

Resolution of Council

18 September 2023

Item 3.2

Pets on Public Transport

Minute by the Lord Mayor

To Council:

Australia has one the highest rates of pet ownership in the world. According to 2021 research by Animal Medicine Australia, there are an estimated 30.4 million pets across the country. Sixty-nine per cent of Australian households now own a pet, up from 61 per cent in 2019. Pet registrations in the City of Sydney confirm there are 32,820 dogs and 26,815 cats living with their human companions in the Local Government Area.

Pets give pleasure and create joy, they teach responsibility, and they love and are loved in return. The research by Animal Medicine Australia also tells us that both dogs and cats helped to improve their owners' physical and mental well-being, particularly through the Covid-19 lockdowns or job losses during that period.

The City of Sydney's Companion Animals Policy promotes responsible pet ownership because we understand how important pets can be to people's wellbeing and quality of life. We educate pet owners and the community about responsible pet ownership. Residents with a pensioner or health care concession cards can access free microchipping and discounted registration. At our Pet Days, we offer social housing residents access to free pet health checks, microchipping, flea and worming treatments, and free desexing for their pets.

For years I have been advocating for changes to improve the welfare of companion animals and the rights of pet owners. We have seen positive reforms to strata laws which prevent owners' corporations establishing blanket bans on pets, and there are plans to make it easier for renters in NSW to have pets. But people with pets are still often made to feel like second-class citizens through unnecessarily restrictive policies about pets on public transport. The community wants this to change.

Taking a pet on public transport is a normal part of life in many cities, including San Francisco, Berlin, Paris and London. In Melbourne, pets can travel free of charge on trains, trams and buses, provided they are in a suitable container or on a lead and large dogs are muzzled.

Meanwhile in Sydney, pets are not allowed on trains or at stations including the Sydney Metro. On light rail, buses and ferries, pets are only allowed if staff or the driver agrees, and not if any of those services are nearing capacity.

Inner-city pet owners are particularly disadvantaged because they are less likely to own a car. Social housing tenants tell me they cannot get their pet to a vet because they do not have access to a car. Older people report that they have been unable to visit relatives because they could not leave their pets at home alone overnight and could not afford alternatives to public transport.

A city for walking, cycling and public transport must serve everyone's needs, including people who have pets. People and their pets are seriously disadvantaged because they cannot travel on public transport with their pets and are unwilling to risk being turned away by transport staff.

Transport for London recently said that allowing dogs on public transport helps their efforts to encourage active travel and reduce car dependency. They allow pets on all buses, trams and trains – free of charge, at all times – because they recognise that many passengers (including women travelling late at night) feel far safer with them. It also provides greater trip flexibility for people going out with their dog.

Allowing pets on public transport does not require legislative change. Instead, it can be achieved by amending the Passenger Transport (General) Regulation 2017 – a much quicker process.

There is a community-led petition before the Legislative Assembly calling for Transport for NSW to allow companion animals on public transport. Tails on Rails, a grass roots community organisation has also been advocating to the NSW Government and parliamentarians on this issue. The Member for Sydney, Alex Greenwich, supports the petition as does the Hon. Emma Hurst, MLC of the Animal Justice Party.

After the NSW Government elections, I raised this issue in a meeting with the Minister for Transport, the Hon. Jo Haylen, who responded positively.

Reducing our dependency on cars is critical to reducing carbon emissions and meeting our net zero target by 2035. This includes reducing our pet's dependency on cars too.

I urge the NSW Government to make this straightforward but meaningful change.

COUNCILLOR CLOVER MOORE AO

Lord Mayor

Attachments

Attachment A. Petition for Transport for NSW to Allow Companion Animals on Public Transport

Moved by the Chair (the Lord Mayor), seconded by Councillor Worling –

It is resolved that:

(A) Council note:

- (i) that in NSW, pets are not allowed on trains or at stations including the Sydney Metro. On light rail, buses and ferries, pets are only allowed if staff or the driver agrees, and not if any of those services are nearing capacity;
- (ii) that inner-city pet owners are particularly disadvantaged because they are less likely to own or be able to afford access to a car, including social housing tenants and elderly people; and
- (iii) the community-led petition, as shown at Attachment A to the subject Minute and endorse its request to the Legislative Assembly to allow companion animals on public transport in NSW;

(B) the Chief Executive Officer be requested to inform the community about the petition through its various communication channels; and

(C) the Lord Mayor be requested to write again to the Minister for Transport, and to the Minister for Roads and Minister for Regional Transport and Roads, with a copy of this Lord Mayoral Minute calling on them to:

- (i) urgently remove current restrictions under the Passenger Transport (General) Regulation 2017, so that certainty is provided to passengers that their pets will be allowed to travel with them on all forms of public transport in NSW; and
- (ii) match the regulation change with updated communications and training for Transport for NSW staff and contractors so that pets on public transport are actively supported and encouraged in NSW as a means to reducing dependence on cars and improving equity.

Carried unanimously.

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