



CELEBRITY VET APPEALS FOR A MORE PET-FRIENDLY COMMUNITY

SUE DUNLEVY

HE'S tackled sharks and given a rhino a pedicure, now celebrity vet Dr Chris Brown's new challenge is to wrangle local councils into making Australia pet friendly.

Pet ownership is in decline as rising costs and unfriendly regulations get between man and his best friends and it risks harming our health and our community says Dr Brown.

cause people assume Australia is a pet-loving nation," Dr Brown told News Corp.

"We're finding pets are sadly passing away and they are just not being replaced and we need to look at why that is," he says.

"The conclusion we're drawing is perhaps it's not so easy to own a pet and pets are not included in our society as much as they could be."

In Europe people can take

A 9 per cent drop in ownership of furry, feathered and scaled friends between 2013 and 2016 is being blamed on pet-unfriendly strata laws as well as the rising costs of keeping pets.

Dr Chris Brown told the National General Assembly of Local Government in Canberra yesterday that creating pet-friendly outdoor spaces is a key factor in supporting pet ownership in Australia.

The benefits of pet ownership, such as improved health and wellbeing, could be lost forever unless local councils work with pet owners and the wider community to build more pet-friendly environments, he says.

"Pet ownership is in decline, we're talking 200,000 cats have disappeared from the pet landscape in the past 12 months and 100,000 dogs which is quite surprising be-

their pets on planes and trains and buses and they are much more a part of everyday life.

"As a result pets are happier and feel stimulated, they feel more energised and more included and that makes a happier pet," says Dr Brown.

Dr Brown wants councils to build more pet-friendly spaces such as off leash dog parks surrounded by fences but containing agility courses, poo bags and water for the dogs.

The important role pets have in making better communities was uncovered in new University Western Australia research released this week which shows pets are the glue that hold communities together.

Researcher Dr Lisa Wood found pets are often the reason neighbours meet "and they are often a topic of conversation over the garden fence".

"It's a positive way to start

a discussion as opposed to someone complaining about a fence in the wrong place or a tree overhanging your yard," Dr Brown said.

US researchers have also found therapy pets help patients deal better with pain.

"If we make cities and towns more pet friendly this could increase pet ownership and contribute to a more healthy and friendly Australia," said Dr Chris Brown.



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Celebrity vet Chris Brown with two West Highland White Terriers. Dr Brown says that pets have an important role in making better communities because they promote good health and social activity.