



**HELP FUND GUIDE DOG
PUPPY TRAINING
BY LOVING A LITTER**

Guide Dogs NSW/ACT has come up with a novel way to fund the enormous costs involved in sourcing, raising and training Guide Dog puppies. Aptly named the Pups with Promise Club, individuals, families and businesses

are invited to co-sponsor a litter of puppies and follow their progress from cuddly balls of fluff through to their graduation as Guide Dogs via standard mail, email or a combination of SMS and MMS.

According to Guide Dogs NSW/ACT Fundraising Manager, Jennifer McCaffery, the idea for the Pups with Promise Club evolved when staff and instructors began thinking of fun ways to combine the public's interest in Guide Dogs with a fundraising program that could involve the whole family.

"We wanted to create a co-sponsorship program that was both unique and entertaining," said Jennifer. "Not only is this the first club of its kind to offer its members regular updates by post, email or their mobile phones (with cute extras like an exclusive puppy ringtone), but they get to watch a whole litter of brother and sister pups grow up together."

Membership to the Pups with Promise Club is less than a dollar a day and will help fund Guide Dog training costs – in excess of \$25,000 per dog. The regular progress updates include feedback from the litter's vet, school reports and training highlights until their graduation at around 22 months.

As Australia's population ages, vision impairment is becoming increasingly more prevalent and as a result there is an urgent need for more trained Guide Dogs. It is hoped that the Pups with Promise Club will raise enough money for Guide Dogs NSW/ACT to meet the ongoing demand for new recruits.

For more information contact Guide Dogs NSW/ACT on (02) 9412 9300 or www.guidedogs.com.au



INTERNATIONAL GUIDE DOG DAY

Help Guide Dogs NSW/ACT celebrate International Guide Dog Day on 27th April. This special day is an opportunity to celebrate the mobility and independence a Guide Dog can bring to vision impaired people around the world. These dogs are specially selected and trained to assist people who are blind or vision impaired in moving about safely and independently.

People often ask the question: "What should I do when I meet someone with a Guide Dog?" The answer, usually nothing! The person is probably coping very well on their own, however, if they appear to be experiencing some difficulty, an offer of assistance might be appreciated. If you think this is the case, simply ask them.

Important points to remember when meeting a person with a guide dog:

- ★ Forget the dog! Always talk to the person, not the dog. Ask permission to speak to the dog before doing so.
- ★ If the dog is wearing its harness, it is working and should not be patted or distracted in any way. To carry out its owner's instructions and keep them out of danger, a Guide Dog must keep its mind on the job.
- ★ Once the Guide Dog's harness is removed, it knows that work is over for a time. This is when you may pat the dog with the owner's permission.
- ★ Labrador is the preferred breed of Guide Dog Associations around Australia, and, as you may know, this type of dog loves food. Guide Dogs are, however, fed a balanced diet by their owners and other people should never feed them.
- ★ Working Guide Dogs can go anywhere! They are legally permitted to enter any public place and travel on public transport.



**CELEBRATE WITH
GUIDE DOGS VICTORIA!**

Guide Dogs work in countries as diverse as Brazil, Korea, South Africa, Japan, Hawaii, Spain and Croatia. They faithfully guide their companions through the snow of Finland, the deserts of Israel and the chaotic city of New York.

In fact, blind people have travelled with dogs as companions and protectors for thousands of years. As far as we know, the first person to train dogs specifically to guide vision-impaired people was Johann Klein, founder of the Institute for the Training of the Blind in Vienna. He published a book on their training and use in 1819.

As part of the celebrations surrounding International Guide Dog Day, Guide Dogs Victoria will open their doors at Chandler Highway Kew (Melways Map 45 B1) from 11am-4pm on Sunday 1 May.

Open Day will give members of the public a behind the scenes look at Guide Dogs Victoria's vital work. Visitors will have the opportunity to see cuddly Guide Dog puppies as well as observe how they are trained to guide their vision-impaired companions. Entry is by gold coin donation and no pets are allowed. For more information visit www.guidedogs.asn.au

OWNER WINS BSL CASE

A disabled dog owner won a convincing victory of breed specific laws that had deprived him of his dog in the Gold Coast area of Queensland. The Gold Coast City Council's dangerous dog laws were totally discredited after a magistrate found major flaws in how so-called "dangerous" breeds were identified.

Fonzie, a crossbreed which had been on death row for four months after being seized as an illegal, unregistered "Pit Bull Terrier", was set free for a heart-warming reunion with owner Justin Taylor last week, but the bigger picture should be of far more concern to the council.

Magistrate Jennifer Batts said she was not satisfied that the council's dog control officers had sufficient qualifications to determine the breed of suspected dangerous dogs.

Mr Taylor, a quadriplegic, went to court to win back his "best mate" after Fonzie, which Mr Taylor claims is actually a Staffordshire Bull Terrier, was picked up by animal control officers in July and identified as a "Pit Bull", using a questionnaire-style criteria list. Fonzie was sentenced to death under the council's draconian laws which are largely based on the UK's flawed 1991 dangerous Dogs Act. The American Pit Bull Terrier is one of four types of dog banned on the Gold Coast.

Lawyers for Mr Taylor argued the officers were hardly experts in identifying breeds of dogs and that the identification process itself was too open to interpretation.

The court was told the total training given to council officers in identifying dog breeds amounted to a one-day seminar, and a dog could be identified as "dangerous" if it scored more than 70 per cent in a 16-point test.

CALLING ALL FAT CATS AND PODGY POOCHES

Slim your pet with this year's Hill's Pet Slimmer of the Year Competition

With obesity no longer a problem just confined to humans, Hill's Pet Nutrition has launched a search for fat cats and podgy pooches to enter the 2005 Pet Slimmer of the Year competition. Just as Australians have got heavier over the years, so too have the nation's pets, with more than 40 per cent of dogs and one-third of cats either overweight or obese.

The annual competition, now in its seventh year, was launched by Hill's Pet Nutrition to help raise awareness of the serious problem of pet obesity. Almost 500 veterinary clinics nationally participate in the Weight Watchers-style competition, which involves regular weigh-ins and rewards for reaching weight loss milestones.

Each pet slimmer will be in the running for the state title, with state finalists battling it out later this year for a tilt at the 2005 Hill's National Pet Slimmer of the Year crown.

Just as with people, obesity has many health implications. Shortened life expectancy, arthritis, heart and respiratory problems, a reduced resistance to infection and diabetes are all associated with increased weight. A cat or dog that is carrying excess kilos is also likely to be irritable, sleep most of the day, exercise less and have a less positive outlook on life.

So if your pet is looking portly, speak to your local vet and he or she could enter the Hill's Pet Slimmer of the Year 2005 competition and be in the running for the grand prize – travel vouchers for your next holiday. In addition, your pet could win a year's supply of Hill's food and vouchers for a pet shopping spree.

**WHEN BEING A LOSER MEANS YOU'RE A WINNER
RSPCA DOG THE BIGGEST LOSER**

A Toowoomba dog's transformation from podgy pooch to streamline canine has made the local RSPCA Shelter Manager, Gail Lane, a very proud owner. Sarah, a six-year-old coolie cross, lost 25 per cent of her body weight by dropping from a whopping 26.8 kilograms to a slim-line 19 kilos on a special weight loss food supplied by pet food manufacturer, Hill's Pet Nutrition.

Prior to joining the program, Sarah was one of the 41 per cent of dogs in Australia that are either overweight or obese. Gail realised her own dog was overweight but was at a loss as to what to do about it. As the major sponsor of the RSPCA, Hill's Pet Nutrition agreed to sponsor Sarah to lose weight. After a vet check, Sarah was prescribed Hill's Prescription Diet r/d, a specially formulated food that helps enable weight loss.

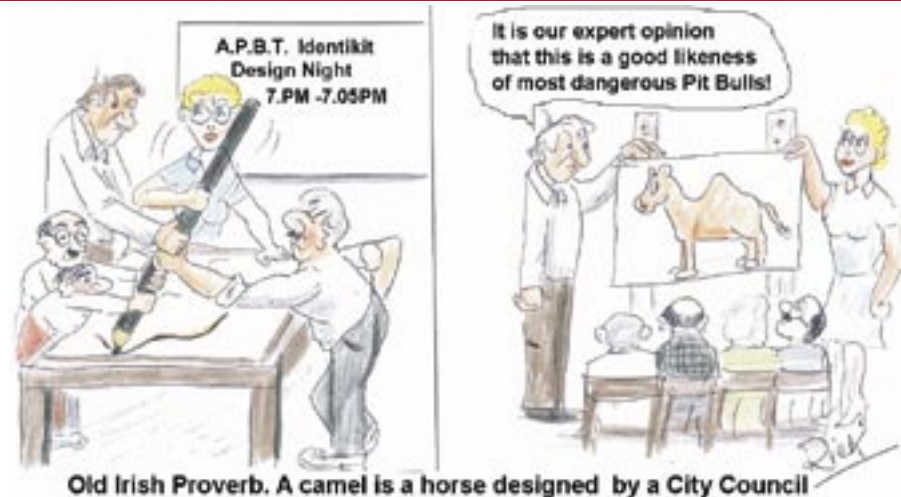
"Seeing Sarah every day meant I didn't notice her gradual weight gain. I really wanted to make sure she was receiving the right nutrition to make her healthier and more energised. The Hill's Pet Slimmer Program worked and Sarah now looks fantastic!" Gail said.

Since shedding the kilos, she's fitter, happier and more energetic than ever before. "You can really notice that her energy level has increased and continues to compete in obedience competitions. For the past three years Sarah has won four trophies in obedience becoming the highest scoring non-registered dog in an obedience trial in Toowoomba."

Hill's National Veterinary Business Development Manager, Michelle Humphreys said inactivity and feeding table scraps were the most common causes of weight gain in pets. "Unfortunately some people are literally killing their pets with kindness. Just giving one small biscuit to a dog is equivalent to a human eating a burger. Overweight pets are more likely to suffer a range of health problems, including heart disease, diabetes, respiratory problems, cancer, joint problems, skin complaints and reproductive disorders," said Michelle.

The Hill's Pet Slimmer Program involves owners taking their animal to the veterinary hospital for regular weigh-ins, with prizes earned for weight loss milestones - like a 'Weight Watchers' for pets. Since reaching her goal weight of 19 kilograms on Hill's Prescription Diet r/d, Sarah has maintained her trim new figure on Hill's Science Diet Canine Adult Light.

To register your pet in the 2005 Hill's Pet Slimmer of the Year competition or for further information on pet obesity, call FRECALL 1800 800 733 to find your nearest participating clinic.



That did not satisfy magistrate Ms Batts, who dismissed the expertise of council animal control officer Selina Neill in identifying Fonzie as a "Pit Bull".

Lawyers for Mr Taylor had brought along their own "expert", a leading veterinary surgeon, but in the light of Ms Batts' ruling, his testimony was not even required.

Mr Taylor, who has relied on Fonzie's companionship since a surfing accident left him in a wheelchair five years ago, buried his head in his hands as the verdict was read out. He was overjoyed at the result.

Acting for Mr Taylor, barrister Jack Pappas said the outcome showed there were serious problems with the council's protocol.

The court's decision could have far-reaching consequences for the council, which has already destroyed more than 60 animals declared as dangerous dogso, as last week's verdict opens the door for other dog owners to challenge the conclusion of animal control officers.

The council's Director of community Services, Collette McCool, said it was too early to speculate on any move to tighten procedures, although it was clear that the ruling had rattled gold Coast City Council, who had hitherto ignored advice from anti-BSL campaigners that BSL was unworkable and unjust.

Meanwhile, Justin Taylor and Fonzie were reunited in an emotional meeting at the City Dog Pound, before Justin took his "best mate" home with him for a well-deserved meal of his favourite dog food.

NICK MAYS From: Our Dogs 12/11/2004

ND/RL Editor's note: Interesting to find this in the UK paper