

MOULDING THE PET OWNERS OF THE FUTURE

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For a significant change of attitude towards pet ownership to occur in the community, a long term generational strategy is required to mould the next generation of responsible dog and cat owners. By combining the Board's research appetite, desire to share evidence and preparedness to "think outside the square", the Dog and Cat Management Board works to influence change and create a society where the positives of pets in our community are realised by both pet owners and non pet owners alike.

The Board implements community based education and awareness strategies towards the achievement of long term behaviour change objectives for the improved management of cats and dogs in our community. Strategies are founded on empirical understanding of the issues requiring address and designed to create awareness, build knowledge and information which leads to behaviour change and voluntary compliance.

The Board has in the past invested in the more traditional community engagement and education campaigns which tend to be one –directional in their delivery however more recently the Board ventured into the realm of social media as opportunity to engage with community on the development of collaborative ideas for issue address. The Board's "Help Homeless Cats" campaign, co-branded with the RSPCA, AWL and AVA provides opportunity to discuss the benefits and challenges of this form of community engagement.

The Board continues to support relevant community events and uses these as opportunity for direct citizen contact, the assessment of intervention performance and for the showcasing of responsible companion animal ownership practices. Investment has also been made in traditional school based education on the understanding that generational behaviour change is best informed during the formative years.

In this paper I will discuss how the strategies of the Dog and Cat Management Board aim to increase community compliance and understanding of the responsibilities associated with dog and cat ownership and how long, rather than short term multifaceted and partnered strategies are required to effect change as relates to issues which have been around for a very long time.