



## Your Pet Has a New Second Best Friend

Online Pet Accessories applauds new International Society for Anthrozoology (ISAZ) President, reveals how her agenda could be a boon for pets and their owners.

Associate Professor Pauleen Bennett, of La Trobe University, was recently chosen as president of the ISAZ. Bennett is on a mission to increase pet ownership in Australia, and to convince politicians to repeal many laws restricting ownership of pets. Bennett believes that pets benefit not only their owners, but their communities as well. According to Bennett, "Pets help us to feel better about our lives, and when we feel better about our lives, we feel more motivated to do great things for our community." Bennett remarked that her "grand plan to save the planet is to have more pets." Bennett has a lot of support from colleagues across Australia. Recently, the ISAZ held a workshop in Melbourne, which was attended by around thirty of those colleagues. Nearly all agreed with her position that more urbanised living and tougher pet laws are having a negative impact on communities, and depriving too many of the benefits of pet ownership. Many communities and apartment buildings don't allow pets. In addition, almost no nursing homes or similar senior housing allows pets. Some seniors even have to have their pets put down because they have nobody to take them. This causes profound sadness and stress, adding guilt and loneliness to the powerless feeling a senior gets when taken to a group home. Bennett feels that only through more research will politicians become convinced that pet ownership provides health benefits, and should be encouraged whenever possible. Consequently, she has formed the Australian Anthrozoology Research Foundation (AARF). AARF was formed to promote and fund more research into how pet ownership affects both humans and animals. Through her affiliation with Monash University, and now La Trobe University, Bennett has created and mentored eight studies about pets and owners. Bennett likes to cite a lot of other research, too. Various studies have found that pets increase humans' levels of such beneficial neurotransmitters and hormones as serotonin and oxytocin, thus elevating mood. There have also been studies indicating that pet ownership has a positive effect on blood pressure, cholesterol, obesity, and depression. Recent work indicates that pets help delay the effects of ageing. Bennett estimates that pet ownership saves the Australian health system as much as \$2.2 billion in a year, but she sees a disturbing trend: "about two-thirds of households... have at least one pet... but Australia's pet population stopped growing (10 years ago)." Between 1994 and 2009, Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) data indicates that the number of dogs declined by close to 10% and the number of cats declined almost twice that much. Professor Bennett and her colleagues want to reverse that trend. Jason Balchand, owner of Online Pet Accessories, an online discount pet supplies store, fully supports Bennett's agenda, and is glad that she is getting some recognition for her work: "We are in this business because we love animals, and we are all for anything that can quantify the benefits that pet owners gain from their pets." Balchand concluded, "We have long thought that too many politicians treat pets like they are a nuisance, and refuse to even listen to anyone who suggests that there is anything positive about pets. If Professor Bennett, through the AARF, can provide scientific information to prove to the public what pet owners already know, we will all benefit." Online Pet Accessories has an extensive inventory of discount pet supplies, including a wide selection of different dog toys, dog beds, and other pet supplies. Visit their website here <http://www.petshop-online.com.au/> for more information, or call them at 08 9296 7544.

### Contacts

Jason Balchand  
(08) 9296 7544  
mailto: CEO@petshop-online.com.au