



# It's a dog's life

**N**ursing homes are setting guidelines for animals.

Most nursing homes don't allow dogs or cats. It turns out that many older people have pets and while it's enough of a wrench to leave the family home for a room in a nursing facility, it's even worse – sometimes unbearable – to also leave the family pet.

Sometimes these pets are the owner's best remaining friend, and the decision to have them put down is heartbreaking.

"Ageing should not be about giving up any of the rights or benefits you had at other stages of your life," says Council on the Ageing ECO **Ian Yates**.

"Pets are one of the few interventions capable of permanently lifting the atmosphere of retirement homes and care facilities."



**Marcy and best friend Foxy.**

Photo: Kate Elmes

The new guidelines are the work of veterinarian and animal behaviourist

**Dr Gaille Perry**. They recommend pets be vaccinated and de-sexed

cats be kept indoors or in a cat run, and dogs be kept on a lead and out of common areas such as swimming pools.

"The guidelines make it easier for people to bring their pet to the retirement community," says Dr Perry.

Research by WA University's **Dr Lisa Wood** showed groups in nursing homes that were visited by pets had statistically significant increases in feeling enthusiastic, attentive, interested and inspired.

**Marcy Williams**, a resident of Sea Change Village in Goolwa, has owned Foxy Lady for the past nine years.

"She found us when we lived in Zillmere, Brisbane; we think she was abandoned," Marcy said. "We flew her across when we moved to Goolwa."