



Attention: Mr Steve McCutcheon
Chief Executive Officer,
Food Standards Australia New Zealand

Via Email: submissions@foodstandards.gov.au.

13th June, 2012

Dear Mr McCutcheon,

RE: Proposal P1018, Companion Dogs in Outdoor Dining Areas

Thank you for the opportunity to provide a submission on companion dogs in outdoor dining areas.

The Petcare Information & Advisory Service (PIAS) is committed to promoting socially responsible pet ownership and has worked since 1966 with government, media, welfare and community groups to achieve that aim. PIAS has been at the forefront of Australian research into the human/companion animal bond for decades.

We would like to congratulate Food Standards Australia New Zealand on taking a risk-based approach to food hygiene where the presence of pet dogs in outdoor dining areas is concerned. PIAS also believes that addressing inconsistencies in standards across different Australian jurisdictions is a rational foundation for Proposal P1018.

Research shows that pets deliver a host of community health benefits. Pet owners are happier and healthier than non-pet owners; pets help connect people with nature and each other, they make people feel secure, and help overcome increasingly sedentary habits and isolating lifestyles. It is not surprising that pet ownership is so highly valued, with the majority of owners regarding their pet as "one of the family"ⁱ. In saying that, we know that nearly 40% of Australian households have a dog.

The research evidence indicates that the benefits of dog ownership far outweigh the negatives. Accordingly, by opening up the opportunity for businesses to permit people with dogs to sit at outdoor dining areas, a net benefit to the local community would be expected to occur. Pets, and dogs in particular, have been shown to act as social lubricants, to bridge social divides, and to make it easier for strangers to start a conversationⁱⁱ. In a business such as a café or outdoor restaurant, this can only be seen as a positive.

PIAS believes that the needs of pet owners and non-pet owners are equally legitimate and need to be accounted for in the proposal. We agree that a balanced approach where the individual food business has the discretion to allow the presence of companion dogs in outdoor dining areas is a sound approach.

In the interests of providing an environment that is acceptable to both those with and without companion dogs, we would like to make the following recommendation for your consideration:

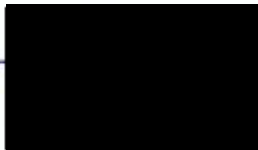
RECOMMENDATION

- Make available to businesses some guidelines on how to develop internal policies or procedures for managing dog-related issues at their premises, such as nuisance behaviour, waste, drinking water (for dogs), and other common but manageable issues.

As an organisation, PIAS has a strong track record in working with professional and government agencies to produce guidelines to address the many manageable situations where companion animals interact with the community. We would be happy to make ourselves available (at no charge) to contribute expertise to FSANZ should you wish to consider our recommendation.

Please feel free to contact me for a discussion.

Yours sincerely



Dr Tim Adams, BVSc

National Director

Petcare Information and Advisory Service

ⁱ Pets and Community Health - <http://www.petnet.com.au/pets-and-community-health>

ⁱⁱ Living Well Together – Dr Lisa Wood, University of Western Australia