

The Lost Dogs' Home

Keeping Pets and People Together

Position Statement

The Problem

For many pet owners experiencing hardship, a pet is not a luxury, they are family and a vital emotional support. When costs rise, these bonds are placed under strain.

Why does this matter?

The Lost Dogs' Home undertook the Vet Pet Survey of pet owners in 2025.

The key findings from the 713 responses include:

- 61% of respondents live below the Australian Poverty Line (Melbourne Institute: Applied Economics and Social Research, 2024).
- 43% had to delay vet care for their pet.
- 58% used credit to pay for vet bills.

Behind these numbers are people choosing between paying the rent and paying the vet bill, delaying treatment they know their pet needs or taking on debt to just keep a companion pet healthy.

What needs to change?

The Lost Dogs' Home is calling for the Victorian Government to provide:

- **Access to low-cost vet care** allowing people to treat manageable health issues early rather than surrendering pets once conditions worsen and treatment becomes more complex and unaffordable. This includes low-cost desexing, microchipping, registration and vaccinations.
- **Greater access to financial counselling services** for pet owners experiencing hardship, to support financial stability and informed decision-making.
- **Pet-friendly crisis accommodation for pet owners** who are experiencing homelessness.
- **Investment in long-term pet-friendly affordable housing**, to provide a stable place to live for people with pets.

Our commitment

At the Lost Dogs' Home, we recognise the difficulty people experiencing hardship face every day.

- Through our Home Together program, the Lost Dogs' Home prevented 200 pet surrenders in 2024-25, demonstrating that targeted, early support keeps people and pets together and reduces pressure on shelters.
- We are also investing in a Mobile Vet to provide low-cost services to vulnerable communities across Victoria.

By working together, government, the Lost Dogs' Home and community organisations can reduce pet surrenders, protect the wellbeing of people and pets, and keep pets and people together, where they belong.



For further information contact
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Background

Impact of the cost of living crisis on pet owners

Pet owners experiencing hardship face significant financial challenges:

- In the last 12 months, the median rent in Melbourne has increased by 6% for private rental (Homes Victoria Rental Report, 2025).
- The waitlist for public housing has reached 66,000 people (Council to Homeless Persons, 2025).
- In 2024-25, 105,126 people accessed homelessness services in Victoria, which is the highest in Australia (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2025).

The Home Together Program

- The Lost Dogs' Home's Home Together program helps owners experiencing hardship to stay united with their beloved pets.
- This includes people experiencing significant financial hardship, escaping family violence, sleeping rough or couch-surfing and people living in insecure accommodation such as rooming houses or squats.

- The program aims to prevent pet surrenders by responding to the barriers experienced by the owners.
- This includes linking pet owners in crisis with support services including interest free loans for vet care, food banks, financial counselling, housing support, mental health support, and charities that assist with vet care and emergency boarding.
- The Home Together program recognises the importance of the human-animal bond. This bond can have wellbeing benefits for pets and their owners including providing emotional support and promoting human interactions (Crawford et al 2023).
- The human-animal bond is linked to the One Welfare Model which recognises that the wellbeing of animals, people and their environment are connected (Crawford et al, 2023).
- This model takes account of pet owners' quality of life including their social and economic circumstances, and their physical and mental health and how this impacts their pets.

References

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