



## Pets are not stocking stuffers

South Australians are being asked to think carefully before adopting an animal this Christmas.

Dog and Cat Management Board Chairperson Jan Connolly said no-one should ever buy a pet on a whim or as a surprise gift.

“Buying a puppy or a kitten is not like buying a stuffed toy or a doll,” Jan said.

“Pets are a living commitment for the animal’s lifetime – they aren’t something to be discarded after a couple of months if you get bored with them.

“If you are buying a pet for a gift, then the recipient must know and be involved in the selection, taking into account factors such as yard size, finances and the time available for grooming, training and exercise.”

Australia has the fourth-highest dog ownership rate in the world, with the US in the lead.

Nearly 3.7 million dogs are registered nationwide, with close to 298,000 of those in South Australia.

Half of all South Australian households have a dog, compared to the Australian average of 40 per cent.

The most popular breeds continue to be Maltese terriers, Australian kelpies, Labrador retrievers and Jack Russell terriers.

Jan said it was vital to choose a pet that was right for the individual, their family and home, rather than simply opting for what was popular at the time.

“Not every dog or cat is right for every home,” she said. “Before purchasing a pet, take the time to research breeds and choose one that fits with your lifestyle.

“Research has showed that matching pet and owner characteristics leads to greater satisfaction for owners and a much lower rate of surrender or abandonment.

“Owning a pet is a long-term commitment, and choosing an unsuitable pet can be a distressing experience for everyone concerned.

“Every February and March, we see a sharp rise in the number of dogs entering shelters, with about a quarter of those being surrendered by their owners simply because they no longer want them.

“We also see far too many pets finding their way to shelters after Christmas because they have been abandoned, which is terribly traumatic for the animals and heartbreaking for the shelter staff.

“We’d just like everyone to remember that while Christmas is a time for giving, it’s also a time for love.

“Make your selection carefully, be kind to your pets, put in the time for training and socialising them and they’ll love you for it.”

To help choose a pet that fits with your property and lifestyle, visit [www.gooddogsa.com](http://www.gooddogsa.com) and [www.goodcatsa.com](http://www.goodcatsa.com) and take the free and easy Select-a-pet Quiz to find your best match.

### Media contact

**Georgia Gowing**

Senior Media Adviser

Department of Environment, Water and Natural Resources

Mobile: 0467 795 640

Email: [georgia.gowing@sa.gov.au](mailto:georgia.gowing@sa.gov.au)