



Retirement accommodation successfully plans for pets

Benefits of pets in retirement communities

- Pets provide a range of benefits to owners and the public – in particular companionship and increased communication and mobility
- Many people are reluctant to enter retirement communities unless they can bring their pets
- It is well established that responsible ownership of a pet improves quality of life

Retirement can have repercussions on many aspects of life, including pet ownership, particularly if it entails moving to a different type of residence that does not cater for pets. Ironically however, many retirees find that they have more time to spend with a pet and would enjoy animal companionship.

Unfortunately, few Australian retirement communities have strategies in place to successfully integrate residents' existing pets, let alone plans to cater for new ones. An exception to the rule is the Halcyon retirement community located at Hope Island on Queensland's Gold Coast.

The company involved in managing the community believed that existing retirement community pet policies were in need of an update.

From a business perspective it was obvious that the company could potentially lose sales to people that own pets. But more importantly, they recognised how important pets are in bringing health to individuals and communities.

After conducting research and speaking with animal organisations like the Australian Veterinary Association and Delta Society Australia, and consulting with veterinary behaviourist, Dr Gaille Perry, a workable policy was finalised.

"It was found that many of the retirement communities accepting pets were overly focused on size and breed restrictions to determine permissibility, despite the fact that little dogs can often be very energetic and noisy compared to some larger dogs."

Dr Gaille Perry, Delta

With assistance from Gaille a remodelled pet policy was developed, making it more suitable for medium density communities. Size restrictions were stripped and new standards placed emphasis on responsible pet ownership and animal behaviour determined by professional behaviour assessment.

Please refer to the Appendix for the pet policy printed in full.



Tips

- Encourage permissibility of pets in special facilities by promoting the use of holistic pet policies
- Ensure benches are present in parks near retirement facilities, thus encouraging the residents to walk with their dogs

Web Links

Halcyon - www.halcyondays.com.au