

## *Dogs in Society Position Paper*

### **The correct selection of dogs**

Successful management of dogs in an urban environment is highly dependent on owners selecting a breed of dog that is appropriate for their situation. The various breeds of dog show marked differences in physical characteristics and personalities, according to the use for which they were originally bred. Factors such as the owner's lifestyle, the physical environment, the dog's size and temperament, and its requirements for food, grooming, exercise and training should all be taken into account when selecting a suitable breed of dog.

It is a common misconception that dwelling type is important to successful dog ownership. Dogs can be successfully integrated into highly urbanised areas, live in close proximity to busy roads or native bushland, or even in high-rise apartments. Environmental enrichment is more important for dogs than space. Exercise and interaction with an owner is far more beneficial (for both owner and dog) than loneliness in a big backyard.

With the rise of single person households in the community and the trend towards longer working hours, many people do not believe that they spend enough time at home to care for an animal satisfactorily. Sometimes keeping more than one animal can help provide acceptable levels of stimulation and companionship.

A new dog can be successfully introduced into a family with children. When selecting a dog that will become a member of a family, it helps to choose a pup that has been socialised with children and other animals in the breeder's home. When a new baby is expected in the family, the dog should be socialised safely with other children and babies some time prior to the arrival of the baby. Any adjustments to the dog's routine should be phased in gradually, also before the arrival of the baby. The dog should be allowed to get used to the sound and smell of the baby, and rewarded when the baby is present to create a positive association for the dog.

With so many different breeds of dog now available, selecting the right breed can be a complex task for aspiring dog owners. Assistance with breed selection is available from many sources, including dog breed societies, veterinarians and dog obedience clubs. PIAS has developed the Selectapet™ computer program to assist potential pet owners to find the breeds of dog or cat that are most appropriate to their circumstances. Selectapet is available on-line on the PIAS website (<http://www.petnet.com.au/>) or via mail-in questionnaire.