

Fireworks and pets

As the New Year approaches, Townsville City Council is urging local residents to keep their pets safe during the New Year's Eve celebration fireworks on December 31.

Chairman of the Community Safety and Health Committee, Councillor Dale Last, said fireworks could be a cause of great distress for the family pooch.

"Dogs are particularly afraid of fireworks, but you will also see cats, birds and other pets become more stressed as well," Cr Last said.

"The most common problem over New Year is animals running away or injuring themselves out of fear.

"Responsible owners should take steps to ensure their pets are safe, comfortable and secure during fireworks displays."

- » Take your dog for a walk early in the day and feed them a solid meal – a well-fed and exercised dog will be less anxious during the night.
- » Encourage calm behaviour by distracting them from the disturbance.
- » Remain cheerful and in control to demonstrate that nothing is wrong.
- » Ensure all pets are securely tied up or kept inside the house or yard. Block potential exits and provide some toys. Chewable toys are great for relieving stress.
- » Make sure your dog is registered and can be identified in the event of an escape. A tag with your phone number can mean a faster return if your dog wanders into a neighbour's yard.

"This is a time where it is particularly important that pets are identified and registered. Council staff devote considerable time to rescuing lost pets after community celebrations and we need all the help we can get to identify and return pets," Cr Last said.

For more advice, ask your local vet or pet shop, or contact council's Animal Management Help Line on 4727 9000.



Animals aren't presents

Townsville residents are being reminded to chew it over carefully before giving a pet for a present this Christmas.

While puppies and kittens may make the kids swoon on Christmas morning, by New Year's Day the novelty of cleaning up after the family's new addition can wear off.

Community Safety and Health Committee chairman, Cr Dale Last said the adoption of a new pet requires far more than puppy love.

"Buying a pet is a ten to 20 year commitment," Cr Last said.

"Animals require daily exercise, food and water. They also attract vet bills, registration fees, training and equipment costs and accommodation costs while you go away on holidays.

Cr Last said that new pet owners didn't always appreciate the enormity of the responsibilities that come with a new pet.

"Every year the RSPCA is flooded with unwanted animals after the festive period and hundreds more become strays.

"Straying dogs pose a threat to residents especially children or the elderly, as well as presenting a hazard to motorists."

Cr Last urged residents thinking of giving a pet as a gift to first check with the intended receiver and to consider the alternatives, such as gift vouchers from the RSPCA or World Wildlife Fund.



Council's Environmental Health Services has fact sheets for pet owners, which can be accessed via the customer service centre on 4727 9000, by calling into the Walker St or

Thuringowa Drive administration buildings or via the website at www.townsville.qld.gov.au

Island's drop in energy impresses judges

Magnetic Island won over judges in Sydney recently.

It wasn't the island's glimmering blue waters that did it, nor the sun-kissed boulders anchoring stunning hoop pines. The judges weren't even swayed by the thought of a lazy Sunday spent stretched out on the sand. What really impressed these judges was what was going off inside Magnetic Island homes – televisions, power tools, stereos, you name it.

Island residents' efforts to reduce wasteful energy usage, increase solar energy usage and cut greenhouse gas emissions by about 50,000 tonnes saw the Magnetic Island Solar Suburb bring home the Community Action Award at the Australian Sustainable Cities Awards.

The awards, held by the Keep Australia Beautiful network recognise the efforts of residents, community groups, businesses and government agencies to protect and enhance their local environment to ensure its long term sustainability at all levels.

Judge, Sean Rooney, who is also Director of the CSIRO Sustainable Communities Initiative, said it was great to see a community come together to reduce "peak demand" electricity usage as a way to

reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

"Another excellent initiative is the Smart Lifestyle Centre," Judge Rooney said.

"Formerly the Horseshoe Bay Sport and Recreation Club, it was redeveloped by Ergon Energy with the support of Townsville City Council, into a sustainability showcase that provides interactive learning on how solar power works, supported with energy efficiency information."

Similar Learnscapes may be visited at CityLibraries Flinders Street and Thuringowa Central, C Bar on the Strand and at Riverway. There are plans for more Learnscapes to be established on the Strand foreshore, at Rowes Bay and in the CBD.

The federally funded Magnetic Island Solar Suburb project is led by Ergon Energy in partnership with Townsville City Council and the island community. The council's Citisolar program provides supportive education programs to spread the word about energy reduction and conservation activities and to encourage the community to become proactive about achieving a sustainable Townsville.