

Animal welfare and animal management - never the twain shall meet? Of course they can!

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Abstract

Animal welfare and animal management have traditionally been seen as separate service sectors. The animal welfare movement grew in response to individuals in the community realising that there were no animal protection laws, often in conjunction with inadequate child protection laws. Animal welfare advocacy activities commenced back in the 1820's in the United Kingdom (UK) and in the 1860's in the United States of America (USA). Animal management was borne of the need for local authorities to deal with community health, safety and amenity problems that related to unwanted, stray, pest and irresponsibly owned animals. This was consistent with their responsibility to keep municipal streets safe, clean and healthy.

However, since then, changing values in relation to how animals should be treated have brought the two sectors closer together. In recent times, animals have been increasingly welcomed into our homes as part of the family. There is greater recognition of their needs, and higher community expectations about the way lost and abandoned companion animals should be treated. So while the purpose of animal management hasn't changed, the way the community expects animal management to exercise its duties has changed substantially. Most Australian communities now recognise companion animals as friends and contributors, expecting compassionate care when humans neglect or abandon them, or they become lost. Ensuring high animal welfare is now an expectation within animal management.

As well, the animal welfare shelter and advocacy sectors have recognised that companion animal welfare is better when animals don't cause harm or nuisance to others. Consideration of both animals' and community needs are necessary. Although primary reasons for existence may vary, both sectors are therefore moving toward a shared strategic approach. Both groups are committed to developing community awareness with consideration for animals' and neighbourhood needs through responsible breeding, informed ownership behaviour and setting standards through supportive legislation. The goals of animal welfare and animal management are merging.

If a safe, happy and healthy home for every companion animal is achieved, both animal welfare and animal managements' goals will be met.

Background

Historic roles of animal management and animal welfare

In 1822, a British MP named Richard Martin¹, pushed through a Parliamentary bill, the Cruel Treatment of Cattle Act 1822. In 1824 he assisted in founding the world's first animal welfare organization, the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. In 1835 the Cruel Treatment of Cattle Act was revised and widened to include other species (although not wildlife) and created provisions for animal shelters, veterinary hospitals and improved transport and slaughter standards. In 1840 the society was given the Royal approval and became the RSPCA. Comparatively, it wasn't until 1889 that the Prevention of Cruelty to, and Protection of, Children Act was developed to impose criminal penalties to deter mistreatment of children.

At the same time City staff were struggling to deal with the stray dog population. In an effort to achieve a safe and clean environment for the residents, stray animals were being killed in a variety of horrendous ways, including by drowning in a cage in the river. A few years later in the USA, similar animal protection groups were being formed. By the late 1800s, several Societies for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals had been established throughout the United States, including the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals in 1866. In 1873, the highly publicised case of child mistreatment to Mary Ellen Wilson resulted in the creation of the first Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children. It was the founder of the ASPCA, Henry Bergh², who rescued Mary Ellen and he then went on to form the New York Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children. In time the two services of animal care and animal control came together in an effort to improve the outcomes for the stray and unwanted animals in the City's care.

In 1877 the American Humane Association³ was formed consisting of representatives from 27 humane organizations from 10 states with the focus

¹ <http://www.museumofanimals.org/#/humanitydick/3745671>

² <http://learningtogive.org/papers/paper357.html>

³ <http://www.americanhumane.org/about-us/who-we-are/history/#1877>

on ending the inhumane treatment of farm animals. One year later child safety and protection was added to their agenda.

The will to protect both animals and humans brought about a “humane movement”, an attitude and ethical approach to the lives and welfare of these two species that live so closely together. This attitude and approach is no less important today than it was all those years ago.

Difficulties with separate operations

Most Municipal Animal Management Departments around Australia are still struggling to manage large numbers of stray and unwanted animals in conjunction with increasing demands from their communities for abandoned animals to be cared for and rehomed. While the proportion of dogs euthanased in many pounds is gradually reducing, Animal Management Officers still have to respond to large numbers of nuisance complaints regarding barking dogs, safety issues from menacing dogs, as well as wandering dogs. Further complaints then result from owners who are angry that their dog has been impounded or given a menacing or dangerous dog classification.

Kitten season results in a flood of surrendered cats and their litters. If surrendered cats are not accepted, if the surrender fee is high, or the public are aware that the kittens will most likely be euthanased, more cats and kittens are abandoned to fend for themselves. This results in further breeding of cats, further nuisance issues and more complaints from those annoyed by cats and those who care about cats who don't want to see them abandoned or destroyed.

While animal management departments primarily concern themselves with community safety by investing their energy and budgets into managing stray and unrestrained animals, the need to euthanase the unclaimed, animals may be perceived as inadvertently supporting a disposable, laissez-faire mentality towards pets, and perpetuating a never-ending flow of hundreds of thousands of stray and abandoned animals. Consequently, it is often difficult to gain public support for animal management. Both AMO's and pound staff experience stress and compassion fatigue having to euthanase healthy and treatable pets.

Animal welfare groups are also struggling. They are often largely volunteer organisations working to prevent animals paying the ultimate price for people's failure to care for and manage their animals well. They often struggle with poor facilities, lack of financial resources and legislative power to address the issues of irresponsible breeding and ownership. These are owners who usually love their pets but who

don't have the knowledge, resources and/or don't understand their impacts on other animals and the wider community. However, animal welfare groups and the wider community do have the motivation and commitment to provide services and the opportunity to recruit resources and support.

The way forward is through cooperation and a preventative approach to minimise harm to both animals and communities i.e. coordinating stakeholders to develop, support and help implement laws, supportive policies and resources and community education strategies to make it easier for people to be responsible pet owners.

Cooperation works!

Cooperation in Disaster and Emergency Situations

In disaster situations, there are recognised and significant benefits for animal management and animal welfare agencies to work together. Rarely does any one agency have all the resources required to deal with the care and management of the community's pets in times of disaster. At the 2008 AIAM conference Laura Maloney⁴ spoke about Saving Pets/Saving People during the Hurricane Katrina disaster in 2005. In her paper she detailed the Key Lessons Learned and Number 1 was “Include animals in planning”. She goes on to say “municipalities must appoint an animal agency to serve as the official lead in animal rescue and response. The fact that the various responsible agencies were not coordinated pre-Katrina meant that they did not know how to leverage each other's capabilities and this resulted in missed opportunities and wasted effort.” The work Laura and others did following the disaster event resulted in The PETS (Pets Evacuation and Transport Standards) Act of 2006 which ensures that state and local emergency preparedness operational plans address the needs of individuals with household pets and service animals prior to, during and following a major disaster or emergency.

Missed opportunities and wasted efforts were also evident during the Victorian Black Saturday fires of 2009 in Australia. One municipality in particular, Yarra Ranges Council, has done an enormous amount of work toward ensuring this does not occur again in the future. One of the integral components of the comprehensive emergency plan developed following this disaster is a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with the local animal welfare shelter organisation, Animal Aid. Roles have been clearly defined and documented. This will result in families and their pets coping with the next disaster in a significantly improved manner, which will, in turn, improve rates of recovery. Response to the needs of

⁴ Maloney, L. (2008). Saving Pets-Saving People: Lessons learned from Hurricane Katrina. Proceedings of the 2008 AIAM Conference.

the community will be swift and comprehensive. The process undertaken to develop this plan included meetings of all stakeholders in the region. This has ensured optimal resource efficiency and clear lines of communication and understanding with all involved. There is no way one municipality can possibly provide all of the needs for the community in times of emergency. By building strong relationships prior to times of need, they have ensured that they can concentrate on the tasks that they do best, while relying on others to do the same in a coordinated and professional operation.

Animal hoarding cases can also require a multi-agency approach. In addition to local government involvement at a compliance level there is a need to provide care and housing for the pets involved, whether removed or not. This can be achieved effectively through collaboration with an animal welfare agency. These cases also benefit from the involvement of human services as there is commonly a poor standard of human physical and mental health and welfare also evident. To work towards a resolution to these, often long standing situations, requires coordinated and collaborative multi agency involvement.

Cooperation in Remote Indigenous Communities

The work of Animal Management in Rural and Remote Indigenous Communities (AMRRIC) is a classic example of the only way being cooperation with whole communities to improve both human health and welfare, and animal management, health and welfare. Addressing the basic (welfare) needs of the animals (mainly dogs) in the community results not only in fewer dogs, but also less dangerous, noisy and disease carrying dogs. There are now models in action that clearly illustrate how animal management and animal welfare can be addressed simultaneously from a local government perspective, as illustrated in East Arnhem Shire Council (EASC). EASC have an Animal Welfare Program within the Animal Management department and this is headed up by Dr Emma Kennedy in the dual role of Veterinarian and Animal Control Manager⁵.

While ensuring good animal welfare and management, we simultaneously ensure good community welfare. Unwanted, lost, injured, stray and unhealthy animals are a burden on the community, in any location: financially, physically and emotionally. Very few people feel comfortable seeing animals in these situations and this becomes a stressor if they are unable to do anything positive about it. Roaming

animals can intimidate and injure community members and unhealthy animals can cause health problems for individuals and families. Dr Robert Dixon included a helpful flow diagram in his 2006 AMRRIC Dog People conference presentation⁶ that demonstrates the interconnect between dogs (in this case dogs in indigenous culture but I think it can also mean animals as a whole) and education, self-esteem, human welfare, animal welfare, community, animal/veterinary care and animal/human/environmental health workers. It's complicated, but this is how things are. A whole community approach is what is required.

Cooperation of welfare and management in Governments

The national initiative of the Federal Government of the Australian Animal Welfare Strategy (AAWS) recognises the impact of government in animal welfare. *The AAWS scope⁷ states that - The Strategy is aimed at the entire Australian community including, persons in charge of an animal, animal users, the veterinary profession, livestock producers, processors and transporters, animal welfare bodies, researchers and teachers, governing bodies of sport and recreation organisations, educational facilities, consumers, government agencies and harvesters.* This strategy's statement of Animal Welfare roles and responsibilities indicates that: *Local governments have responsibility for some areas of domestic and unwanted animal control and public health that has a significant impact on animal welfare⁸.* Local government representatives are therefore part of the mix of stakeholders working together to improve animal welfare.

The Victorian Bureau of Animal Welfare⁹ recognises the relationship between animal welfare and animal management and administers both types of legislation. *The BAW "was formed to be the focal point for liaison, co-ordination and co-operation in animal welfare matters between the states, Commonwealth governments, local government and animal welfare agencies in Victoria. The functions of the Bureau are to (amongst other things):*

- *Facilitate the operation of the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1986, Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Regulations 2008, Domestic Animals Act 1994, Domestic Animals Regulations 2005, Impounding Livestock Act 1994 and Impounding Livestock Regulations 2008.*
- *Provide advice to Municipalities to facilitate their implementation of the Domestic Animals Act*

⁵ <http://www.eastarnhem.nt.gov.au/animal-welfare-program/>

⁶ Dixon, R. (2006). Healthy dogs, healthy communities - a multidisciplinary approach to effect long term change. Proceedings of the 2006 AMRRIC Conference.

⁷ <http://www.daff.gov.au/animal-plant-health/welfare/aaws/online/scope>

⁸ <http://www.daff.gov.au/animal-plant-health/welfare/aaws/online/roles#local>

⁹ <http://www.depi.vic.gov.au/agriculture-and-food/animal-health-and-welfare/animal-welfare/bureau-of-animal-welfare>

1994, the Domestic Animals Regulations 1996, Impounding Livestock Act 1994, Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1986 and the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Regulations 2008.”

The Bureau recognises that: “Animal Welfare and domestic animal management is a sensitive and complex field, high on the list of government priorities and it holds a prominent position in the interests of the general community.”

Cooperation in Desexing

Desexing is a great example where animal management and welfare can work together to have a remarkable effect. Local governments don't often have veterinarians on staff so teaming up with a local animal welfare agency and contributing to a cooperative low/no cost desexing program ensures that those in the community that need it can access this resource which will lead to fewer unwanted pets in the community, fewer roaming pets, better behaved and easier to control pets and healthier family pets.

By working together to prevent unwanted litters being born, animal management and animal welfare organisations have fewer unwanted animals to collect, care for and dispose of. The reduction grows and gathers pace over time. In addition, animals are less likely to go wandering and be nuisances to the rest of the community. This strategy is especially useful for cats.

An example¹⁰ of the economic benefits of this approach

In Gold Coast City in 2011, the cost of collection of an abandoned cat or dog, holding the animal for an average of four days and euthanasing the animal is on average \$220, and \$260 for a litter collected and housed together, then euthanased. The statutory holding period is up to 14 days in some municipalities around Australia, which can add another \$200 to the cost i.e. total cost of approximately \$400 per animal or \$480 for a litter.

In contrast, the cost to Gold Coast City Council of a Co-operative Desexing Program, working with local private practice veterinarians and the Animal Welfare League of Qld (AWLQ), is **\$40** per cat. The savings from funding this desexing cost as opposed to funding the costs of collecting, holding and euthanasing the progeny of the undesexed cat are presented in Table 1. These costs are conservative,

as they do not account for the unwanted cats having their own litters, so that the number of animals to be collected, and the associated costs, grows exponentially.

TABLE 1 Costs and savings by funding desexing subsidies

Cat management strategies	Collect/ Hold/ Euthanase One cat	Council Desexing Subsidy one cat	Savings by preventing one unwanted kitten / or one litter	Savings in 1 year if 250 cats desexed, preventing one litter each
COSTS/SAVINGS held 4 days (on average)	\$220	\$40	\$180 /\$220	\$55 000
COSTS held 14 days (on average)	\$400	\$40	\$360 / \$440	\$110 000

The long term effect for Councils of investing in desexing, rather than catch/hold/euthanase, is a decrease in the number of animals coming in to the pound and shelter over time. Since the number of kittens one cat can produce over 5 – 10 years ranges between approximately 40 and 300, encouraging just one extra person to desex their cat through discounted rates can make a huge difference to the work load of animal management officers. Figure 3 shows the trend in reduction of incoming Gold Coast cats with over 1150 fewer cats coming in as stray or surrendered in Gold Coast City between 2006/7 and 2010/11.

Desexing owned cats also reduces the workload of Animal Management Departments in managing unowned cats. A study published in 2007 showed that 20% of owned cats are not contained to their property at all times.¹¹ Wandering owned domestic cats, of which between 10%¹² and 63%¹³ may be undesexed if less than 12 months of age, can breed to contribute to the unowned cat population. Council desexing programs of owned animals help to limit these unowned and feral populations, which are difficult to control.

Other benefits to Councils from Funding Cooperative Desexing Programs

1. A reduction in both abandonment and euthanasia. As most Animal Management Departments know, communities are increasingly aware of, and disapprove of, the euthanasia of abandoned healthy and treatable cats and dogs. Communities also appreciate any reduction in nuisance issues that result from unwanted and abandoned animals.

¹⁰ <http://www.g2z.org.au/assets/pdf/Benefits%20of%20Funding%20Co-operative%20Desexing%20programs.pdf>

¹¹ Webb, C. Why promote paediatric desexing? Department of Environment & Primary Industries Victoria, <http://www.dpi.vic.gov.au/agriculture/archive/animal-welfare-topics/early-age-desexing2/chapter-1-why-promote-paediatric-desexing>

¹² Ibid

¹³ Toukhsati SR, Bennett PC, Coleman GJ. Behaviors and Attitudes towards Semi-Owned Cats. Berg Publishers, 2007 http://s3.amazonaws.com/academia.edu.documents/30246752/Toukhsati_et_al._2007.pdf?AWSAccessKeyId=AKIAIR6FSIMDFXPEERSA&Expires=1378537676&Signature=0MkigZH8f6mYgrslfOkd3wjf1BE%3D&response-content-disposition=inline

2. Desexing subsidy programs help increase registration and microchipping compliance. With registration differentials for desexed cats and dogs in most communities, cat and dog owners with financial difficulties are able to more readily afford registration when their dog or cat is desexed at the subsidised rate. Microchipping can be offered at reduced rates while an animal is being desexed under a subsidised scheme, as there are no additional labour expenses incurred by veterinarians. Free registration for the first year at the time of desexing can also be offered as an incentive, which saves having to find these cats in the future. Desexing subsidy programs are an essential support for Breeder Permit legislation, to address both unplanned and poor breeding practices. If breeders pay a fee to Animal Management to cover costs of inspection of breeding establishments, a subsidised desexing program provides a cheaper option.
3. Increased satisfaction of Animal Management staff. Councils will be more likely to recruit and retain motivated staff members who are able to achieve job satisfaction and take a more positive approach through offering desexing support to the community, a fall in euthanasia rates and fewer complaints about wandering unwanted cats over time.

Further information on Cooperative Desexing Programs can be found at: <http://www.g2z.org.au/co-operative-desexing-programs.html>

Cooperation for Preventative Legislation and Support

Local laws can be developed that serve both the Animal Management and Animal Welfare end goals. An example of this legislation is Breeder Permit Legislation.

A user-pays Breeder Permit system includes inspection, legislated standards, tracking and consumer information to protect companion animals from poor breeding conditions, to prevent excess animals being born with insufficient homes to go to, and require responsible rehoming. Breeder Permit Legislation has been implemented in two Queensland municipalities¹⁴ after a comprehensive cooperative coalition approach to the issues being experienced by both local animal management and animal welfare agencies. Breeder Permit systems should also include microchipping prior to sale or transfer; and desexing of kittens. This should be coupled with a Pet Shop Permit system including mandatory Code of Practice specifying acceptable standards of care and housing for the pets, sourcing of pets from breeder permit holders and mandating desexing of kittens before sale (if animals are coming from other jurisdiction without a Breeder Permit system).

¹⁴ <http://www.goldcoast.qld.gov.au/documents/bf/breeder-code-practice%281%29.pdf> and <http://www.moretonbay.qld.gov.au/general.aspx?id=96520>

¹⁵ http://www.maddiesfund.org/Grant_Giving/Lifesaving_Awards/Portland_Metro_OR.html

For further details on Breeder Permit systems already in effect go to: <http://www.g2z.org.au/recommended-legislation.html>.

Cooperation with whole communities

Another example of existing cooperative endeavour between Animal Management and Animal Welfare is that of community Stakeholder Coalitions.

The Breeder Permit system that is in effect in the Gold Coast was developed by dog and cat breed organisations, local government, animal welfare groups, wildlife groups, and veterinarians. This method of developing legislation, programs and support mechanisms for whole communities ensures effective buy in by all concerned, ensuring active lines of communication and commitment by all involved. By having all groups with an interest involved ensures that any specific issues facing that group are revealed; it is surprising what you learn when you get everyone around a table. Often differences in opinion or objectives don't seem so great either when face to face.

A number of Victorian municipalities recently implemented the Stakeholder Coalition model with success, when developing their Domestic Animal Management Plan for the community.

In Portland, Oregon, USA a stakeholder coalition consisting of local government and NFP's, recently garnered the members a shared \$1 million windfall by way of a grant. Maddie's Fund awarded its prestigious Community Lifesaving Award¹⁵ to six animal welfare organizations in the Portland metropolitan area for achieving and maintaining an adoption guarantee for all healthy shelter dogs and cats for two years (2010 - 2012).

The one million dollar unrestricted grant was given to the Oregon Humane Society, Humane Society of Southwest Washington, Cat Adoption Team, Multnomah County Animal Services, Washington County Animal Services and Clackamas County Dog Service. The grant was divided among the organizations based on their pet adoption numbers.

All of the major animal related organizations in the Portland, Oregon metropolitan area have worked together since 2006 through the Animal Shelter Alliance of Portland to end the killing of healthy and treatable shelter dogs and cats. The collaboration has reduced euthanasia in local shelters by a dramatic 65% from 2006 to 2012. The 2012 Live Release Rate was 85%.

The Portland Metro area includes Clackamas, Multnomah and Washington Counties in Oregon and Clark County in Washington. Combined, the area has a human population of 2,102,066.

Best practice

More frequently than not, good animal management = good animal welfare. Animal Management and Animal Welfare both benefit by achieving responsible pet ownership i.e. a focus on Desex, Identify, Train, Keep safe and Happy¹⁶. The partnership of animal welfare agencies and animal management agencies is being shown around the world to be the gold standard best practice strategy for dealing with animal issues in the community. A combined approach of enforcement of prevention strategies at the breeding stage and support for existing owners and their pets to prevent further breeding and mismanagement is an effective way of creating the change required. Francine Shields, Manager and Chief Inspector of Whangarei SPCA in New Zealand, spoke about a new approach that their agency is taking to welfare and management issues in their community, at the 5th National G2Z Summit in September 2013¹⁷. The provision of a Community Drop In Clinic and associated low/no cost desexing clinic has resulted in healthier animals, less unwanted and stray animals, a community that feels supported and empowered, better relationships between regulatory bodies and the community, higher child vaccination rates, a more knowledgeable community and a community that feels good about how the animals they are responsible for look, feel and behave.

Clare Connell from Auckland City Council also spoke about this link at the 2009 AIAM conference¹⁸. Clare spoke about Auckland City Council's strong dog management policies resulting in improved animal welfare.

In Canada, in the City of Calgary, a strategy has been implemented that ensures both the regulatory and ethical aspects of pet ownership are addressed¹⁹. Bill Bruce and colleagues have developed an effective community engagement model that has helped the "stick" side of the Calgary Animal & Bylaw Services department's animal control work become secondary. He reports that high return to owner rates and low euthanasia numbers can be credited to the programs implemented. Registration income funds the municipality's pound and shelter and its veterinary clinic, a free desexing program for those in the community on a low income and other programs

designed to get pets adopted, reunite pets with their owners, resolve animal related disputes and provide emergency medical care for injured pets. The department works closely with the Calgary Humane Society, local rescue groups, veterinarians, breeders and animal advocates – stakeholders with a desire to see lost and stray animals returned home and reduce unnecessary euthanasia.

In 2011 at the 4th National G2Z Summit, Mitch Schneider, Animal Services Manager for Washoe County Regional Animal Services²⁰, shared how: *"Washoe County Regional Animal Services, also serving the cities of Reno and Sparks in northern Nevada, has gained national attention for having one of the highest pet returned-to-owner rates and lowest pet euthanasia rates in the country. This is the result of a successful public-private partnership with Nevada Humane Society, collaborative relationships with many other area animal rescue groups, extensive use of technology, broad public support, and pet-friendly policies and practices."*

Community expectations demand a cooperative approach

Community expectations and standards are changing rapidly when it comes to the treatment and future of the animals in the community. They don't necessarily see these issues as either animal welfare or animal management, but an extension of Council's social services provision. The animals in the community are often part of families, so how they are treated is a reflection of Council's attitude to the community itself. This flows through into the services that Council provide and how they provide it. Rate payers are no longer satisfied with a pound service that was built in 1948, serves the animals their meals out of hubcaps and is only visited once a day until they are disposed of. Accessibility to the facility, rehoming programs and standards of care for those animals housed are significant public issues today. There will always be the need for a service to take in unwanted and stray animals, but how we do that is changing rapidly. Showing compassion towards stray and surrendered cats and dogs by providing comfortable care and housing, vet treatment and desexing prior to adoption are expected by today's community. The community has the ability to communicate their needs and

¹⁶ <http://www.awlqld.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2011/07/s-not-a-game02f.pdf> and <http://www.awlqld.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2011/07/itsnotagame-front.pdf>

¹⁷ <http://www.g2z.org.au/summit2013.html>

¹⁸ Connell, C. (2009). The link between dog control and dog welfare. Proceedings from the 2009 AIAM Conference. http://www.aiam.com.au/resources/files/proceedings/AIAM%202009/CConnell_TheLink.pdf

¹⁹ Hettinger, J. License to Succeed. Animal Sheltering magazine 2011 Jan-Feb. http://www.animalsheltering.org/resources/magazine/jan_feb_2011/license_to_succeed.pdf

²⁰ Schneider, M. (2011) Getting to zero through proactive animal management programs. Proceedings of the 4th National G2Z Summit.

<http://www.ndn.org.au/assets/files/Schneider%20Mitch%20Getting%20to%20Zero%20through%20Proactive%20Animal%20Management%20Programs%20a%20Win%20Win%20Approach%20to%20Animal%20Control.doc>

grievances much more powerfully today than ever before and will take action if they see that change is necessary. Working transparently with the community to provide a facility with high rehoming rates and desexing assistance can create much more support toward achieving both animal management and animal welfare objectives. Identifying with credible and effective animal welfare organisations can have positive benefits, such as providing people resources as volunteers, often staff trained and experienced in animal health, behaviour and care, and access to external rescue networks. Having an arrangement like this frees up Council's resources to concentrate on other key issues.

Things for us to remember

1. The issues that we are discussing today are not just about animal welfare or management, regulation or enforcement, or who is meant to be doing what. For the most part this is about **people and their (or other people's) pets**. They are community and animal issues which equate to people safety and wellbeing.
2. Communication = success. Exclamation mark! Communication is one of those practices that tend to go out the window in the daily whirl of too much to do and not enough time/money/people to do it in. Make the time and resources available to organise that roundtable meeting or pick up the phone and call direct. If really pushed send an email but this often isn't the best way to communicate and can lead to more problems. If in doubt, ask the questions and have the conversation. Never assume. If there are issues with a relationship, effective communication is essential.
3. The human animal bond. According to the Australian Companion Animal Council two thirds of households in Australia own pets and over half of all households own a dog and/or cat²¹. 91% of pet owner's reports feeling "very close" to their pet, reinforcing that pets are an integral member of the family unit. More than 83% of Australians have had a pet at some time during their lives and of the people that do not currently own a pet 53% would like to do so in the future. There are more pets in Australia than people.

How G2Z is helping

Getting to Zero (G2Z) is a national program that aims to increase responsibility for companion animals - it assists animal management and animal welfare. The Getting to Zero Model details the principles, structures and strategies for achieving better management and reducing killing of healthy and treatable cats and dogs (more than 90% of all

incoming stray and surrendered cats and dogs) in whole communities²².

G2Z provides practical support for councils and NGO's to put into place the policies, strategies and practices that contribute to Getting 2 Zero. This is achieved by working with and alongside all of those involved in a respectful and supportive way. G2Z resources are provided at no charge. You can find out more by going to www.g2z.org.au or contacting Nell Thompson, G2Z Coordinator on 0427 981 759 or info@g2z.org.au.

It is recognised that things don't happen overnight and that there is a need to be realistic with what can be achieved by Councils with often limited resources in this area. However, taking the first step to try something new is often the hardest. This isn't reinventing the wheel; these strategies are being implemented in one way or another by many Councils and organisations globally, who want to do better for the community and their pets. Implementing one strategy at a time is OK and far better than doing nothing at all.

G2Z looks forward to helping you to develop some of these cooperative strategies in the near future.

About the author

Nell Thompson was appointed as Coordinator of the national Getting 2 Zero program in July 2012. Nell has worked in the animal welfare, care and veterinary sectors for over 20 years and was the Victorian G2Z representative since the development of the G2Z program. Her background in shelter operations and management and animal health is a great resource for Councils, shelters and all groups and individuals involved in the program. Nell is passionate about improving outcomes for pets who enter the shelter and pound systems and strongly believes that the best results occur when animal welfare and animal management are working together towards the same goals.

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²¹ http://www.acac.org.au/pdf/PetFactBook_June-6.pdf

²² <http://www.g2z.org.au/about.html>