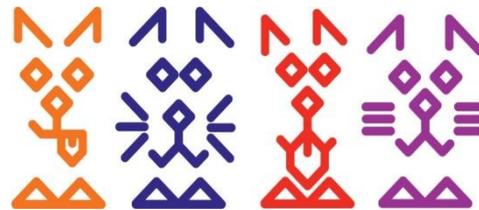




# Paw Pals

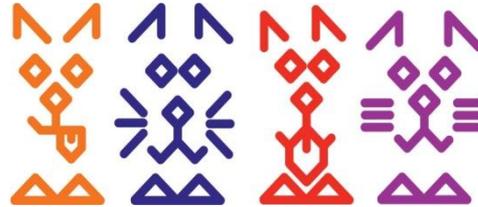


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# What is Paw Pals?



Being able to have pets at home through the support of volunteers, HACC clients will overcome some of the issues around depression, loneliness and social isolation increasing their mental health and overall wellbeing.



# Evidence

More than 63% of Australian households own a pet, of these: <sup>1</sup>

- 40% own dogs
- 26% own cats
- 53% own a dog and/or a cat

Compared with non-pet owners:

- Pet owners show lower levels of risk factors associated with heart disease<sup>1</sup>
- Pet owners, on average have lower cholesterol and lower blood pressure<sup>3</sup>
- Pet owners recover more quickly from illness and surgery<sup>4</sup>
- Pet owners deal better with stressful situations<sup>1</sup>
- the annual national health cost saving resulting from pet owners visiting the doctor less often is estimated to be approximately \$2.2 billion <sup>2</sup>
- Elderly pet owners report an increased quality of life and companionship<sup>5</sup>
- Pet owners are less likely to report feeling lonely<sup>6</sup>

1. Australian Companion Animal Council, (2006). Contribution of the Petcare Industry to the Australian Economy. 6th Edition.

2. Bennett, P, Pet Subject inspires some big thinking, (2012) The Age

3. Heart Foundation Statistics, (2008).

4. McHarg et al, (1995) National People and Pets Survey.

5. Anderson, W.P., Reid, C.M. and Jennings, G.L. (1992) Pet ownership and risk factors for cardiovascular disease. Crowley-Robinson, P., Fenwick, D., C. And Blackshaw,

6. J .K. (1996). A long term study of elderly people in nursing homes with visiting and resident dogs.



# Local evidence

## Ageing Well strategy in Wodonga

### The Issues

- Health risk from refusal to seek medical services because worried about pet
- Loneliness, depression decreasing physical activity and other health issues related to decreasing pet ownership among HACC clients

### The Contributors

- Aging
- Physical frailty
- Stress and anxiety
- Depression
- Loneliness

### Social Determinants

- Low fixed income
- Inappropriate personal health practices
- Stress
- Health system (doesn't work with pets)
- Changing family structure, decreasing family support

# Target population

- Home and Community Care (HACC) clients in Wodonga ( 10 clients).
- There are approximately 700 HACC clients in Wodonga and it is estimated that about 25% of these currently have pets.
- Main issues for the Wodonga population include:
  - Physical frailty
  - Mental health and wellbeing, especially depression
  - Fixed low incomes





# How did we do it?

October 2011

November 2011

December 2011

January 2012

February 2012

March 2012

Steering committee meetings (representatives from RSPCA, assessment officer, volunteers and aged care)

Recruit HACC clients through the Assessment Officers

Recruit volunteers

Training sessions for volunteers (4 sessions)

6 week review with clients and volunteers

Pilot project completed

Development of client and volunteer hand books

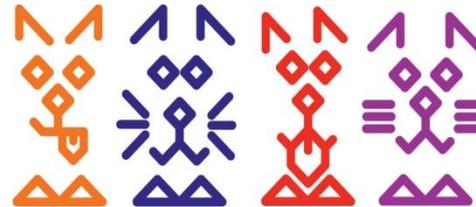
Assessments of client's animals by trained professional

Initial meet and greet between clients and volunteers

Weekly Paw Pals visits

Ongoing evaluation (face to face and phone interviews)

# What worked?



- Relationships
- Cost effective
- Training of volunteers
- Assessment of animals
- Unexpected outcomes



# What worked? (continued)

- “ my dog is my family”
- “if she’s happy, I am!”
- “could something so good really be free?!”
- “I look forward to their visit every week! Lily waits at the front door when she knows they are coming”
- “ I am so relieved knowing he is being looked after”
- “ we have become friends”
- “ she’s my Wodonga grandma”
- “ she (the dog) gives people a reason to talk to me”
- “Katherine was wonderful, she knew what I needed to feel ok with letting someone else walk Brody”
- “Where do I sign up for the next one?”

# Case study

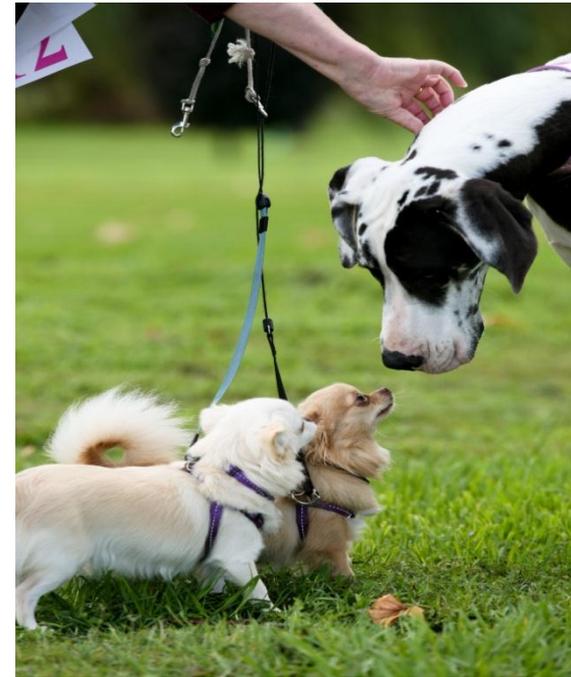


# Prime News 15.12.11



# What needed improvement?

- More volunteers
- More coordination time



# Worth replicating?





*The average dog is a nicer person than the average person.” - Andy  
Rooney*

# Questions?

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