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Herald Sun

Making life better

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Try to beat The Shark P15



BY GEORGE

Teaching kids where food begins P3



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BEST FRIENDS

Lisa Kudrow on that reunion LIFTOUT



Policies not up to scratch

WHY A NEW PETITION DEMANDS WORKPLACE LEAVE ENTITLEMENTS FOR PET OWNERS

PETS

VANESSA CROLL

WITH more pets than people in Australia – about 29 million pets compared to about

25.7 million people – pressure is mounting on businesses to acknowledge the role domesticated companions play in our lives.

New data reveals 81 per cent of pet owners want greater flexibility in the workplace when it comes to the care of their animals.

More than 60 per cent say they don't feel supported by their workplace to do this, according to a study of 1000 Australians by online pet company PetCulture.

The study also found almost one third feel a lack of pet-friendly workplace policies is "outdated" and "archaic" and needs to be changed.

This includes launching a national petition today calling on workplaces to introduce pet-friendly policies.

"This includes two days off when introducing a new pet to the family, sick leave or even grievance leave," PetCulture CEO Simon Smith says, adding the business will be introducing their own PETernity policies for staff.

"As Australians return to the office, we understand the transition period for new and existing pets can be difficult and we want to throw our

Have a say

PetCulture's PETernity PETition calls for all Australian pet owners:

- To be granted sick leave to care for their pets.
 - To be granted leave to welcome their new pet family members.
 - To be able to have their pet stay with them whether they are glamping in a five-star resort.
- According to the petition, PETernity rights matter because:
- Two thirds of Australian pet parents see their pet as a member of their family.
 - Many vets recommend new parents take time to settle in pets.
 - Introducing a new animal member to a home is stressful, so it's important to be supported.
- See the petition here: petculture.com.au/peternity-petition

support and understanding behind Aussie pet parents."

YOU'LL TAKE LEAVE ANYWAY

Writer and comedian Michelle Azevedo is a pet parent with Sam Bowden to their dog, Bugle, and their cat, Sherlock.

Azevedo says while past employers have made tending to a pet's needs more difficult, her current employer was more progressive.

"At previous workplaces I had



Comedian Michelle Azevedo and her partner Sam Bowden with their dog Bugle.

more issues with Sherlock," she says. "Once in a while I would need to come to the office a bit later because Sherlock was sick or knocked over a vase and would cut himself if I didn't clean it."

"My employer definitely was not understanding."

"When it comes to your pets' wellbeing, you need an area of understanding – it's not an area that you want to be micromanaged."

"My current boss was saying when it comes to people taking leave to care for their pets, people are going to take the leave anyway."

"They will put their pets first over work, so you need to give them the

opportunity, not just for their wellbeing but to help them be better in your business."

GRIEVING A FAMILY MEMBER

With one-third of Aussie pet owners seeing their pet as a child or baby, according to the PetCulture survey, BoldHR founder Rebecca Houghton says this can translate differently in the workplace.

"Love, care and grief – the feeling, responsibility and devastation that is associated with personal caregiving, be that to a parent, child or pet, should all be treated the same way," Houghton says.

"The pet versus child debate is a

values-based argument, it means no one can ever be proven right or wrong, so make a decision based on the values of your organisation and accept that whatever your decision is, it won't make 100 per cent of your team happy."

PETS IN WORK NOT THE ANSWER

As for allowing pets in the workplace, Houghton is not convinced.

"I can see pets at work being troublesome," she says.

"Allergies, toilet training, fur everywhere and bad behaviour simply isn't everyone's cup of tea. And I pity the cleaners."