

Is it time that landlords took another look at allowing pets?

Most landlords don't allow pets in their rental properties, hoping to protect their investment and limit any maintenance and repairs that will need to be done after a tenant vacates.

Landlords make this decision based on the fear that pets will damage their property. Dogs and cats shed hair and can leave odours throughout the property, especially in carpets and the back yard. As a result, only about 10 per cent of Queensland rental properties allow pets. This number is only five per cent in Victoria and New South Wales.

More than 63% of Australian households own a pet and about 53% own a dog or a cat.

This means there is a large number of families who are excluded from pet ownership because they rent, or, if they have a pet, are locked out of most rental properties.

There are many benefits to pet ownership, including companionship, responsibility and, in some cases, improved home security. And it seems unfair to restrict renters from experiencing those benefits, simply by virtue of the fact that they rent.

Data suggests there are benefits to landlords to allowing pets in their investment property. Those households with pets tend to move less often and, due to the fact that there are fewer properties that allow pets, be less likely to break leases to move within a town.

There is also some suggestion that people with pets would be open to paying higher rents, and perhaps some version of 'pet insurance' to accommodate their furry friends.

In a series of decisions QCAT has ruled that absolute pet bans are not permissible in the by-laws that govern apartment and unit living. However, in other instances, landlords are permitted to ban pets – but should they?

The REIQ is supportive of all parties coming to a negotiated agreement that permits pets in the rental property while mitigating the issues that landlords face.

A proactive property manager will be able to monitor pet impact on a property and will offer mitigation tips to tenants as condition of rental, to help limit risk of damage. And it's possible that by allowing pets a landlord may attract a more loyal, long-term tenant.

-ENDS-