



10 February 2017

To Whom It May Concern,

### **Review of the Residential Tenancies Act 1997**

I am co-Founder of the **Pound Reform Alliance Australia (PRAA)** and President and co-Founder of **Forever Friends Animal Rescue (FFAR)**. Established in 2011, FFAR is the largest animal rescue organisation in Victoria, with over 800 volunteers, and work closely with our colleagues at RSPCA, Lost Dogs Home, GAWS, and council pounds Darebin, Melton, Mornington, Mildura, Swan Hill and Bass Coast. We are also one of the only rescue organisations in Victoria that accepts the voluntary surrender of animals directly from community members. Last year we rescued and rehomed over 1600 pound and surrendered animals.

I wish to address Part B Section 5 which proposes:

1. introducing a mechanism for addressing pet-related costs and encouraging landlords to accept pets, either by way of a pet bond or by optional additional pet consent and cleaning clauses in the tenancy agreement, and
2. providing that a 'no pets' clause is unenforceable if it is unreasonable."

Forever Friends Animal Rescue is strongly in favour of the above proposals; however we would seek to see changes to the Residential Tenancies Act 1997 go further, removing any legal right for landlords to refuse tenants with pets for the following reasons:

1. Pet ownership, and the emotional and physical benefits it brings, should be the equal right of both home owners and tenants.
2. Having to surrender a family member is often traumatic for tenants, particularly children in our community.
3. The high number of animals surrendered to rescue organisations such as ours places an unfair burden on our volunteers' resources that are already over-stretched.
4. The high number of animals surrendered to shelters like RSPCA places an unfair burden on charitable institutions that are already over-stretched.
5. Many tenants' animals surrendered to council pounds and shelters are killed, not rehomed. This is an unacceptable outcome.
6. Tenants' animals given away 'free to good home' rather than being surrendered to a pound or animal welfare organisation often face horrific consequences, including being used as 'dog bait' in illegal fighting rings.
7. Animals are good for people's health and save Australia several billion dollars in reduced health care costs annually.

8. Children who grow up with animals are healthier, happier and more resilient.
9. People who have pet-friendly rentals are likely to move less often, reducing costs and inconvenience to landlords.
10. Landlords' fears of pet owners allowing damage to their homes is largely unfounded; the vast majority of pet owners are responsible and ethical people.
11. It is fact that children can often do more damage to landlords' properties than pets, but parents are not asked to relinquish their children.
12. Many landlords are in favour of leasing their properties to tenants with pets.

We look forward to the review of the Residential Tenancies Act 1997 resulting in a more equitable and compassionate legislation, not only for tenants, but our community's animals also.

Yours sincerely,



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President

*On behalf of*

**The Committee of Forever Friends Animal Rescue Inc.**

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