

Melbourne Leader

YARRA EDITION

melbourneleader.com.au MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 5, 2011 \$1 Incl. GST



9/11 REMEMBERED MELBOURNE MAN'S LUCKY ESCAPE p8-9



RESIDENT ANGER APARTMENT PLAN CRITICISED p11

Python breeder Kevin Welsh says snakes are becoming increasingly popular with inner-city residents.
Picture: MARK STEWART N10ME203 Digital image



Snakes charming

Lifestyle | Christopher Gillett

Reptiles all the rage for city renters

SCORES of pythons and lizards are being kept as pets by inner-city apartment residents unable to own dogs or cats. The reptiles – which can be bought from \$100 – are “rapidly” entering more and more households in high-density areas, according to breeders. Python breeder and secretary of the Victorian Herpetological Society Kevin Welsh said many inner-Melbourne renters bought pythons because they were not

allowed to keep noisy or messy pets. “Pythons eat once a fortnight and don’t bark,” Mr Welsh said. “A lot of people in high-rises who don’t have a backyard are buying them. Their popularity is increasing rather rapidly.” He said although some pythons bite, they were not dangerous. “They aren’t venomous and they do handle quite well,” he said.

“A lot of people keep more than one or two because it’s easy. They are especially popular with kids (aged) eight to 12.” Mr Welsh said bearded dragons were also popular pets. Richard Hruska keeps two pythons at his St Kilda rental apartment. He said snakes were far more common pets in other countries, such as Germany and his native Austria.

“They (snakes) are not dangerous at all,” Mr Hruska said. Victorian laws require python owners to have a licence. Statistics from the Department of Sustainability and Environment show there are 96 private reptile licence holders in each of the Melbourne and Yarra municipalities. Some reptiles, including certain

species of blue-tongued lizards, turtles and skinks, can be kept without a licence. Paul Stokes, the owner of reptile shop Amazing Amazon, said python sales were up 15 per cent this year. “A lot of people living in high-rises are buying them,” Mr Stokes said. “People are substituting them for cats and dogs.”

Are snakes and lizards ideal pets in apartments? Tell us at melbourneleader.com.au

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