

## Pooches are singles' best bedmates

Melbourne: Dogs are called a man's and a woman's best friend, but now these furry mates have become so close to singles in Australia that they ease their loneliness by sharing their bed with pooches.

About one in three singles said they let their dog or cat in their bed, a major shift from 10 years ago when just 8 per cent would do so.

Vanessa Papas, 25, is one single who doesn't mind sharing a blanket with her eight-year-old dog Chops.

"Chops is very much a house dog and has always just been my baby and a member of the family," news.com.au quoted her as saying.

"Since we've had him he always just comes into my room and climbs on to the bed. It's an arrangement that works very well for both of us. "He likes the attention and I like having the company," she added. While people sharing their bed with their pets are still in the minority, a



survey also revealed four out of five singles allow their pet inside. Women are more likely to have their pets indoors. Only about 20 per cent of dogs are now left out in the doghouse. In 2000, 37 per cent of pets slept outside.

The figures come from a national survey of 600 people released by the Petcare Information Advisory Service.

CEO Susie Willis said the way society and pets interact is changing. Willis said that a part of the issue was about feeling secure. "For people living alone there is a level of security in having the pet there and we know from our research that women in particular do say they feel more secure when the dog is around," she said.

## Here are the rules of smart phone etiquette

Washington : With iPhones and Blackberrys seeping into offices, homes as well as classrooms, there is a need for people to practice some smartphone etiquettes, says an expert.

However, it is difficult to demarcate what is socially acceptable or is taboo while using these high-tech gadgets.

"The key is how you choose to use it. It has an off switch, it has a vibrate or silence. You can check voice mail later. You can choose

how to use this technology and I think that is very important key to getting it right," Discovery News quoted Anna Post as saying.

Post is author and spokesperson for the Emily Post Institute, an organization that specializes in etiquette training. She said that there are few widely accepted taboos surrounding Smartphone behaviour, but that some standard of etiquette is developing.

## Soon, swipe cell phone to pay for shopaholics' purchases

London : A mobile phone that can be swiped at the till to make instant purchases may soon end the need to carry cash or even a wallet. Although it has yet to go into full commercial use, after five months of a six-month trial in the Spanish resort of Sitges near Barcelona, the results of the hi-tech new payment method look impressive. Locals were given 1,500 Samsung phones fitted with special SIM cards and security chips for use at 500 businesses, reports the Sun. And more than half of users are still regularly

paying by phone, with the average sale an impressive 31 euros (26.50 pounds).

The innovation is the result of collaboration between payment company Visa, mobile operator Telefonica - the owners of O2 - and Spanish bank la Caixa. For anything under 20 euros, the retailer just keys in the amount or scans the barcode before the phone is swiped across the front of a sensor. Larger purchases require a four-digit PIN number, which adds security should the phone fall into the wrong

hands. Phones can be pre-loaded with cash or linked directly to a bank account. As well as being a payment system, security passes for work, gym membership or even Oyster cards for London commuters can also be added. However there are still some major obstacles. For the system to work, the mobile needs to use a SIM card with a payment function built in, plus a supporting secure chip similar to a top-up memory card. And there needs to be enough financial incentive for the mobile operators to join in.

## Talking to death: Texts, phones kill 16,000, says study

Washington : Drivers distracted by talking or texting on cell phones killed an estimated 16,000 people from 2001 to 2007, US researchers reported on Thursday. The estimate, one of the first scientific attempts to quantify how many people have died in accidents caused specifically by mobile telephone distractions, also suggests a growing number of these drivers are under 30. "Our results suggested that recent and rapid increases in texting volumes have resulted in thousands of additional road fatalities in the United States," Fernando Wilson and Jim Stimpson of the University of North Texas Health Science Center wrote in the American Journal of Public Health. Wilson and Stimpson used details on road deaths from each state, on cell phone

ownership and data on text message volume from the Federal Communications Commission. They got reports from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration on deaths attributable to distracted driving. "Since roughly 2001-2002, texting volumes have increased by several hundred percent," Wilson said in a telephone interview. In 2002, 1 million texts were sent every month; this rose to 110 million in 2008. "Since 2001 our model predicts that about 16,000 people have died since then that we attribute to the increase in texting volume in the United States." Just talking on a cell phone can distract a driver, and several studies have demonstrated that, even with a hands-free device.

## Whistling while working makes you do your job better

London : Whistling while you work could help you do your job better, suggests a new study.

According to a leading psychologist, whistling or singing helps distract the mind from trying too hard and prevents mental overload. The suggestion is based on a study into the phenomenon of "choking" - the moment when a footballer misses a critical penalty or a top student flunks a vital exam. Dr Sian Beilock of the University of Chicago argues far from being down to "just nerves", choking occurs when the brain finds itself with too many pieces of information to process, resulting in "paralysis by analysis". The same holds true when presenting a vital sales pitch,

making an important putt or doing an audition.

"Choking is sub-optimal performance, not just poor performance," the Daily Mail quoted Beilock, who used brain scans to study what is going on the mind during high pressure situations in the lab, as saying. "It's a performance that is inferior to what you can do and have done in the past and occurs when you feel pressure to get everything right." Some of the most memorable moments of choking occur in sports when the whole world is watching, she said. Even

singing helps stop parts of the brain that might interfere with performance from taking over, she said. She has dubbed the phenomenon paralysis by analysis - when people try to control every aspect of what they are doing in a bid to ensure success.

