An estimated 22 percent of Australian households now live in homes that are covered by a strata plan.

As a result, high-rise households are creating an unprecedented demand for owners’ corporations to recognise pet ownership as part of strata lifestyle.

Susie Willis, from the Petcare Information and Advisory Service (PIAS), said there was a clear trend in Australia away from the detached home on a quarter acre block in suburbia to higher density, often high-rise, living that is close to employment and amenities such as shops and restaurants.

"With this, comes a demand from residents for access to all the lifestyle choices they would have in any other living environment," Susie said.

“The majority of Australian households own a pet, most often a dog or a cat, and many of the people who are choosing a high-rise lifestyle also have pets, or would like to own a pet."

The latest research by Dr Emma Power, from the University of Western Sydney, shows that there are many benefits to living in a pet-friendly strata community.

“Our research showed that dogs help their owners to get to know others within the apartment building and local neighbourhood, and can be valuable in creating a strong apartment community," Dr Power said.

“Pet owners were keen to ensure that their pets fitted in well with others in the community, and regularly helped one another with advice on training and caring for pets.”

In recognition of the trend towards pets living in higher density environments, PIAS and Strata Community Australia (SCA) have developed a Pet Application Form and a Pet Keeping Agreement.

The forms provide a clear application process and also allow pet owners and owners’ corporations to understand and agree on the conditions for owning a pet in a strata property.

Strata by-laws vary significantly around Australia. A default or model by-law regarding the keeping of animals often applies and states that a resident must have permission in writing from their owners’ corporation to keep an animal.

Susie Willis said that generally, however, an owners’ corporation could choose to either adopt or amend the model by-law or create their own by-law. This meant that by-laws could vary widely from state to state and from one strata development to another, and the variance could be from accepting pets without the need for approval through to not permitting pets at all.

PIAS advises that pet owners, and those considering getting a pet, should check with their owners corporation to see what by-laws apply to their building.

The Pet Keeping Agreement is between the pet owner and the building's owners corporation. It enables the owners corporation to clearly detail their expectations of how pets will be kept and managed once they are approved.

Both forms can be downloaded from www.petnet.com.au and adapted to suit the specific requirements of a strata property.

The benefits that pet owners derive from their pets should not be at the expense of non-pet owning residents," Susie said.

"Clearly, balance needs to be achieved whereby individual needs are accommodated and residents who choose not to own a pet are unaffected by those that do own pets."

More at petnet.com.au
HIGH-RISE TREND: There is a trend towards pets living in higher density environments as more Australians forego the traditional suburban housing block.