

Career opportunities and nationally recognised training for AMOs

Geoff Irwin and Jo Toia

INTRODUCTION

The aim of this paper is to look at the current availability of career opportunities and training for AMOs throughout Australia. It can not be denied that this is a very difficult situation with the wide variation of roles and responsibilities of AMOs, not only from state to state, but also between councils both urban and regional. Legislation and by laws at state and local council by-law levels can vary considerably. How then to provide training which meets all these needs and equips AMOs to advance is indeed a difficult one and many would say almost impossible.

CAREER PATHS FOR AMOs

Although there has been a general improvement over the past few years there are still considerable limitations to career paths for AMOs, particularly in the smaller councils. Where there are career paths what are the steps required to move up the ladder? What training and support is available to those AMOs who wish to further their career?

CURRENT TRAINING FOR AMOs

There are currently many and varied training programs offered through TAFE, private providers and local councils in-house across Australia. The majority of these programs are not based on recognised industry competency standards. This does not mean that the content of these programs is not valid and appropriate however, there is only one recognised training program based on competencies. Given that there is still no recognised training program which is accredited on a national basis the opportunity for AMOs to move interstate and have their training recognised is to say the least limited.

There is a National Training Package for local government. This package contains only 3 competencies which are directly related to AMO officers. In Queensland the Local Government Industry Training Advisory Board is establishing a Traineeship for AMOs utilising the National Training Package. New employees will be able to be employed as a trainee and access training through a traineeship. This has many benefits but does not necessarily meet the needs of councils with long term staff members. It is true that the current staff could seek recognition of prior learning and undertake training to meet competency standards which may not have been covered, but this will be at a cost which at the time of the writing of this paper had not been established.

As part of today's session we would like to take some time to establish what training programs you may have undertaken, whether the programs were accredited, offered through private or public providers or in- house, and obtain some feedback on these programs.

DEVELOPMENT OF AN ACCREDITED TRAINING PROGRAM FOR AMOs

The UAM Advisory Group has spent considerable time discussing the possibility of seeking funding for the development of a training program for Animal Control Officers which will be nationally accredited and provide the flexibility and mobility of qualifications. The veterinary nurses provide a wonderful success story and through their dedication and commitment, have worked together with the veterinary profession to establish a National Training Package for Veterinary Nurses. This project is a real credit to the veterinary nurses and the Veterinary Nurses Council of Australia. The profession is a relatively small one and parallels can be drawn with their situation some 8 years ago and that of the AMOs today, with no cohesive body to represent them.

The Veterinary Nursing Training Package is currently under review by the Rural Training Council of Australia (RTCA). The review may include re-engineering the national training package to accommodate other related animal care/handling occupations such as kennel attendants, pet shop attendants, animal management officers, wildlife rangers and laboratory animal technicians.

So what do we do? Do we just leave things as they are and have training of varying standards from high to very low? Do we make sure, as a key stakeholder, that we have input into the training program?

As a result of the UAM Advisory Group meeting at Perth it was suggested that a national training program could be developed. The objective was to develop a relevant nationally accredited training program:

- to offer a career path for AMOs; and
- to ensure that AMOs are equipped to satisfactorily meet the public service demand in Animal Management.

Possible content was considered and is outlined below. As part of today's proceedings we would like to discuss this content and ask you to assist in further development. As key stakeholders in the development of this program we value your input.

We would also like to seek your endorsement of the development of a nationally accredited training program for AMOs. This endorsement can then be utilised when seeking funding and support for the development of the program through government funding agencies.

Possible areas for inclusion in a nationally accredited training program. We look forward to meeting with you in Hobart.

	PEOPLE	ANIMALS	LEGISLATION
F O U N D A T I O N C O M P	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conflict resolution • Stress Management • Dealing with difficult clients • Investigation techniques • Verbal judo • Neighbourhood disputes methods • Mediation • Communication (verbal and non-verbal) • Critical incident management • Public education 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First aid • Maintaining equipment • Occupational health and safety • Animal identification • Breed identification • Loading and handling • Confinement and restraint • Animal care and control • Behaviour - barking, aggression, wandering • Zoonotics • Disease identification 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understanding legislation • Courtroom procedures • Public/personal/ council liability • Taking evidence • Relevant legislation • Prosecution case handling • Process infringements • Occ. Health & Safety • Core laws • Preparing a brief • Pound operations • Information access

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Geoff Irwin
 Gold Coast City Council
 PO Box 5042
 Gold Coast Mail Centre Qld 9729

Ph. 07 5581 6023 Fx 07 5581 6898
Email. girwin@goldcoast.qld.gov.au

Geoff is the Supervisor Animal Control for Gold Coast City council with 10 years experience in the field. he is currently a member of the Urban Animal Management Advisory Group and was Chairman of the UAM Conference Committee for the event held in the Gold Coast in 1999.

Jo Toia
139 Creek Rd
Mt Gravatt Qld 4122
Ph. 07 3420 5267
Fx 07 3420 5267
Email. terri.bits@uq.net.au

Jo's first involvement in urban animal management was through the National Urban Animal Integration Symposium convened by the Australian Veterinary Association in 1983. Jo's interest in Urban Animal Management has continued to grow. She has learned about the difficulties and stress AMOs meet implementing the by-laws designed in the interests of public and animal welfare.

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