AUSTRALIAN INSTITUTE OF ANIMAL MANAGEMENT SUBMISSION

TASKFORCE ON REHOMING PETS

The Australian Institute of Animal Management (AIAM) is the national peak body representing Local Government Animal Management Officers. The AIAM Committee consists of a wide range of professionals engaged in the various aspects of companion animal management.

AIAM seeks to support those engaged in the business of animal management, and the function itself, by providing training and information, opportunities for networking and collaboration and by encouraging the use of best practice policy and practices. AIAM understands the significant pressures placed on Local Government and not for profit rescue and rehoming service providers when working in the companion animal management space.

AIAM promotes consistency of legislation, consultation in the creation of legislation and workplace processes and healthy relationships with external stakeholders and the community. AIAM supports cross sector collaboration and co-design of projects and initiatives. The AIAM Committee welcome the opportunity to engage at any level on the topic of companion animal management.

Local Government Animal Management is not involved in any way with the rehoming of animals from scientific or teaching institutes so we will not address these issues in this submission.

AIAM is committed to encouraging, and enabling where possible, evidence based, best practice companion animal management for all communities. The current systems in place do not support prevention but rather, are reactive and costly for all involved. A focus on the welfare and survival rates of cats and dogs in shelters and pounds may be necessary now but should not be the long-term goal. A wider and longer-term focus on preventing intake through supportive and proactive programming is the recommended best practice strategy internationally.

We would be happy to provide more information on any of the recommendations discussed below.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS:

Recommendation 1: Implement a state-wide data base to capture and trace all companion animals going into and out of rehoming establishments.

Recommendation 2: Implement a state-wide data base to register all CFCNS and rescue groups

Recommendation 3: Provide a no cost training program available to rescue groups and CFCNS.

Recommendation 4: Develop a stakeholder working group to progress and support progressive companion animal management in the state

Recommendation 5: Provide training for Government and non-Government shelter providers in best practice shelter management principles

Recommendation 6: Provide support to Local Government and not for profits to implement preventative strategies and practices

Recommendation 7: Provide support to Local Government to ensure that an adoption program is functioning in all LG shelters.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Recommendation 1: Implement a state-wide data base to capture and trace all companion animals going into and out of rehoming establishments

Data capture and traceability are important factors in improving our understanding of the problem. Mandatory reporting for all those groups involved is essential.

Currently we have an incomplete set of data that is of varying quality via the LG DAMPs. There is not any data collection from Rescue Groups and CFCNS and there is no traceability for pets that have been through any of the systems.

This lack of data makes the development of effective, evidence-based policy, strategy, and practices impossible, and any resources being applied to the issues are at risk of being wasted. A well developed and resourced state-wide data base that includes a wide range of information relating to the individual animal would provide the necessary transparency and information required to effectively assess current state and plan for the future.

There are models for this recommendation in action around the world and we would be happy to provide more information if required.

Recommendation 2: Implement a state-wide data base to register all CFCNS and rescue groups

A state-wide rescue group database would link in with the traceability database mentioned above and provide assurance for adopters and authorities.

This database would also improve communications and the ability to provide training and education to groups and their staff and volunteers.

Recommendation 3: Provide a no cost training program available to rescue groups and CFCNS.

AIAM acknowledges the existence of the 'Guide for Victorian dog and cat community foster care networks and rescue groups' but recommend a more in depth and extensive training framework is developed and provided at no cost to those working in the space. The need for rescue groups has mainly been driven by the high intake to Government shelters, and the lack of rehoming programs delivered by those LG's. Therefore, it is reasonable to support those working on this deficiency by the provision of high quality, evidence-based training, and education.

Recommendation 4: Develop a stakeholder working group to progress and support progressive companion animal management in the state

The development of an accessible, transparent and evidence driven, state supported, stakeholder working group would provide much needed resources and support to all those groups working in the sector (including the research sector). The AIAM Board would be happy to participate and provide a member to support this initiative.

The importance of staying abreast with the latest companion animal management initiatives, research, and trends, from around the world cannot be understated. Up to date information and practices should be driving local developments in this space.

Recommendation 5: Provide training for Government and non-Government shelter providers in best practice shelter management principles

There is no Australian training package available specifically designed for those working in companion animal management and sheltering. If the goal is for this space to be operating at best practice this resource needs to be developed and made available at low or no cost.

The Code of Practice for the Management of Dogs and Cats in Shelters and Pounds, being the Government approved only resource available, is not a training package and does not meet basic guidelines in operation elsewhere in the world.

High quality, evidence-based training will provide the tools to improve the welfare and survival rates of cats and dogs requiring rehoming.

Recommendation 6: Provide support to Local Government and not for profits to implement preventative strategies and practices

Local Government do not have the resources to effectively deliver proactive companion animal management, although they have been tasked with this role. Owner support and outreach programs are essential to the success of preventative strategies and reducing intake.

Local Government, and the not for profits that also work in this space, need to be provided with support and resources to deliver this animal management function, and the necessary programs, if the outcomes are going to be improved.

Recommendation 7: Provide support to Local Government to ensure that an adoption program is functioning in all LG shelters.

Many Local Government Areas in Victoria do not provide rehoming services to their community, from their shelter facility, which means limited live outcome opportunities for the pets involved. Those live outcome opportunities that are available to them generally result in removal from the community by transport to more populated areas. These practices result in social inequality, and do not encourage the adoption of desexed and microchipped pets in the community. It is understood that many of these LGA's do not have the resources to facilitate an adoption program that would be affordable for the community and therefore State support is recommended.