

Community comes together and educates through fun family activity

Benefits of holding an educational community pet event

- Brings broad scale community together using a positive message and theme
- Creates an opportunity for Councils to educate local residents on specific pet related issues
- Normalises responsible pet ownership by creating a forum attended by many community members

Pets help keep individuals healthy, teach responsibility and provide companionship. When a council decides to bring pets and people together on a large scale, those benefits can flow on to help build community.

Frankston's Pets Day Out is possibly the biggest pet event in Victoria, whereby pets and owners can attend together. It is held annually in Frankston City, a regional capital located an hour's drive from Melbourne on Port Phillip Bay.

The event, now in its ninth year, began in a small way as a microchipping event, with a few hundred people attending. It has now developed into an event which attracts crowds of approximately 10,000.

While the day's main goal is to promote responsible pet ownership, Sheree McClelland, Council's Senior Animal Management Officer says, "One of the overarching goals of the day is to connect the community of Frankston. With current social implications of rising petrol and day to day living costs, the event is about providing something locally to the people of Frankston that is fun, free and for the whole family."

Such community events can play an important role in building a sense of community²⁷, which in turn can have positive flow on benefits for residential turnover, community safety and the social fabric of an area²⁸.

The day makes the most of the community connection by educating and informing people on a host of pet ownership issues the Council's Animal Management Officers have identified throughout the year.

At Pets Day Out, demonstrations of dog sporting activities like flyball, herding and agility courses are run, presenting owners with healthy, fun ways to accommodate and improve the quality of their dog's lives.

It is also an event with activities appealing to the broad community, including live music, pet parades, competitions, demonstrations and children's activities.



"We have approximately 21,000 dogs and 9,000 cats registered in Frankston. Council recognises pet ownership is a significant contributor to a healthy and vibrant community and budgets for around \$60,000 towards the Pets Day Out each year. Through the event we try to educate and encourage, rather than enforce." Sheree McClelland, City of Frankston

Tips

- Involve the local community by creating an organising committee or working party assisted and overseen by Council staff
- Encourage local experts such as veterinarians, dog trainers and pet shop owners to be involved in organising the event and to be present on the day to provide information and advice
- Seek sponsorship from the pet industry and/or local businesses

The success of events like Pets Day Out is obvious; similar days are now being held regularly all over Australia.

They can be run anywhere, on a small or large scale, and are a positive way to foster sense of community as well as promoting responsible pet ownership.

Web Links

Frankston City Council - www.frankston.vic.gov.au