

veterinarian and ambassador of the Keep Australia Pet Friendly campaign.

"We need to move our policies towards pets into the next century and currently we haven't really progressed in last 20 to 30 years, whilst the rest of the world has," said Dr Brown at a campaign event in Sydney in July. "Countries like North America and in Europe are more progressive and inclusive when it comes to attitudes towards pets, and they are reaping the benefits of that."

New data released this year in The Healthcare Economics of Pets report (commissioned by Mars Petcare) shows pet owners deliver a massive \$2 billion in public healthcare savings across Australia, with every pet owner saving the health system \$700 per year in reducing the number of doctor visits and associated health costs, such as fewer specialist appointments and hospital visits.

Dr Brown encouraged policymakers to consider tax rebates or offsets that encourage pet ownership to stimulate further savings.

"This report shows that keeping Australia pet friendly is an issue of national importance. I hope the government can see the value in spending a little, to save a lot," he said. "Pets are having a profound effect on our health and we need to respect and embrace that."

The economic projections indicate that if pet populations increased by 10% a year the public health system could stand to save over \$200 million annually.

BIRD AND FISH NUMBERS ARE FALLING

The AMA pet ownership report reveals Australia has a total estimated pet bird population of almost 4.2 million, which is down by 11% since 2013. Currently, 12% of households are keeping birds mainly as a companion. The AMA predicts the population of birds to continue declining due to ongoing changes in legal restrictions on the types of birds that can be kept in Australia and the diminishing popularity of bird-keeping as a pastime.

The AMA also reveals the expenditure on our feathered friends is consistent with declining population numbers - \$483

million, down 8% from 2013. (The biggest areas of expenditure are bird food, and products/accessories, such as cages and toys.) "Bird sales are in decline at a retail level not just in Australia but internationally as well," said Mr Grima. "I see the future of bird ownership mostly around hand-raised, companion pet birds or an eco-system type aviary that is more of a living garden feature than an aviary used to breed budgies."

Fish keeping, suggested to be a very therapeutic hobby as gazing at aquarium fish reduces stress and lowers blood pressure, is sadly also on the decline whilst expenditure is on the rise!

The AMA's 2016 Pet Ownership Report reveals Australia has a total estimated fish population of almost 8.7 million - down by 21% since 2013. Currently, 12% of households keep fish. Expenditure on our finned friends is \$439 million, up 54% from 2013 across most product categories.

PIAA Suppliers and Manufacturers Director Josiah Pit is also Operations & Supply Chain Manager at Aquarium Industries, the largest supplier of high quality freshwater & marine aquarium fish to the retail sector in Australia. He said to understand why the population of pet fish is decreasing in Australia, we need to look at fish import figures - the most reliable data that the industry has.

Mr Pit pointed to fish import data peaking in 2007/08 with more than 19 million fish and halving with just over 8.5 million fish imported in 2016/17. Data for the two-year period between 2007/08 and 2009/10 show import volumes dropped almost 23% from 19 million to just over 14.5 million.

"This major decrease was most likely impacted by the Global Financial Crisis and the decrease in consumer confidence with their discretionary spending," he said.

From 2009 to 2014, fish imports numbers remained relatively stable and then 2014 to 2016 saw a 20% decrease. The recent reduction can in part be attributed to changes in import regulations as implemented by the Australian Government, which required additional health certification affecting about 70%

of total imports, Mr Pit explained.

"This resulted in certain fish no longer being imported, but also reduced the number of importers as their exporters were unable to supply fish under the new requirements," he said. "In addition, there was a change in the variety of fish that were locally bred. Fish producers that typically only produced fish that were unable to be imported, have now started to produce the fish that required the extra certification, as the costs to meet the new import regulations allowed local production to be cost competitive." 

AUSPET CONFERENCE 2017 & GROOMEX 2017

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Australia's only pet trade event, AusPet, will be held at the Rosehill Gardens Racecourse in Sydney, on October 19 and 20.

Expert presenters will share their knowledge on business, aquatics, avian and reptiles, and groomers will compete and attend education workshops, seminars and demonstrations.

AUSPET TRADE SHOW ONLY

Free for PIAA Members - \$29 for Non Members

AUSPET CONFERENCE AND TRADE SHOW

Free for PIAA Members - \$99 for Non Members

GROOMEX

Free entry to trade show for competitors and one helper

Groomex Seminars will be held at Rydges Parramatta on October 21 and 22.

For more information, contact Linda Chamarette (Events Manager) on 02 9659 5811 or email events@piaa.net.au.