



Plea for pet pals

Aged can benefit from relaxed bans

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BANS on pets must be relaxed as the population ages and more people move to high-density living, experts say.

Lisa Wood, an academic specialising in communities and health at the University of WA, wants retirement villages, apartment blocks, rental properties and local councils to lift restrictions on pets because of their benefits to owners and the broader community. She said this had

become even more urgent as baby boomers retired and moved into apartments or retirement villages.

"In the past, a lot of those places haven't allowed pets and one of the

things we're advocating is that those places and local governments that perhaps set some of the bylaws will think laterally about that," she said. "It does bring companionship and social benefits."

Ms Wood, who will speak at a Parks Victoria congress in Melbourne next week, said pets not only improved their owner's mental and physical wellbeing, but also acted as a "social glue", keeping communities together.

Pet owners were more likely to exchange favours with neighbours, get to know people in their suburb and consider their neighbourhood to be more friendly, her research

found.

About 40 per cent of pet owners said they had met people through their animals. Walking the dog was the most likely to initiate contact.

Tenants Advice Service of WA spokesman John Perret said landlords should keep an open mind about tenants having pets.

"It's hard to make a generalised comment about all situations — it depends on the type of pet and the reasons why the tenant has the pet," Mr Perret said.

"But we would say people need to be reasonable and there is scope under the Residential Tenancies Act for bonds for pets."

WHERE PAWS FEAR TO TREAD



OUT AND ABOUT

- Except for seeing eye dogs, pets generally aren't allowed in restaurants, pubs, shops and theatres
- All dogs must be leashed in public except in designated off-leash areas in public parks and beaches

RENTAL PROPERTIES

- Tenants must obtain their landlord's consent before getting a pet
- Many leases have a "no pets" clause

RETIREMENT VILLAGES

- Pet policies are set by the owners' corporation, resident committee or owner-operator
- Some have a blanket ban on all pets, while others restrict number, size or type
- Some allow residents to bring their pet when they move in but don't allow them to replace the animal when it dies