

Results Without Punishment: Reducing Euthanasia Through Community Assistance

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Shared Purpose

G2Z is more than a conference; it is a movement. We are united by the belief that pets are family, that their well-being matters, and that communities are stronger when animals are valued. Across every sector represented here, our collective purpose is clear: to lead with compassion, to innovate with evidence, and to create a better tomorrow for pets and people.



Why Enforcement First Fails

- Trapping programs didn't reduce stray cat numbers
- Most complaints and intakes came from disadvantaged areas
- Complaints stayed constant
- “Education” for the community?
- Infringements don't automatically get paid
- Community trust eroded, and we were seen as the “bad guys”
- Kitten season- amplifies the issue
- Mandates: limits on cats, feeding bans, containment laws, mandatory desexing
- Free surrender → repeat cycles of animals handed in

→ There had to be a better way.

The catalyst for change (2012)



Enforcement: Who Really Pays?

- Traditional approach to compliance: fines, trapping, and impoundments
- **Results:**
 - High euthanasia
 - Supply outweighs demand
 - Recurring complaints and surrenders
 - Cost to councils, shelters/pounds, vets, rescues, foster carers and the community
- Toll on the Cats
- Human Toll

Enforcement: Who really pays?



Toll on the Cats



Human Toll

Punishment doesn't solve the problem – it shifts the burden.

A New Approach: Support First

- **One Welfare in action** – supporting cats, people & environment
- **Free desexing, microchipping and registration** – no limits per household and no criteria to enrol
- **Targeted Programs in disadvantaged areas**- street by street, house by house
- **Barrier-free access** –provide transport to the clinic if needed

Community members who provide care for semi-owned and unowned cats will take ownership if given the resources to do so.



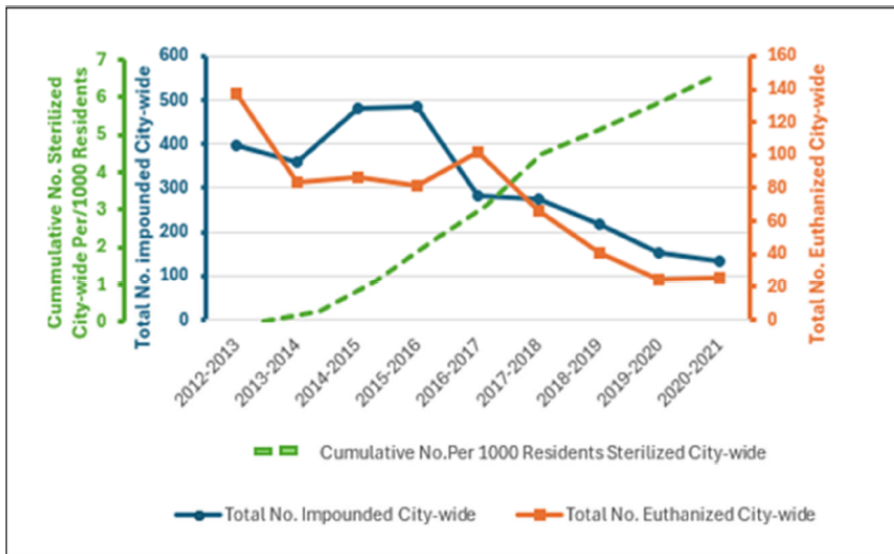
Collaboration

- **Partnerships & collaboration** — councils, rescues, vets, carers, social services, police, RSPCA all working together.
- **Education began with council-** change of management, understanding the cat overpopulation issue and its impacts
- **Face-to-face contact-** all sectors within the community
- **Working with people-** to work with animals, is to work with people



Proof in Action: Banyule, Victoria

- **869 cats desexed**
(2013-2021)
- Cat impoundments ↓ 66%
- Euthanasia ↓ 82%
- Complaints ↓ 36% City-Wide and 51% ↓ in targeted areas
- 50% ↓ in direct public surrenders to pound
- Reclaims ↑ 16%



Keeping Cats out of the Pound

- Old role: “fine issuers” and “cat catchers.”
 - New role: **community allies**:
 - Listen to carers and residents.
 - Offered practical solutions
 - Reduce conflict → build trust.
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- **Outcomes:**
 - Cooperation from carers/semi-owners.
 - More sustainable compliance than enforcement alone
 - Negotiate outcomes
 - Provide information according to each situation for the community to make their own informed decisions
 - Cats desexed initially adults and seniors, reduced to 8 weeks to 1 year

**KEEPING CATS
OUT OF THE POUND**



Community Assistance and Referral

- Improved job satisfaction and mental health
- Assisted shelter and local rescues
- Community trust
- New approach to cat complaints – letterbox drops, door knocks, solving problems at the source
- Cat Trapping Program- continued but multi-cat properties the trapping was done by AMO

COMMUNITY ASSISTANCE AND REFERRAL



Critical Success Factors

👉 **Shift from punishment to support** – programs reduce intake, euthanasia, and complaints.

👉 **Free desexing & microchipping not subsidized** – accessible services stop breeding cycles.

👉 **Engage disadvantaged communities** – remove cost barriers, build trust, support carers.

👉 **Partnerships & collaboration** – animal care industry and human support services combined

👉 **Build trust with communities** – AMOs as allies, offering help not punishment, as a first option.

👉 **Measure and report outcomes** – track intake, euthanasia, and complaints.



Key Learnings

- Enforcement-only = costly, ineffective, harmful
- Support-first delivers measurable, sustainable results
- The amount of budget you have doesn't determine success in a CCP; the level of community engagement does
- The budget needed will reduce with a decrease in service demand



Thank You

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