

Compliance theory: how to improve companion animal problems by managing people better

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I first introduced the notion of *compliance* to the UAM conference in 1995 where I explored the role and place of *laws* in UAM. This paper documented the deficiencies of relying on regulations alone to solve a range of policy problems, including those affecting dogs and cats. The paper was unashamedly provocative. To read it, you would probably think I'm anti-regulation (which I'm not). Its just that at that time, I believed there was an over-reliance on regulatory approaches to UAM, with limited understanding of their limits.

The next year I presented another paper that expanded on this theme. It identified a range of behaviour change strategies that might be available in addition to use of laws. The paper looked at research from other policy areas because virtually nothing was available on UAM. Nevertheless, I was of the view that we had a lot to learn from other policy areas, so I saw this as a positive approach rather than a negative one.

My conclusion in the second paper that we needed to be smarter about the way we use the UAM dollar. Public education is a must but it can swallow vast sums. However that shouldn't stop us from putting a toe in the water. Unfortunately I didn't have a magical wand then or now – it was and still is a matter of continuing to try new programs and sharing and learning from our successes and failures.

These 2 papers didn't start a ground swell – they were responding to the laws-versus-education debate that was raging in UAM at that time. The previous 10 years had seen the proliferation of new UAM laws across Australia. Some people were questioning the validity of more laws whilst others were clinging to traditional approaches. In 2003, the laws-versus-education debate is still high on the UAM agenda but thankfully it now looks at the relative place of each as opposed to one versus the other.

In this paper, I want to comment on the progress of UAM in Australia since I wrote these papers in the mid-1990s. I will recap on the main conclusions of those two papers, look at new research from the policy and planning literature and highlight its significance to UAM.

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