

July 9 2021

Committee Secretary

Community Support and Services Committee
Parliament House
George Street
Brisbane Qld 4000

Via email: CSSC@parliament.qld.gov.au

Dear Committee Secretary,

On behalf of Mars Petcare Australia, I write to the Community Support and Services Committee in relation to putting forward a submission to the *Housing Legislation Amendment Bill 2021* ('the Bill'), that was introduced to Queensland's Parliament on 18 June 2021.

Mars Petcare Australia is one of the leading pet food manufacturers in Australia. We are a significant regional employer in the country and employ 1,000 Associates across Albury-Wodonga, Bathurst, Wacol, Sydney and Melbourne. We believe passionately in the positive, community enhancing power of pets. Our vision is to make a better world for pets by making healthy, safe, nutritious food that pets love. We believe that our responsibility extends far beyond the quality of our products, to promoting the overall health and wellbeing of pets through responsible pet ownership, whilst also promoting the positive benefits that having a pet can have on individuals and communities.

Mars Petcare is a strong supporter of pet friendly policies and acknowledge the difference such policies make to pets and the people who love them. We have been an active voice in supporting the Queensland Government on including pets within the *Residential Tenancies and Rooming Accommodation Act 2008*, outlining our support of Queensland's reform of the tenancy laws in our submission to the 'Open Doors to Renting Reform' consultation in October 2018 and again upon the release of the 'Better Renting Future Reform Roadmap' in 2019. Queensland's commitment to these extensive consultations brought attention to the need for greater fairness and balance between property owner and renter rights.

We applaud the Government's recognition of the importance of pets to families and individuals and acknowledge the work the Queensland Government has undertaken to ensure pets are included in the Bill. However, we feel there is more that can be done to ensure that renters have greater support frameworks when it comes to renting with pets.

In its current form, the Bill unmistakably favours the rights of landlords, reinforcing that the balance of power remains with property owners when it comes to renting with pets. While in the proposed Bill, lessors will now need to have 'reasonable grounds' to refuse and respond in writing within 14 days, the legislation places relatively strict conditions on pet ownership. This includes the possibility of having to keep pets outside (184F 2a), which is an onerous restriction that is out of pace with current recommendations for pet management. Cat curfews are increasingly being implemented in Australian local council jurisdictions in order to protect wildlife, and indeed the [RSPCA strongly recommends](#) that cats are kept indoors, both for the

safety of wildlife and to prevent them from contracting diseases. Further, the Bill's listed grounds for refusing pets being kept at premises is quite ambiguous and much at the benevolence of the landlord and perceived opinions about certain types of pets and pet breeds, as a tenant's request can be refused if 'keeping the pet is likely to cause damage to the premises...' (184E 1c).

We believe that the legislation should reflect that renters should be able to keep pets (either indoors or outdoors) as they choose and require stricter grounds for landlords to restrict pets, similar to the conditions outlined in the Victorian legislation that came into effect on 1 July 2020. The hugely successful reform effort in Victoria states that landlords are only able to refuse permission for a tenant to have a pet by obtaining an order from the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal ('VCAT'). The proposed Amendment Bill in Queensland is silent as to the process available to tenants and landlords to resolve the question of pet friendliness and needs to provide clarity for tenants to dispute or appeal a lessor's refusal. The Victorian laws strike the right balance between ensuring renters can make their rental property a home and protecting landlords' investments in the property. They represent best-practice in Australia for upholding pet owners' rights and Queensland's reforms should go further.

We acknowledge the positive step forward that has been made to addressing and including tenants' rights to have pets in this legislation, however more can be done to ensure pet owners are not discriminated against when it comes to rental applications. As more of the Australian community is renting long term, it becomes even more important that renters' rights are sufficiently protected by legislation and regulation.

We would welcome the opportunity to further discuss these reforms with you and look forward to supporting action towards creating fairer, more pet-friendly rental laws in Queensland and ensuring the success of this landmark reform.

Yours Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Sophie Anning', written in a cursive style.

Sophie Anning
Corporate Affairs Director
Mars Petcare Australia