

Improving NSW Rental Laws

Greyhound Rescue Inc Submission

Greyhound Rescue is a non-profit organisation in Sydney, Australia, dedicated to rescuing and rehoming greyhounds. Our primary focus is on retired racing greyhounds, as well as greyhounds that have been surrendered or abandoned by their owners.

We thank the NSW Government for reviewing the state's rental laws, and advocate for a policy framework that allows Australians to adopt and care for companion animals with minimal limitation or restriction.

Owning an animal, particularly a greyhound, can bring numerous benefits to Australians. Greyhounds are elegant and gentle creatures with unique qualities that make them wonderful companions. They provide friendship, social interaction, mental and emotional well-being, a sense of purpose and responsibility, and therapeutic benefits, among other demonstrable advantages when compared with other dog breeds.

Despite this, many renters face numerous barriers to pet ownership, and greyhound owners are subject to additional biases that landlords, body corporates, stratas, and tribunals hold against large dogs.

Greyhounds are known for their affectionate and gentle nature. They form strong bonds with their owners, providing companionship and a sense of connection. For Australians seeking a loyal and loving pet, a greyhound can be a wonderful choice.

Greyhound Rescue asserts that any biases are unfounded, as greyhounds are typically ideal dogs for rentals due to their inherently calm nature, in both houses and apartments. To foster a more inclusive and fair rental environment, we oppose the refusal of a specific dog breed as a valid reason for a landlord to refuse a pet. Instead, we are advocating for a breed-blind approach to pet consideration, eliminating any prejudices that hinder responsible pet ownership. By embracing breed-blind policies, the housing market can better accommodate pet owners and create a better environment for all residents.

Challenging Biases Against Large Dogs:

Biases against particular breeds or types of dogs are rarely grounded in fair judgment; instead, it arises from a range of social factors. These factors encourage people to discriminate further against certain breeds, identifying them as undesirable or disposable¹. According to a study conducted under the University of Veterinary Medicine in Vienna, big dogs were more obedient, less excitable and pugnacious, and less anxious and fearful than their small dog counterparts.²

Despite this, landlords and tribunals often harbour misconceptions about large dog breeds. The stigma attached to them results in significant hurdles for responsible pet owners seeking rental housing. By addressing these biases head-on, the proposed Housing Bill can pave the way for a more equitable pet-friendly rental landscape, promoting a broader range of breeds suitable for apartment living.

Greyhounds as Ideal Apartment Dogs:

Greyhounds, renowned for their docile and relaxed demeanour, are a great example of a big dog breed that is well-suited for apartment living. Several studies confirm that their low-energy lifestyle aligns seamlessly with smaller living spaces, making them an excellent choice for urban renters. Because they are not a territorial breed, Greyhounds are rarely prone to barking³ and are known for their non-destructive behaviour. One of the most defining traits of the Greyhound is their lazy nature. On average they spend 18 hours a day sleeping⁴ and are clean and largely odour free,⁵ further supporting their suitability as apartment companions.

The Importance of Breed-Blind Pet Consideration:

Breed-blind policies are essential in fostering an unbiased approach to pet ownership evaluation. Assessing pet suitability based on individual behaviour and temperament, rather than breed stereotypes, ensures fair treatment for all pet owners.

¹<https://www.kannananimalwelfare.org/blogs/breed-bias-against-companion-animals-a-reflection-of-human-inequalities>

² <http://www.pawsforreaction.com/2020/07/big-dog-bigger-discrimination-large.html>

³<https://www.maynoothuniversity.ie/research/spotlight-research/5-reasons-why-greyhounds-make-great-family-pets>

⁴ <http://www.greyhoundsonly.com/hounds/education/about-greyhounds/greyhoundsat-home#:~:text=Greyhounds%20generally%20spend%20about%2018,not%20be%20an%20active%20participant.>

⁵ <https://www.ngagreyhounds.com/Greyhounds-As-Pets>

Breed-specific legislation has been proven to be ineffective as a criteria to select which dogs are suitable versus which ones are not. Research shows that bans on certain types of dogs are largely ineffective and often a waste of public resources⁶. Embracing a breed-blind perspective acknowledges the uniqueness of each animal, thus enabling landlords and tribunals to make more informed and unbiased decisions.

Enhancing Responsible Pet Ownership:

Greyhound Rescue fully supports responsible pet ownership and believes that a paradigm shift towards breed-blind pet consideration would encourage responsible pet ownership. By eliminating unnecessary biases against otherwise perfectly eligible pets, the landlords and the Tribunal can focus on tenants' ability to care for their pets responsibly, regardless of breed, size, or appearance.

Collaboration and Education:

The successful implementation of breed-blind pet consideration relies on collaborative efforts among landlords, pet owners, and animal welfare organisations. Providing resources to organisations that are dedicated to education and advocacy on responsible pet ownership can further enhance the positive impact of breed-blind policies, leading to more informed decisions and healthier rental communities.

It would further alleviate the pressure faced by shelters and animal welfare organisations to care for the high number of dogs that are not being adopted, or are resubmitted to shelters, because landlords wrongfully judged them to be unsuitable for urban housing.

Conclusion

For the reasons outlined, this submission opposes characteristics such as size or breed of a dog as a valid reason for refusal of a landlord. Instead, the proposed Housing Bill should address biases against specific types or pets, particularly greyhounds, by adopting a breed-blind approach to pet consideration.

Recognising the ideal nature of greyhounds for apartment living and promoting responsible pet ownership through education and collaboration will create a more inclusive and compassionate rental environment.

⁶ <http://www.summitdogtraining.com/blog/discrimination-in-the-dog-world>