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Australia Strata Rules Can Limit Pet Ownership

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For many Australians, buying a first home marks the end of years of renting and the freedom to finally live with a pet without a landlord's consent. However, if the new property is in a strata complex, there may still be restrictions that limit – or even prevent – pet ownership.

Across Australia, pet rules in strata properties vary by state and territory. In New South Wales, Queensland, the ACT, and Victoria, body corporates are prohibited from imposing outright blanket bans on pets. However, property experts warn that the by-laws can still be strict, and buyers should review them in detail before signing a contract.

Melbourne buyer's agent Mario Borg says that pet owners often underestimate how strata by-laws can override expectations. "If you've got a pet – or are planning to get one – strata rules can (and will) override your rights as an owner," Borg says. "Some buildings still ban pets entirely, or make approval so difficult it's effectively a 'no.'"

Even where pets are allowed, there may be detailed rules about their presence. These can include restrictions on walking pets in common areas, limitations on certain breeds, or size limits for dogs. Borg advises buyers to get any required pet approval in writing before committing to a purchase.

Sydney buyer's agent Michelle May notes that some complexes require cats to remain indoors and dogs to be carried through lobbies or common areas. "This becomes impractical for owners of large dogs, especially if they also have young children," she says.

Other common rules include limits on the number of pets, breed-specific restrictions, and requirements that dogs be under a certain weight or height. May recalls a client with two Alsatians who faced challenges because the strata by-laws prohibited dogs of that size.

Both Borg and May stress that buyers must carefully read and understand the by-laws before making an offer or bidding at auction. Failure to do so could lead to disputes, stress, and costly legal processes.

For prospective buyers, the safest approach is to request a full copy of the strata by-laws during the due diligence stage, confirm pet policies with the owners' corporation, and secure written approval for any existing or planned pets before contracts are signed.

With property prices and competition high in many Australian cities, skipping these checks can lead to unpleasant surprises. Pet owners can avoid future disputes by ensuring their beloved animals are not only welcome in their home but also permitted under the property's formal rules.