

MEDIA RELEASE

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High rise households welcome pets

With an estimated 22% of Australian households now living in homes that are covered by a strata plan, and nearly two million strata properties nationally, high rise households are creating an unprecedented demand for owners corporations to recognize pet ownership as part of strata lifestyle.

“There is a clear trend in Australia away from the detached home on a quarter acre block in suburbia to higher density, often high rise, living that is close to employment and amenities such as shops and restaurants. With this, comes a demand from residents for access to all the lifestyle choices they would have in any other living environment,” says Susie Willis from the Petcare Information and Advisory Service.

“The majority of Australian households own a pet, most often a dog or a cat, and many of the people who are choosing a high rise lifestyle also have pets, or would like to own a pet,” says Susie.

And the latest research by Dr Emma Power from the University of Western Sydney shows that there are many benefits to living in a pet-friendly strata community.

“Our research showed that dogs help their owners to get to know others within the apartment building and local neighbourhood, and can be valuable in creating a strong apartment community. Pet owners were keen to ensure that their pets fitted in well with others in the community, and regularly helped one another with advice on training and caring for pets,” says Dr Power.

In recognition of the trend towards pets living in higher density environments, the Petcare Information Advisory Service (PIAS) and Strata Community Australia (SCA) have developed a Pet Application Form and a Pet Keeping Agreement. The forms provide a clear application process and also allow pet owners and owners corporations to understand and agree on the conditions for owning a pet in a strata property.

Strata by-laws vary significantly around Australia, according to the various legislation of each state and territory. A default or model by-law regarding the keeping of animals often applies and states that a resident must have permission in writing from their owners corporation to keep an animal.

Generally, however, an owners corporation can choose to either adopt or amend the model by-law or create their own by-law. This means that by-laws can vary widely from state to state and from one strata development to another; and the variance can be from accepting pets without the need for approval through to not permitting pets at all. PIAS advises that pet owners, and those considering getting a pet, should check with their owners corporation to see what by-laws apply to their building.

“Assuming you live in a pet-friendly building, the Pet Application Form provides an opportunity to present the owners corporation with relevant and specific information about your pet including training, overall health and references. This not only makes it easier for potential pet owners to apply to keep their pet on the property, but also for the owners corporation to have all the information they need to make a decision,” says Susie.

The Pet Keeping Agreement is between the pet owner and the building’s owners corporation. It enables the owners corporation to clearly detail their expectations of how pets will be kept and managed once they are approved. Both forms can be downloaded from www.petnet.com.au and adapted to suit the specific requirements of a strata property.

PIAS says that the materials have been developed with SCA in recognition of the rights of all strata residents.

“The benefits that pet owners derive from their pets should not be at the expense of non-pet owning residents. Clearly, balance needs to be achieved whereby individual needs are accommodated and residents who choose not to own a pet are unaffected by those that do own pets. At the same time, pet owners who care for their pets in a responsible and considerate manner should not be deprived of the enjoyment their pet brings to their lives.

“Pet owners enjoy better mental health, lower blood pressure, and higher satisfaction with home life. Communities where people walk their dogs have a lower incidence of violent crime and a higher perception of neighbourhood friendliness. Pet-friendly strata properties attract more people and have lower turnover rates and higher profitability. And communities that work together, talk regularly and create more opportunities to socialise are much healthier communities,” says Susie.

Paget the High-Rise Hound

Jonathan and James live on the 8th floor of “Altair”, an award winning apartment building in Rushcutters Bay. The building is pet-friendly and soon after moving in they became the proud owners of Paget, an eight week old Pug/Beagle cross.

Altair has clear guidelines about the keeping of animals, with pet owners required to complete a formal application process and follow all pet-related by-laws. "We needed to gain permission to keep a dog from our landlord first," explains James "Then we had to submit an application to the Owners" Committee."

Paget is now 20 months old and loves her high-rise lifestyle. "We have a balcony and when we go out we leave the door slightly open so she can go in and out as she likes. She has the run of the apartment, but her preferred place is sitting on a chair on the balcony watching the world go by."

The building is home to numerous dogs, which James sees as an advantage. "The dog owners have got to know one another and often help out minding each other's pets. We meet up and go for walks together. The Concierge even has treats and when we come in and out Paget knows if she sits for the Concierge she'll get a reward."

"We weren't thinking of getting a dog when we initially moved here, and we thought long and hard about the responsibilities of owning a pet. Now that we have Paget we just love her."

(ENDS)

Issued on behalf of the Petcare Information and Advisory Service

Available for interview:

Susie Willis
Petcare Information and Advisory Service
Ph: 02 9555 9675

Other media enquiries:

Jill Calder, 03 9654 8098