



Pets in the city

Four-legged friends can live happily in the big smoke

Words Susan Bugg Photography Chris Groenhout

Feline fan
Daniel Cordner works full-time but makes sure
Boots comes out to play at night (above)

Big and beautiful
The Goodwins exercise Merlin and Grail (above right)

Relaxed
Irish wolfhound Merlin prefers the peace and quiet
of inner suburbia (centre right)

New abode
Tony Smarrelli and Bart love their home (far right)

Most mornings around six, in Yarra Park around the MCG, a dedicated little group gathers to start their day with exercise.

Big guys and little guys, the friends run, chase after balls and pant with exertion.

But there's no arduous day at the office ahead for these city dwellers. An hour of fun and games over, they go back on the lead for a short walk home and breakfast.

Owning a pet is one of life's joys, and you don't need a big back yard to join the fun.

"In Australia there's a perception that if you

don't have a back yard, you can't have a dog. But that's not true. People in high-rise New York, in Europe and Asia have dogs and they manage. It's not a barrier," Denise Humphries, from the Petcare Information & Advisory Service, says.

No matter where you live, your dog needs exercise. Yarra Park is among several inner-city parks where nearby human and canine residents can stretch their legs.

"There are all sorts of dogs in our group, from little fluffies to big ones like greyhounds and bull terriers," says Rod Goodwin, whose own experience shows that not only can you have a dog in the city, you can have big ones.

Rod and his wife Brigitta have two Irish wolfhounds: Merlin, an 80kg male, and his 60kg half-sister Grail. They are five years old and the latest in a succession of wolfhounds the Goodwins have owned for more than 25 years in the inner city.

"I was attracted by the idea of a giant dog that's a pushover in its personality," Rod says. "They're real couch potatoes," Brigitta says.

"People are initially surprised to find out we have wolfhounds, but we explain that if we had