



# Dogs lube wheels of friendship

SALLY GLAETZER

DOGS are the best people according to the song by the Fauves and new research has found they are also the best way to meet new people.

Even an embarrassing poo faux pas can turn into a conversation starter, Hobart dog owners say.

A study commissioned by an online pet-care directory showed dogs were a conversation starter for 94 per cent of Australians who took their pets to dog parks.

Dog lovers often found they had more in common with each other than just their love of their pets.

The study by town planner Virginia Jackson found 38 per cent of people who met at dog parks went on to become more than passing acquaintances.

"Other research undertaken recently at the University of Western Australia shows that companion animals help strengthen social fabric," said Susie Willis, of the online Petcare Information and Advisory Service.

The regular dog walkers at Lenah Valley's John Turnbull Park may not know each others' names but they definitely know the names of each others' dogs.

"Coming down here, there's a

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lot of people you'll see all the time and the dogs know each other," Peter Waters, of Mt Stuart, said yesterday as he walked maltese terrier Charlie.

"Some dogs are territorial but once they know one another they're right."

June Green, of New Town, agreed.

"Dog people are usually very friendly," she said.

Mrs Green's dog Donni is lucky enough most days to score a long walk at Cornelian Bay and a shorter run around at John Turnbull Park.

One benefit of off-leash areas was that the dogs could chase each other and exercise without too much exertion by their owners.

"They wear each other out . . . she'll sleep well tonight," Mrs Green said.



Page: 1  
General News  
By: Sally Glaetzer  
Region: Hobart  
Circulation: 47123  
Type: Australian Capital City Daily  
Size: 437.45 sq.cms  
Frequency: MTWTFS-



**SMILES:** Peter Waters, with his dog Charlie, and June Green, with Donni yesterday.