot of benefit from the companionship and the pleasure of having a pet. ... Well, they just need to extend the pet provision to rooming houses.

A2: And again, it's just a classic example of judgement about the residents and people always use extreme examples in this. Quite often, you're talking about someone who's got a small companion animal, quite often a small dog. Even if it was not a small dog, even if it was a medium-sized dog, so what? They keep it in their room.

You've got to have rules about if it's dangerous to other people, you've got to keep it under control, but all rules that are sensible for all pet owners but somehow, it's viewed as highly problematic that a rooming house resident would have a pet, irrespective of all the benefits that pets might bring to the resident. (Commissioner for Residential Tenancies (Victoria) (A1) and Deputy Commissioner for Residential Tenancies (Victoria) (A2))

In addition to the specific reforms associated with companion animals and housing arrangements, more general reforms geared to equalise the property rights of owners and renters are likely to reinforce the equity elements of current companion animal reforms associated with these. Most notably, enabling private rental tenants' rights to occupancy that are like those that owners enjoy in regard to pets are significant potential and currently active changes underway to varying degrees across state and territory jurisdictions.

So, if my neighbours are horrible to their pets, there's nothing I can do about that if they own their own home, but if you're a tenant I should be able to charge you more money, some people would say I should be able to evict you if you're horrible to your pet, all kinds of things like that, because you're a tenant. You're entitled to less because you're a tenant which basically means ... really, tenants are not very trustworthy. The risk here is that they won't look after their pets and they'll just let their pets damage the house because it's not their house. So, there's a lot of this that goes back to a very basic mindset around renters, a not very nice mindset about renters. (Deputy Commissioner for Residential Tenancies (Victoria))

The research undertaken within this study has focused on housing regulation and operations, but it also draws attention to the intersection of these settings with urban governance. Findings indicate increased attention needs to be paid to the neighbourhood and precincts in which housing with companion animals is located in cities and regions of the future.

Creating the urban precincts and regional community spaces that act to reduce risks and costs and optimise widespread benefits of pet ownership is an area that is additionally in need of rapid policy catch up with the new reality of housing opportunity that many Australians now face. Increasingly, high density, vertical neighbourhoods that include opportunity for green spaces, shared animal-friendly areas and the amenity required to remain housed in healthy ways in apartment and townhouse living are needed. Innovation for households that include companion animals within such building and precinct designs are increasingly needed, not only in inner city areas but also in precinct in-fill development areas that are likely to attract a diverse range of household types—both with and without companion animals.

While social housing also includes medium and high density living, innovative ways to include supported housing in high density contexts is increasingly required for vibrant, animal-friendly buildings and neighbourhoods that are inclusive.

Whenever there's new accommodation built, or quite often the new accommodation that's built is more high-density, so there's a lot of unit-style accommodation trying to house as many people as possible, which is completely valid, because there's a definite shortage of housing, and the more people you can assist the better. But most of these new accommodation styles don't have any outside space, so it just rules out that opportunity for a lot of people. There's not a lot of new accommodation that gets built that would accommodate for that. And I can understand why, because when they have a space to build accommodation on and they say, 'We can house six people, or we can house 20,' you can sort of understand where the choice has gone. But it doesn't necessarily reflect the needs of the people on the waiting list.

Or the other thing is, that if there are ground floor units that do have courtyards or outdoor spaces, they're normally disability adapted, which means we definitely prioritise clients who are in wheelchairs or have physical disabilities, and not people with pets. There's two main client groups that would be vying for those same accommodation spaces that are very limited. (Client Service Officer, Access, Wentworth Community Housing (NSW))

5.5 Housing companion animals in COVID-19 context: from crisis to innovation

The COVID-19 global pandemic developed while undertaking this research project. Consequently, data collection and report production were affected by the crisis, most significantly through obtaining fewer key informant interviews than planned. However, the issues highlighted in this report have not been reduced due to COVID-19. Rather, the illness itself, as well as widespread stress, sudden unemployment, income loss and increased time confined to the home have impacted people in relation to housing, pets and the intersection between them. Unemployment and income loss have resulted in increased housing insecurity, with widely-publicised stories of tenants no longer able to pay rent and threatened with eviction (Booker, Millar et al. 2020; Henriques-Gomes, Butler et al. 2020). On 29 March 2020, the Australian Government announced a six-month moratorium on evictions (Morrison 2020), and most states and territories eventually enacted this (AHURI 2020) after some uncertainty (see, e.g. Tenants' Union of NSW 2020a; Tenancy WA 2020). In the homelessness and crisis sectors, there have been innovative moves by the South Australian and Western Australian Governments to use empty hotels to house rough sleepers (Siebert 2020; Raphael 2020).

The importance of pets for people's wellbeing during the COVID-19 crisis has been highlighted by significant increases in adopting and fostering pets across Australia (Shine 2020; Lyons 2020). However, animal welfare groups have expressed concern that there will be a wave of pet surrenders after the pandemic when people no longer work from home (Lyons 2020), or that existing pet owners will surrender their pets during the pandemic due to income loss (Shine 2020).

Last week, the State Government announced it would pay to put rough sleepers up in hotels and motels as a measure to protect them from COVID-19, and minimise the spread of coronavirus.

Since then, the Government has placed 223 people experiencing homelessness into emergency accommodation in motels across inner metropolitan Adelaide, with food to be delivered by the Hutt Street Centre and Baptist Care SA.

Shelter SA director Dr Alice Clarke said that in normal circumstances, demand for crisis accommodation often overwhelms supply, and the hotels and motels policy was filling an important need.

'Coronavirus hotels policy shows governments can tackle street homelessness immediately, advocates say', ABC News, 2 April 2020.

Cat Haven chief executive Roz Robinson said while the jump in foster applications was a positive result of more people working from home during the pandemic, the shelter was bracing for a huge influx of surrendered cats.

'We are concerned that people, through losing jobs, being stood down, will not be able to afford their cats and we are just bracing for the storm of the surrenders coming in,' she said.

'People might be let off jobs, they are casual workers, they don't know where their next pay cheque is coming from, and obviously they can't afford to feed themselves, let alone cats.'

'Coronavirus sees pet fostering surge, but cat and dog homes brace for rise in pets being surrendered', ABC News, 21 March 2020.

5.6 Policy implications summary

The findings of this research have implications for wide housing reform, urban change and transition as well as for discrete tenures and sectors across jurisdictions. We have examined barriers and points of friction in reform via a risk, costs, benefits and opportunities framework. This approach is helpful in illuminating how current and future changes to legislative settings, sector management and housing policy and practice can proceed in ways that do not unfairly burden any given party, while at the same time enabling Australian households to enjoy lifestyles with companion animals.

- **Risks:** Within housing supply, and housing and housing asset management focus, risks focus on potential property damage. Risks are also posed to companion animals, who may be relinquished or become used in violent housing contexts such as in the case of family violence. *For housing occupancy and pathways*, risks include challenges accessing affordable, appropriate, safe, secure housing; maintaining housing; and transitioning smoothly and safely between dwelling and housing tenure contexts.
- **Costs:** The costs associated with housing and companion animal pathways tend to directly mirror the risks and the burden or distribution of costs associated with actualised risks. *For housing occupancy and pathways*, costs are borne primarily by households who may go without appropriate housing or become homeless or live with risk of homelessness. Housing and crisis assistance for these households may increase. The welfare costs associated with pet relinquishment are borne by networks of volunteers and funded agencies with a mix of public and donated funds.
- **Benefits:** The benefits of companion animal ownership within private households has not formed the primary focus of this research. However, existing evidence indicates benefits include health, wellbeing, community and longevity impacts for humans and neighbourhoods.

- **Opportunities:** The opportunities associated with housing and companion animal ownership identified in this research mirrors benefits. Opportunities and innovations associated with these also play an equally important role in how we conceptualise and respond to risks and costs in policy development, legislation and in the practices associated with housing provision, management, assistance and occupancy.

Specifically, this research indicates that there is a foundational conflation of *property rights* with *human rights* and *animal welfare rights* shaping the way that *some—not all*—households living with companion animals can become and remain housed and able to transition between dwellings and tenures in their housing pathways. This acts to minimise the potential scaling up of *benefits* associated with companion animal ownership. Problematically, it also acts as a barrier to progressive use of currently available mechanisms and levers that could fruitfully reduce risks and better distribute costs associated with housing and housing pathways with companion animals.

5.7 Future directions

Recent reforms to tenancy legislation, animal rights legislation and practices of housing assistance organisations, including those responding directly to homelessness, are changing the ways in which companion animals can be housed in Australia.

Fundamentally, these changes amount to moves to equalise the access to benefits associated with companion animal ownership enjoyed by households with ‘full property rights’ of home ownership, to other housing tenures including the privately rented housing sector, homelessness services and to residential care settings. How these policy and legislative changes influence the cultural practices of a range of organisational actors and individuals associated with the provision, management and occupancy of housing for households with companion animals across and between dwelling types and tenure forms, is an important area for further and ongoing monitoring and evaluation.

Opportunities exist to learn from current policy development contexts and improve the roll-out of future policy developments in ways that make clear to households with companion animals (as well as to the multitude of stakeholders associated with the provision, management and development of their housing, housing assistance models and building and precincts) that such changes do not create new risks. Data monitoring, evaluation and practice observation are key requirements of fulfilling this opportunity.

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. The pace of change across those state and territory jurisdictions where companion animal housing and housing pathways have been explicitly supported is swift. These changes have occurred very recently, including during the time frame of this research. Understanding how these existing mechanisms—as well as new intermediaries and innovations—can be activated towards companion animal housing in ways that reduce and more equitably distribute risks and costs, and optimise benefits and opportunities, requires rapid research and policy attention to maintain and optimise the reform momentum.

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Appendix 1: Companion animal definitions by jurisdiction

COMMONWEALTH

Disability Discrimination Act 1992

assistance animal	<p>(2) For the purposes of this Act, an assistance animal is a dog or other animal:</p> <p>(a) accredited under a law of a State or Territory that provides for the accreditation of animals trained to assist a person with a disability to alleviate the effect of the disability; or (b) accredited by an animal training organisation prescribed by the regulations for the purposes of this paragraph; or (c) trained:</p> <p>(i) to assist a person with a disability to alleviate the effect of the disability; and</p> <p>(ii) to meet standards of hygiene and behaviour that are appropriate for an animal in a public place.</p> <p>Note: For exemptions from Part 2 for discrimination in relation to assistance animals, see section 54A.</p>
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NEW SOUTH WALES

Companion Animals Act 1998 No 87

companion animal	<p>means each of the following:</p> <p>(a) a dog, (b) a cat, (c) any other animal that is prescribed by the regulations as a companion animal.</p> <p>Note: The fact that an animal is not strictly a 'companion' does not prevent it being a companion animal for the purposes of this Act. All dogs are treated as companion animals, even working dogs on rural properties, guard dogs, police dogs and corrective services dogs.</p> <p>corrective services dog means a dog that is being used on official duty by a correctional officer (within the meaning of the Crimes (Administration of Sentences) Act 1999).</p> <p>Note: This Act contains special exemptions for corrective services dogs. Because this definition requires that the dog is being used on official duty by a correctional officer, the exemptions apply only when the dog is 'on duty'.</p>
assistance animal	<p>means an animal referred to in section 9 (Disability discrimination—guide dogs, hearing assistance dogs and trained animals) of the Disability Discrimination Act 1992 of the Commonwealth, but does not include a working dog.</p> <p>Note: That section refers to a guide dog, a dog trained to assist a person in activities where hearing is required and any other animal trained to assist a person to alleviate the effect of a disability.</p>

SOUTH AUSTRALIA

Dog and Cat Management Act 1995

	Definition of companion animal not stated—instead implied that only relates to dogs and cats through the <i>Dog and Cat Management Act 1995</i> .
cat	means an animal of the species <i>felis catus</i>
dog	means an animal of the species <i>canis familiaris</i> but does not include a dingo or cross of a dingo
assistance dog	means a dog trained and used for the purpose of assisting a person who is wholly or partially disabled and includes a dog undergoing training of a kind approved by the Board for the purposes of this definition
	No mention of assistance animal in <i>Disability Inclusion Act 2018</i> or <i>Disability Services Act 1993</i>

AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

Domestic Animals Act 2000

domestic animals	No definition, however; Parts 1 and 2 about dogs, Part 3 about cats and dogs, Part 4 about cats, Part 5 assistance animals. No definition for 'domestic animal' but implied that it is cats and dogs based on breakdown of the legislation
assistance animal	means an animal trained to help a person with a disability to alleviate the effect of the disability' (also in <i>Discrimination Act 1991</i>)

VICTORIA

Domestic Animal Act 1994

prescribed class of animal	means any of the following— (a) dogs; (b) cats; (c) horses; (d) a class of animal prescribed by the regulations
	Largely relates to dogs and cats

Disability Act 2006

	No mention of assistance animals
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WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Dog Act 1976

dog	No definition found
assistance dog	(1) In this section—assistance dog means a dog—(a) that is trained or is being trained by a representative of an organisation that is prescribed for the purposes of this definition; or (b) that is trained or is being trained by an individual having the qualifications and experience prescribed for the purposes of this definition; or (c) that is assessed by a person mentioned in paragraph (a) or (b) as being competent to be an assistance dog ; or (d) that is being assessed by a person mentioned in paragraph (a) or (b) to decide whether the dog is competent to be an assistance dog; or (e) that has been approved, for the purposes of a law of another State or a Territory, as a dog whose use can alleviate or manage an effect of a person's disability or medical condition; or (f) that is approved by the CEO for the purposes of this definition.

Cat Act 2011

cat	means an animal of the species <i>felis catus</i> or a hybrid of that species
	Disability Services Act 1993
	No mention of assistance animals

Animal Welfare Act 2002

animal	means (a) a live vertebrate; or (b) a live invertebrate of a prescribed kind, other than a human or a fish (as defined in the <i>Fish Resources Management Act 1994</i>)
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Source: Authors.

Appendix 2: Interviews with key informants

Interview matrix*

	ACT	NSW	SA	VIC	WA
Public housing (Govt-run and community housing)	Housing ACT	Caseworker, Adult Homelessness & Client Service Officer, Access, at Wentworth Community Housing			
Private housing (renting, strata, caravan parks, boarding houses)			ShelterSA	Commissioner for Residential Tenancies Deputy Commissioner for Residential Tenancies	
Crisis or homelessness accommodation		Homelessness NSW	Safe Pets, Safe Families (SA) Boardinghouse		
Retirement homes			Rental support officer, older persons housing provider (SA)		
Related services			RSPCA SA Safe Kennels program		

* Interviews with key stakeholders were directly disrupted by the onset of COVID-19, in some cases interviews that had been scheduled were cancelled, in others, stakeholders become unavailable due to their urgent roles in the pandemic response.

Source: Authors.

Information sheet

Stakeholder Interview Information Statement

Project Title:	Housing Pathways with Companion Animals: Risks, Costs, Benefits, Opportunities
Swinburne University of Technology (HREC Project Number: 20201316-3595)	A/Prof Wendy Stone, Zoe Goodall
Western Sydney University	Dr Emma Power; Caitlin Buckle
University of Adelaide	Dr Debbie Faulkner
University of South Australia	Dr Selina Tually
Curtin University	Dr Amity James

- I have read the information statement version listed above and I understand its contents.
- I believe I understand the purpose, extent and possible risks of my involvement in this project.
- I voluntarily consent to take part in this research project.
- I have had an opportunity to ask questions and I am satisfied with the answers I have received.
- I understand that this project has been approved by Swinburne University of Technology and research partner Human Research Ethics Committees (as per the table above) and will be carried out in line with the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007).
- I understand I will receive a copy of the Information Statement.

In relation to this project, please circle your response to the following:

- | | | |
|--|------------|-----------|
| • I agree to be interviewed by the researcher | Yes | No |
| • I agree to allow the interview to be recorded by electronic device | Yes | No |
| • I agree to make myself available for further information if required | Yes | No |

I acknowledge that:

- My participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw from the project at any time without explanation;
- This project is for the purpose of research and not for profit;
- I will not be identified in publications or otherwise without my express written consent.

I agree to participate in this project

Participant Name	
Participant Signature	
Date and time	

Consent form

Consent Form

Project Title:	Housing Pathways with Companion Animals: Risks, Costs, Benefits, Opportunities
Swinburne University of Technology (HREC Project Number: 20201316-3595)	A/Prof Wendy Stone, Zoe Goodall
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|--|------------|-----------|
| • I agree to be interviewed by the researcher | Yes | No |
| • I agree to allow the interview to be recorded by electronic device | Yes | No |
| • I agree to make myself available for further information if required | Yes | No |

I acknowledge that:

- My participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw from the project at any time without explanation;
- This project is for the purpose of research and not for profit;
- I will not be identified in publications or otherwise without my express written consent.

I agree to participate in this project

Participant Name	
Participant Signature	
Date and time	

Interview schedule

Stakeholder interviews questions

Federal, State, Local government and Regional Development organisations

1. How significant are issues related to housing and companion animals to your organisation (priorities)?
2. How does the organisation define companion animals and their ownership?
3. What local strategies and laws exist in your scope of work that you refer to around these issues, or that shape the way you understand and respond to them?
4. What do you see as some of the potential benefits and opportunities for improving options for residents' living arrangements and housing options with companion animals?
5. What do you see as some of the potential risks and costs of residents' living arrangements and housing options with companion animals? For whom/what?

Housing, Homelessness & Transitional/Crisis Housing Organisations

1. How significant are issues related to housing and companion animals to your organisation (priorities)?
2. How does the organisation define companion animals and their ownership?
3. What local strategies and laws exist in your scope of work that you refer to around these issues, or that shape the way you understand and respond to them?
4. What do you see as some of the potential benefits and opportunities for improving options for residents' living arrangements and housing options with companion animals?
5. What do you see as some of the potential risks and costs of residents' living arrangements and housing options with companion animals? For whom/what?

Organisations focused on key population groups

1. How significant are issues related to housing and companion animals to your organisation (priorities)?
2. How does the organisation define companion animals and their ownership?
3. What local strategies and laws exist in your scope of work that you refer to around these issues, or that shape the way you understand and respond to them?
4. What do you see as some of the potential benefits and opportunities for improving options for residents' living arrangements and housing options with companion animals?
5. What do you see as some of the potential risks and costs of residents' living arrangements and housing options with companion animals? For whom/what?

Organisations focused on animal welfare & management

1. How significant are issues related to housing and companion animals to your organisation (priorities)?
2. How does the organisation define companion animals and their ownership?
3. What local strategies and laws exist in your scope of work that you refer to around these issues, or that shape the way you understand and respond to them?
4. What do you see as some of the potential benefits and opportunities for improving options for residents' living arrangements and housing options with companion animals?
5. What do you see as some of the potential risks and costs of residents' living arrangements and housing options with companion animals? For whom/what?

Appendix 3: Resident experience secondary data analysis

Australian Housing Aspirations (2018) (AHA) Survey

Select analysis of a suite of purpose-designed survey items about companion animal ownership and its relationship with housing experience, decision making and perceived options was included in the Australian Housing Aspirations (2018) (AHA) Survey. Key tables including housing, household and locational attributes not included in the body of the report are presented here for additional reference.

Long-term housing aspirations by companion animal ownership status

	No	No, but I/we used to but had to re-home because I/we moved dwelling	No, I/we cannot have pets where I/we currently live	Yes, including companion animals
	%			
Location				
a large regional city or town	14	14	18	21
a remote community	2	2	0	3
a small regional town	11	11	9	17
None of these	2	2	7	2
the CBD of a capital city	11	11	12	5
the inner suburbs of a capital city	29	29	30	20
the middle/outer suburbs of a capital city	33	33	24	32
Dwelling type				
Ancillary dwelling/granny flat	0	0	0	0
Apartment (less than 4 storeys)	2	3	5	1
Apartment (more than 4 storeys)	13	14	13	6
Attached dwelling (semi-detached/terrace/townhouse etc.)	8	11	5	4
Caravan or other temporary structure	13	16	15	12
Separate (detached) dwelling	62	55	61	77
Number of bedrooms				
1	7	7	5	3
2	29	24	25	20
3	35	42	42	40
4	25	22	21	30
5+	4	4	7	8

	No	No, but I/we used to but had to re-home because I/we moved dwelling	No, I/we cannot have pets where I/ we currently live	Yes, including companion animals
	%			
Tenure type				
Informal arrangement with friends/family	2	1	0	1
Living with parent(s)/guardian(s)	6	1	1	1
Outright ownership	20	35	30	35
Owned with a joint mortgage shared with friends and family	8	6	9	5
Owned with a mortgage	40	38	36	42
Renting from a state or community housing provider	1	4	3	4
Renting in a shared house/flat/room with friends/ family	6	2	4	3
Renting through a real estate agent or direct from a private landlord	17	12	14	8
Shared ownership/equity through state government	2	1	3	1

Source: Original analysis of Australian Housing Aspirations (2018) (AHA) Survey (Stone, Rowley et al. 2020b).

Housing preferences of companion animal owners who think this will restrict future residential mobility options

	Will have an impact	Will not have an impact
	%	
Location		
a large regional city or town	19	18
a remote community	2	3
a small regional town	20	20
No preference	2	2
Other	1	2
the CBD of a capital city	11	6
the inner suburbs of a capital city	18	17
the middle/outer suburbs of a capital city	28	32
Dwelling type		
Ancillary dwelling/granny flat	2	1
Apartment (less than 4 storeys)	8	5
Apartment (more than 4 storeys)	8	5
Attached dwelling (semi-detached/terrace/townhouse etc.)	10	8
Caravan or other temporary structure	2	1
No preference	3	3
Other	2	3
Separate (detached) dwelling	64	74

	Will have an impact	Will not have an impact
	%	
Number of bedrooms		
1	2	2
2	21	14
3	41	41
4	28	36
5+	6	6
No preference	1	1
Tenure type		
Jointly owned with a joint mortgage shared with friends and family	5	5
Live with parent(s)/guardian(s)	1	1
No preference	2	1
Other	0	0
Ownership	72	83
Rent from a private landlord	5	1
Rent from a state or community housing provider	3	2
Rent through a real estate agent	5	3
Renting in a shared house/flat/room with friends/family	3	1
Shared ownership/equity (dwelling ownership shared with State government or a not for profit provider)	1	1
Within a lifestyle or retirement village	3	3

Source: Original analysis of Australian Housing Aspirations (2018) (AHA) Survey (Stone, Rowley et al. 2020b).



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