



“THE NOTION ‘PET-FRIENDLY’ NEEDS TO BE UNPACKED FOR THIS SPECIFIC SETTING TO BETTER UNDERSTAND WHAT IT MEANS FOR BOTH THE OLDER PERSON AND THE COMPANION ANIMAL.”



Don't leave me behind?

Forced separation of older people and their pets in residential aged care homes.

Fiona is an urban planner who focuses on the integration of 'pets' in urban places and spaces. She has long been interested in how people and pets navigate space and in the design of space to accommodate the needs of the pet.

This interest in human-animal spaces has led her to undertake a PhD at the College of Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences, Flinders University. Her PhD research explores the interconnections between humans, animals, and place (or space) in residential aged care homes through a multispecies lens.

Fiona's has worked closely with Companion Animal Network Australia (CANA) on their Pet Friendly Aged Care programs working on keeping older Australians together in residential care and support in the home care packages. Following their 2023 survey¹, only 18% of residential aged care facilities consider allowing residents with companion pets.

This means many older Australians transitioning to a residential aged care home are forced to leave their companion animal behind due to exclusionary 'pet' policies.

FIONA DE ROSA

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Older people have to make the difficult decision between giving up their pet or securing a bed in a residential aged care home.

On the surface, the label 'pet-friendly' presents an opportunity for aged care facilities to include 'pets', but it's fraught with several issues, for instance: Are they referring to visiting, facility or personal pets? Are residents and their companion pets allowed to live on site together? What species are permitted? What conditions apply? The notion 'pet-friendly' needs to be unpacked for this specific setting to better understand what it means for both the older person and the companion animal.

Along with Fiona's initial work and ongoing collaboration with aged care facilities running proven successful programs keeping people and their pets together, CANA is offering proven support kits (including rules, regulations policies and more) to all residential aged care facilities considering making this move. "The kits are free to the industry. Our role is to keep people and their pets together in the interest of both," said Trish Ennis CEO CANA.

TRISH ENNIS

*CEO
Companion Animal Network Australia - CAN*

¹ petfriendlyagedcare.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/CANA-Pet-Friendly-Aged-Care-Survey-Results-OPT.pdf

Learn more about Fiona and Trish's work:
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petfriendlyagedcare.com.au | australiacan.org.au