

27th July 2004

Media release

For comment, please contact

Richard Denniss 02 6125 1270 or 0419 222 511

More spent on pets than on foreign aid

Doggie floatation vests, diamond jewellery, gourmet cat food, pet breath freshener and sleeping bags for ferrets are among items that have pushed Australian spending on pets above what the nation spends on foreign aid according to a report by the Australia Institute.

The report, entitled *Overconsumption of Pet Food in Australia*, estimates that Australians spend over \$2.2 billion on their pets compared to foreign aid spending of less than \$2 billion.

“Pets bring joy to millions of Australians but it seems our priorities are out of kilter when items such as breath fresheners for dogs and gourmet cat food are behind an upsurge in expenditure on Australian pets,” Richard Denniss, Deputy Director of the Australia Institute, said.

In 2003 Australians spent over \$1.2 billion on pet food, \$169 million on other pet products and more than \$700 million taking pets to the vet. Some doggie ‘treats’ retail for over \$100 per kilo while diamond jewellery, buoyancy vests for dogs and sleeping bags for ferrets, costing hundreds of dollars, are also now on the market in Australia.

“As people are working longer hours, earning more money and feeling more cut off from the world there is a tendency for their focus to shift inwards. The companies selling the pet products are taking advantage of this phenomenon by trying to convince people to spend \$100 per kilo on treats for their dogs,” Dr Denniss said.

“There is no evidence a pet appreciates a \$50 toy more than a \$5 toy.”

This demand for ever more expensive pet products is coming at a time when, according to a Newspoll survey commissioned by The Australia Institute, 62 per cent of Australians agreed with the statement that they could not afford to buy everything they really need, including 47 per cent of people in households earning over \$70,000 per year.

“Many Australians believe that they are struggling to make ends meet but prefer to put gourmet food in the pet bowl rather than nutritious food on their own dinner table, or any food on the tables of the world’s poor”, Dr Denniss said.