

STATES OF JERSEY



PETS IN RENTAL PROPERTIES (P.70/2024) – COMMENTS

Presented to the States on 7th November 2024#
by the Minister for Housing

STATES GREFFE

COMMENTS

Nearly every homeowner in Jersey, if not all, has the assumed right to have a pet live with them in their home. As a matter of principle, it is my view that the thousands of renters in Jersey should not be treated any differently.

The central tenet of P.70/2024 is that a request to own a pet should not arbitrarily be refused with no reason given, and the report sets out the importance of pets for the mental and physical well-being of Islanders. I believe it is important to have a Law that, as far as practicable, removes unfair barriers to pet ownership and creates conditions where all the parties to a tenancy agreement can be confident about supporting pet ownership.

I therefore support the principle of this proposition and will be prepared to respond to its intent, as part of my package of measures being brought forward to update the Residential Tenancy Law.

This proposition is clear that there is no intention to make the right to have a pet something that is devoid of responsibilities for tenants. The report accompanying the proposition talks of reasonable costs that a tenant should be prepared to pay. I would seek to make it a legal requirement for tenants to take responsibility for how a pet behaves (or any damage it causes). And *if* a landlord wanted a tenant to take on reasonable costs, such as extra insurance cover, and the tenant refused, this would be grounds for a landlord to withhold consent. In a situation where a tenant did not make good on their commitments about their pet (e.g., a pet being a sustained nuisance or causing damage), I would treat this as a breach of contract under the Law. There would, therefore, be inherent protections for landlords in the Residential Tenancy Law.

In circumstances where, despite the caveats and protections for landlords around pet ownership, a landlord unreasonably withholds consent within a residential tenancy agreement, I believe this should equate to interfering with a tenant's peaceful enjoyment of their property.

As Deputy Curtis highlights in her report, the UK Renters Reform Bill is also proposing legislative measures for the consideration of pets. Although Jersey is under no obligation to act simply because the UK is doing so, it is nonetheless important to consider that the UK has recognised the same problem and is trying to deliver a similar solution.

Indeed, my predecessor's consultation on his then proposed changes to the Residential Tenancy Law surfaced how this is an important issue for Islanders, which has been included in the [Findings Report](#) that I published earlier this year. I believe that P.70 will allow me to respond substantively to the thoughts and concerns already raised by tenants and landlords.

I am pleased this proposition has been brought before the States Assembly now as it offers Members an opportunity to debate this issue before I bring forward detailed Residential Tenancy Law proposals, for which Law drafting is now well progressed.

Whilst I commit to respond to the will of the Assembly in response to this proposition, I strongly believe that Members can support the proposition because there is nothing inherently controversial being asked. P.70/2024 makes clear that if there are good

reasons why a pet should not be in a rental property, then a landlord has the right to refuse, and I will ensure the Law states clearly what those reasons are. The Assembly will have the opportunity to consider and amend – if felt necessary – those reasons when I bring forward the draft Residential Tenancy Law provisions.