

Dogs in Society Position Paper

The importance of urban animal management

ACAC believes that it is essential to have plans and strategies in place which help pets, pet owners and non-pet owners to live harmoniously.

Urban Animal Management (UAM) is the term commonly used to describe local government's management of pets in the community. UAM is all about minimising public pet nuisance whilst maximising community pet benefit. UAM is a complex blend of community behavioural science and animal behavioural science. It is a regulatory local government service that ideally depends on encouraging responsible pet ownership through the provision of public education and other community management infrastructure.

Australia has one of the highest levels of pet ownership in the world, with almost two thirds of Australian households currently owning pets. For every 100 people in the community there are an average of 20 dogs and 13 cats. Companion animals impact one hundred per cent of the population and in most local council areas pets are the single largest cause of complaint. With increasing urbanisation and the trend towards higher density living, better UAM is a significant community concern.

There are some 700 local authorities in Australia, all of which are obliged to implement animal management programs and all employ staff to carry out animal management duties. Despite this, not all local authorities recognise that Urban Animal Management is a positive and valid community service that deserves significant allocation of financial and human resources.

UAM is an area which, when well managed, can gain local government a great deal of community support. After all, the vast majority of households own pets and most regard their pets as members of the family. Innovative pet management benefits everyone in the community.