Heart Foundation Wins Pet Friendly Planning Award

A planning and design tool that encourages the consideration of dogs in public open spaces has won the inaugural 2012 Pet Friendly Planning Award.

The ‘Matrix of Like Design Considerations’ - a tool that can be used to demonstrate synergies between guidelines that influence design in the built environment was entered by the National Heart Foundation of Australia (SA Division).

The search for a planning project that best considered the needs of our pets was launched in July by the Planning Institute of Australia (PIA) and the Petcare Information Advisory Service (PIAS).

Heart Foundation Acting CEO, Wendy Keech said the Heart Foundation was very proud to receive this award as dog ownership produces considerable health benefits and provides an important form of social support that encourages dog owners to walk.

"With the high level of dog ownership in Australia, the relationship between dog ownership and physical activity levels is important.” Ms Keech said.

“With 67% of adults not doing the recommended amount of physical activity, these design considerations will encourage more people to be active, reducing their risk of heart disease – Australia's biggest single killer.

Two commendations awarded in the 2012 Pet Friendly Planning Awards went to the Hume City Council at Broadmeadows in Victoria and the Onkaparinga City Council in South Australia.

The Judges said both local authorities provided good examples of how the provision of pet friendly places could be advanced. Their entries demonstrated extensive research, community engagement, and thorough consideration of the design that went into the development of enclosed dog parks.

The judging panel was made up of Melbourne based town planner Virginia Jackson; an international expert in pet friendly planning and the built environment, Susan Thompson, Associate Professor and Director of the Healthy Built Environments Program at the University of NSW and Jason Black, National Board Director of the Planning Institute of Australia and Director of Insight Planning.

The judges were impressed by the Heart Foundation’s entry as it incorporates pet friendly planning as part of good design that supports people being healthy in everyday living.

Associate Professor Susan Thompson said planning has to consider complex and sometimes conflicting needs of all members of society, including dog owners.

“We are living closer together in apartments and townhouses with smaller private outdoor areas. As a result, public parks are more important than ever because they have to meet multiple needs of city dwellers and their pets” Professor Thompson said.

“Planning guidelines must ensure that public spaces are well designed and supportive of healthy communities. The Heart Foundation’s matrix brings the key considerations together, including how to plan for pets and their owners in denser urban environments”.

PIA National President Dyan Currie congratulated the Heart Foundation for its on-going interest in planning and helping to create healthier places.

“The Heart Foundation worked closely with PIA in creating the Healthy Spaces and Places program to ensure better planned and healthier communities for the future”, Ms Currie said.

“HSP is working with people in local government, urban design and other practitioners engaged in planning, designing or developing urban environments.

“The planning, layout and design of our towns, cities, neighbourhoods and community spaces have a direct bearing on healthy communities. It’s nice to see our pets are now being considered in healthy planning endeavours.”

The 2012 Pet Friendly Planning Award recognises planners whose work encourages the social integration of pets in city precincts and public spaces.

The value of the award is $8,000 with the announcement made yesterday, World Town Planning Day. The winning project will be officially launched by the Heart Foundation in December and showcased at the 2013 PIA National Congress in Canberra.

Media Contact: Geoff Mullins at Pan Communications 0402 070 225