



## AGE-OLD BATTLE Pooches trump cats in popularity stakes

# Raining dogs in Gladstone

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Pets

IT IS official, Gladstone residents are hardcore dog lovers.

There were 8731 dogs registered in the Gladstone region at the end of 2014, with the most popular breed of dog being a staffordshire bull terrier. There were 2006 cats registered, too.

The Boyne-Tannum Veterinary Surgery has 1119 staffys on its books and head nurse Rayna McDonald said the breed of dog suited many different types of people.

"The biggest thing is they are a companion animal," Ms McDonald said.

"They are good for sick people with health problems and they benefit people with depression and PTSD."

Harbour City Veterinary Surgery had five appointments with staffy dog clients on Thursday alone.

"They are the most popular dog in Gladstone. The vet specialist in Brisbane used to call Gladstone the staffy capital of Australia," veterinary nurse Kerry Huth said.

"They are a good-sized dog and super loyal to their families."

So why is it that Gladstone loves dogs so much?

Senior research fellow at CQUniversity, Dr Bradley Smith, studies animal and human behaviour. He said there were a number of reasons.

"Around 60% of households in Australia have a cat or dog and 40% of residents have dogs," he said.

"If you are moving to a strange town and you don't have

family or friends around, coming home to a pet or dog gives you support and love, enabling you to form a bond with something."

Dr Smith said dogs also encouraged owners to leave the house and exercise.

Self-identifying with a pet is also a factor in why we find it necessary to have a dog.

"Dogs are a reflection of ourselves. If you want to be seen as a tough bloke you will buy a tough breed. People also choose particular breeds

to make a statement," Dr Smith said.

"They can deliberately choose a breed that no one has ever heard of before that's unique."

Protection is the other factor.

"A lot of single females who have kids like protection. You might feel when you are away from your house because of shift work having something at home protecting your assets is quite an important thing," he said.

Tracey Peters described her dog Gary and former dog Sally, "humogs" - pretty much the same as a human.

"It was with sad regret when I had to put my faithful old girl Sally to sleep at the ripe old age of 15 and two months. She saw me get married, divorced, and everything in between, she was my rock," Tracey said.

"And now there is Gary, who I love with my heart and soul.

"My dogs

aren't just dogs. They're humogs!"

Selena Bell has three dogs, one a staffy-cross blue heeler.

"They are loving companions to us now our children

are all grown up, and secondly they keep guard of our home and yard, and watch over all our neighbours."

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### MOST POPULAR DOG NAMES

- Bella
- Max
- Diesel
- Molly
- Jack

