

Early word

Mr Vu Ho is a Vietnamese refugee in Victoria. In 2000, Springvale mechanic and Vietnamese refugee Vu Ho bought Baa for \$60. Baa the sheep had spent her early years on a farm before becoming part of Mr Ho's family.

Ten years ago, the Greater Dandenong City Council threatened to confiscate Baa, and issued a \$220 fine under a local law prohibiting livestock on land under half a hectare.

Mr Ho in turn launched legal action against the Council arguing Baa was a family pet, and shouldn't be considered a farm animal. Baa had lived with the family for more than 11 years at that stage.

A steady back and forth of legal battles ensued, eventually mounting up to hundreds of dollars in legal expenses. At the time, Mr Ho was without property and savings.

Mr Ho even trained himself in law, despite limited English so he could represent himself in the Supreme Court of Appeal because no-one would take on his case. The court was told Mr Ho's extensive written submission is one of the most comprehensive the judges have seen from a self-represented litigant.

He said it would be unbearable to think the council could take his pet away. Despite all the legal wranglings, Baa was never removed from the property and remained with Mr Ho until the end. Baa had been battling cancer, and had to have a tumour removed from her neck. Another tumour appeared and this time the vet advised against surgery. Her strength briefly returned last month after being fed one of her favourite snacks - fried chips - but she steadily declined.

“Death is not an obstruction of my love for my sheep,” Mr Vu Ho said. “Love is not only emotion - true love involves something higher than that,” Mr Ho said. “With an animal, I did not expect to have this joy, and I have enjoyed serving this animal ... this is true love.”