

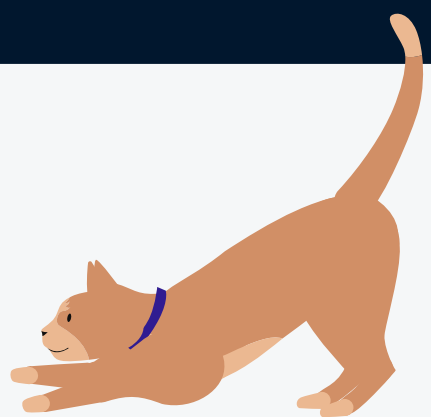
PAWS FOR THOUGHT:

Recent Changes to Companion Animals Law

The Family Law Amendment Act 2024 (Cth) commenced on 10 June 2025, unleashing new provisions acknowledging that companion animals are more than property—they are valued members of the family, and courts are empowered to make decisions that prioritise their welfare and emotional bonds, recognising their importance in family disputes and safety considerations.

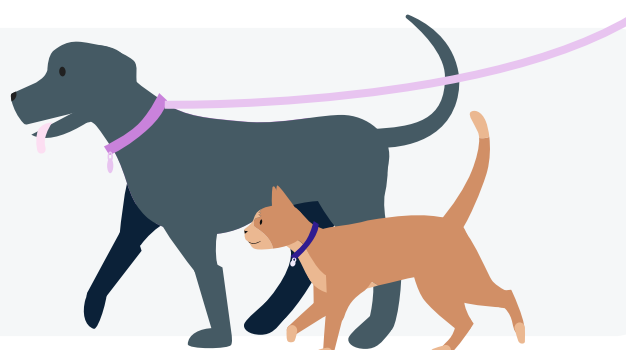
Enactment & Definition

- » Enactment & Amendment: Family Law Amendment Act 2024 (Cth), commenced 10 June 2025
- » Definition of Companion Animal: Animal kept primarily for companionship (excluding assistance, business, agricultural animals)



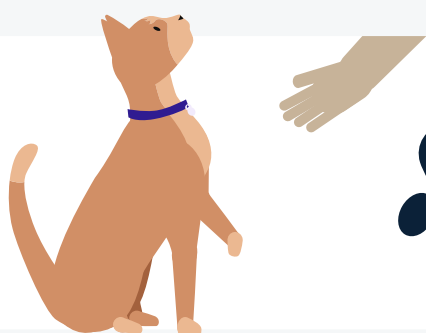
Previous Legal Approach

- » Pets as property (chattel) before 2025
- » Case reference: Gruneth v Wighton (2022)



Court's Limited Orders

- » Court can transfer or sell the animal
- » No joint/shared ownership allowed



Factors in Judicial Decisions

- » Acquisition circumstances
- » Care contributions
- » Family violence & cruelty
- » Attachment & future care

Impact on Family Violence & Jurisdiction

- » Includes harm to animals in family violence laws (s 4AB)
- » WA's Family Court relies on the Family Court Act 1997 (WA) for de facto relationships.



The law now recognises companion animals beyond property—considering their welfare and emotional bonds.



Read the article 'Navigating the 2025 Changes to the Family Law Act' for more information on the Property, Financial, and Procedural reforms to Australia's Family Law Act, introduced on 10 June 2025.

[READ NOW](#)

Watch the 20-minute Podcast on parenting reforms to Australia's Family Law Act, which came into effect on 6 May 2024.

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Practical Guidance Family

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Practical Guidance Family is a how-to resource for legal practitioners dealing with family law matters.

The module sets out best practices for key areas of family law, including divorce and nullity, annulment, dispute resolution and settlement, apprehended violence orders, child orders, and property settlement.

Suitable for specialist family practitioners, general practice family practitioners, and practitioners who take on family law matters, Practical Guidance Family is a step-by-step guide to the core tasks for family law matters.