

# Prologue

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2002 has been a year of dramatic events in Urban Animal Management (UAM). Several states have embarked on Dangerous Dog Legislation and the unfortunate practice of banning breeds. Our eleventh conference this year has much to do with dangerous dogs and the legal liability issues for Local Governments and their officers, both of which are coming together in an alarming way. This year we have combined with 'Big Lick', a group that deals with the health and welfare issues of domestic animals in the indigenous communities.

## Big Lick

This joint conference will be Big Lick's second and UAM's eleventh. The Big Lick component is an area UAM has touched on briefly in the past but will get a thorough look into this year. Due to Big Lick's involvement our usual AMO training stream will not be run, but those issues will be incorporated into the main stream for the other one and a half days. This stream will be a huge insight into the problems faced by some members of our community and hopefully will help all in managing some of these problems.

## National Dangerous Dogs Position

We started the process of developing a dangerous dogs' position statement from UAM at last year's conference in Melbourne. We hope with everyone's input from this year's conference to have a presentation at the end. From the information gathered last year we have developed a starting position and it is important you all contribute, as this is your position statement. It is difficult with the 'Australian Condition' (our constitution and the sovereignty of the states in certain aspects of law) to get the states to agree on the direction to go with any issue, let alone have compatible legislation. However this paper will ideally be a blueprint for all levels of Government to follow, should they wish to look at the issue of dangerous dogs.

What we need is a several level look at the issue including what needs to be recorded when investigating, what needs to be recorded against a dangerous dog and what are the best controls for the dogs once the investigation is complete. Coupled with this is the entire issue of UAM and how governments should be legislating for a very important part of our community.

## Insurance and Public Liability

This last twelve months has seen some major upheavals in the insurance industry and the decision of the High Court as mentioned by Basil Stafford in last year's proceedings, this is now a much larger issue for Local Government than it ever has been before. How we go about setting up for our community pets to have time running off-leash is now critical as is how we manage a dangerous dog or even one that might be. If our AMO does not complete the investigation well enough or just verbally warns the owners their dog is a potential danger and it bites someone – is the risk to the Council and its AMO increased? If a Council is seen to encourage an activity e.g. off-leash free running dog exercise, does that increase their liability risk?

The job of being an AMO is becoming ever more demanding and the need for proper training in all aspects of the field are becoming ever more apparent.