



Government of **Western Australia**
Department of **Communities**



Crisis Accommodation Program Pet Policy

1 Purpose

The Crisis Accommodation Program Pet Policy (Policy) captures the Department of Communities' (Communities) criteria for a person to be considered eligible for the Pets in Crisis Program (Program); considerations for Community Housing Organisations (CHOs) using the Program (including allocations principles); and considerations for RSPCA WA when constructing pet enclosures.

2 Strategic Intent of the Program

Through the Crisis Accommodation Program (CAP), Communities provides short-to-medium term accommodation for people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness at their point of crisis. A key target group of CAP accommodation is women and children escaping family and domestic violence.

The Pets in Crisis Program (Program) is a key strategic objective of Communities which seeks to remove any barrier for women and children escaping domestic violence who have a pet and fear for their pet if they were forced to leave it behind.

The Program provides veterinary care, behavioural training and foster care for the pets of women and children escaping domestic violence, for the duration of their stay in a CAP property.

3 Scope of the Policy

This Policy is for use by Communities, RSPCA WA and CHOs that lease properties from Communities for use as refuges within the CAP refuge, that have agreed to be part of the Program. It outlines the general eligibility criteria set by Communities for the Program, and the construction criteria for a pet enclosure.

4 Definitions

Table 1 – Definitions for the Pets in Crisis Program

Term	Definition
Applicant	A woman applying for the Program.
CAP Refuge	A refuge used for the Crisis Accommodation Program.
Community Housing Organisation (CHO)	Any not-for-profit organisation incorporated under the Law of the Commonwealth of Australia or the State of Western Australia, or a Local Government, whose primary objective is to provide social housing or affordable housing to eligible persons.

Term	Definition
Crisis Accommodation Program (CAP)	The Communities' housing program designed to deliver short-to-medium term accommodation for people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness at their point of crisis, including women and children escaping family and domestic violence.
Duty of Care	A moral or legal obligation to ensure the safety or well-being of others.
Eligibility	That a woman seeking to use the Program meets the policy requirements detailed in this Policy.
Occupant	A woman who signs an Occupancy Agreement to stay at a CAP refuge.
RSPCA WA	The Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Western Australia.

5 Policy statements

5.1 Strategic objectives of the Program

The strategic objectives of the Program include:

- 5.1.1. Removing the barrier for women and children who are victims of family and domestic violence who have a pet to not leave an abusive situation for fear their pet will be hurt by the perpetrator if they leave it behind;
- 5.1.2. Providing reassurance that pets will be looked after, enabling women and children escaping domestic violence to focus on recovering from crisis;
- 5.1.3. Removing pets from an abusive situation, ensuring their well-being;
- 5.1.4. Improving health outcomes for pets taken into the Program; and
- 5.1.5. Providing pet care assistance for CHO staff, enabling them to focus on providing assistance to women and children who need their service.

5.2 Program structure

The Program functions in the following method:

- 5.2.1. Victims of family and domestic violence who have a pet can bring their pet with them to a CAP refuge that has agreed to be part of the Program;
- 5.2.2. The pet will be cared for at the CAP refuge until RSPCA WA are able to collect the pet;

- 5.2.3. Once RSPCA WA have collected the pet, it is assessed by VetWest and given any required and appropriate treatment, including worming, microchipping and sterilisation;
- 5.2.4. The pet is then fostered through RSPCA WA's network of foster carers;
- 5.2.5. The pet can remain in the Program as long as the victim remains an occupant of a CAP refuge or, by agreement with the RSPCA WA, for a period after leaving a CAP refuge while the victim seeks safe and secure accommodation;
- 5.2.6. An occupant will be reunited with their pet once they have secured safe accommodation and are ready to be reunited with their pet;
- 5.2.7. RSPCA WA liaise with the referring CHO to assist with the reunification of families and their pets; and
- 5.2.8. Should an occupant choose to surrender their pet while in the Program, the pet will be re-homed by RSPCA WA.

5.3 Eligibility criteria for the Program

Applicants for the Program will be assessed against the following eligibility criteria:

- 5.3.1. An applicant is escaping a family and domestic violence situation;
- 5.3.2. An applicant has an advocate representing them in discussions with the RSPCA WA, such as a CHO, lawyer or police officer;
- 5.3.3. The referral is for a family pet. Livestock are not eligible for the Program;
- 5.3.4. The pet has not been aggressive towards people and is not unpredictable. Referrals for pets that have been aggressive towards people or are unpredictable will not be accepted, as pets within the Program will be residing in a foster home environment;
- 5.3.5. If the animal is not sterilised, vaccinated or microchipped, the applicant who owns the pet must agree to have these procedures done (as appropriate for the species); and
- 5.3.6. Additional eligibility criteria specified by the CAP refuge, if required.

5.4 Allocations for the Program

When an applicant brings an accompanying pet with them to a CAP refuge, the CHO managing the CAP refuge should consider the following before making an allocation:

- 5.4.1. Whether staff are comfortable with a pet being present (e.g. are there issues regarding safety concerns, allergies, religious reasons, or another reason);
- 5.4.2. Whether other occupants of the CAP refuge are comfortable with a pet being present (e.g. are there issues regarding safety concerns, allergies, religious reasons, or another reason); and

5.4.3. The Program should apply the 'no wrong door' principle. When an applicant is unable to be accommodated as a result of their pet, the CHO should make alternative arrangements to assist the victim.

When making an allocation to the Program, RSPCA WA should apply the following priority criteria:

5.4.4. Priority into the Program will be pets of victims experiencing family and domestic violence who are referred by a CAP refuge.

5.5 Pet enclosure construction criteria

When constructing a pet enclosure at a CAP refuge as part of the Program, the CHO and RSPCA WA must abide by the following criteria:

5.5.1. Fund construction of the pet enclosure through the Program at the expense of RSPCA WA, unless otherwise agreed with Communities;

5.5.2. Receive approval for the pet enclosure from Communities;

5.5.3. Ensure State Government laws and regulations, and local government authority regulations are followed;

5.5.4. Ensure the structural integrity of the building is not compromised;

5.5.5. Ensure the pet enclosure has been constructed with materials and a design which is appropriate for the conditions of the property, i.e. in an area with significant wind, the pet enclosure must be able to withstand these conditions; and

5.5.6. Maintain the pet enclosure at the expense of RSPCA WA through the Program.

5.6 Maintaining pet enclosures

CHOs that are partners in delivering the Program must ensure that:

5.6.1. Their insurance covers any potential risk from having pets onsite;

5.6.2. Pet enclosures are safe and secure; and

5.6.3. Their CAP refuge and pet enclosure are kept clean and damage free.

6 Other related documents

Related documents include:

- Housing Act 1980
- Cat Act 2011
- Dog Act 1976
- Dog Regulations 2013
- The National Plan to Reduce Violence Against Women and their Children 2010-2022
- Western Australia's Family and Domestic Violence Prevention Strategy to 2022

7 Amendments

Version	Date	Author	Description
1	May 2023	Senior Policy and Practice Officer	New policy.

8 Summary Information

Responsible Officer	Executive Director Contracting
Contact Officer	Manager Policy and Evaluation
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