

OPTIONS FOR CONTROL OF CATS

FILE NO: C-62-2

RESOLVED

THAT

1. We partner with the Cat Protection Society in a series of Operation Cat de-sexing and educational programs to promote the use of their services to assist low income people to have their cats de-sexed and to utilise their education officer in the education and advisory options to ensure responsible cat ownership.
2. We work with the National De-sexing Network in August to promote their National De-sexing Month.
3. We continue to run our advertising campaigns in local papers and on our website to remind our residents of their obligations for responsible cat ownership.

Report to Council:

1 OPTIONS FOR CONTROL OF CATS

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REPORT BY: DIRECTOR CITY PLANNING

Summary:

- Council resolved on 25 June 2009 that a report be prepared regarding free or subsidised cat de-sexing programs including the enlistment of vets; the possibility of belling cats; activities to reduce the number of strays; and that the report include discussion on the extent of the problem of stray and feral cats in the City of Canterbury.
- We run a series of Operation Cat de-sexing programs in conjunction with the Cat Protection Society.
- We work with the Cat Protection Society to run programs to educate people about feeding stray cats.
- We work with the National De-sexing Network to promote their national cat de-sexing month.

City Plan and Budget Implications:

Adoption of this report's recommendation may have financial implication for the City Plan if we elected to subsidize the cost of de-sexing of animals for health care card holders.

Report:

Council resolved on 25 June 2009:

“THAT

1. A report be supplied to the next Council meeting on a program to offer free and/or subsidized de-sexing of cats in Canterbury as a way to reduce the number of stray and domestic cats occupying areas like Lakemba and Belmore shopping centres. Consideration is to be given as to whether to offer free cat de-sexing to just low income earners and pensioners, or, to the whole community. Possibly free cat de-sexing may be given over a 6 months period and continue with subsidized cat de-sexing for high income earners and free for pensioners and low income earners.
2. Vets and animal welfare organisations who are prepared to provide the service at a reasonable cost be enlisted to the program whether in or outside the LGA.
3. The report should also examine the possibility of Council requiring all cats being belled so that they warn native animals and birds of their presence.
4. Other activities that could reduce the numbers of strays to be included in the report.
5. The report should also include discussion on the extent of the problem with feral and stray cats in the City of Canterbury.”

Free or Subsidised De-sexing of Cats in Canterbury

Council, as a stand alone organisation, is not in a position to offer a go-it-alone program for free or subsidised de-sexing of cats as we do not have the resources or experience to assess correctly and independently applications for assistance.

The general costs associated with de-sexing a cat from a local vet are \$170 for a female and \$88 for a male plus any other associated costs that may be applicable. It is unknown how many cats are housed in the City of Canterbury but an estimate could be as many as 10,000.

To offer free or subsidised de-sexing of cats for all our residents would be cost prohibitive and no provision has been made in the 2009/2010 budget to provide such a service. There are a number of welfare organisations that offer discounted de-sexing of cats to pensioners and other people on low incomes.

The National De-sexing Network (NDN) is a nationwide referral system for discounted de-sexing made available to pet owners in financial need. Their goal is to end pet overpopulation by making this service more affordable to those who might not otherwise be in a position to de-sex their pets. The NDN was established in 2005 as a program of the Animal Welfare League of Queensland.

The NDN has a nationwide network of more than 168 participating veterinary clinics. Veterinarians in the program calculate their own prices according to what they find acceptable. Generally, they offer de-sexing at 20-50% less than the regular price.

In August each year the NDN organises National De-sexing Month. During this month, welfare organisations, veterinarians, pounds and councils are encouraged to raise awareness about pet overpopulation and promote de-sexing as a humane method of solving it.

We intend to work with the NDN in August 2009 to promote their de-sexing month.

The NDN have an application form available on their website and assess applications from anywhere in Australia and require that the recipients of the subsidised cat de-sexing are pensioners or those who can demonstrate that they cannot otherwise afford to have their companion animal de-sexed and are screened by the staff from NDN. Applicants are mailed a referral certificate to take to their veterinarian who honours the agreed fee. The discounted service is then paid for by the client at the time of their visit.

The Cat Protection Society runs a subsidised de-sexing program called "Operation Cat". In the past we have promoted this program in conjunction with the Cat Protection Society, this however was a little time ago. We have had discussions with the Cat Protection Society to again run an "Operation Cat" program although the Society currently has difficulty with their pick up and delivery service. On this basis we will be picking up the cats from a designated drop off point and delivering them to the assigned veterinary service and then picking up the next day.

Between the NDN and the Cat Protection Society's network of vets that offer discounted or subsidised de-sexing of animals, there are suitable facilities available for those in genuine need to obtain assistance to have their cats de-sexed.

We will continue to promote de-sexing of pets through the distribution of literature at our festivals, on our web page and through our column in local newspapers.

Stray and Un-owned Cats

The Cat Protection Society believe the problem of un-owned cats is not tackled by low cost de-sexing programs. People feeding stray cats do not see themselves as 'owners' and so don't present the cats for de-sexing. A successful education program is aimed at getting the message across that feeding strays promotes feline overpopulation.

We have a number of problems with some colonies of stray cats at some centres in the City. These colonies are usually fed food scraps provided by members of the public who see this feeding as being responsible. Whenever possible we trap these stray cats and if they are able to be re-socialised, the pound purchases the animal from us and places them through its network of voluntary groups such as Sydney Animal Rescue to re-home them.

We are proposing to have information sheets in relation to feeding of stray cats translated into relevant community languages and then work with the education officer from the Cat Protection Society who would do presentations for children particularly at our libraries as the children can be important influencers at home. We would also offer these advisory sessions at our festivals in conjunction with the Cat Protection Society.

Trap Neuter and Release (TNR)

We have a problem with a few cat colonies that are around the commercial centres of Lakemba, Belmore and Campsie in car parks and laneways.

A TNR program involves trapping the cats and having them checked by a vet, neutered, one ear clipped (so as to identify that the cat has been neutered) and then released. As the cats are de-sexed the colony eventually dies off.

We could run a TNR program in these areas however there would be a cost to this program of about \$15,000 which would include staff costs, veterinary care and de-sexing costs of \$60 for a male cat and \$135 for a female cat.

This type of program has not been included in the budget for 2009/2010 and we would need to allocate funds for such a program in the 2010/2011 budget.

Cats in Bushland Areas

As there is a problem with cats entering the bushland areas, we will send information kits to the houses adjoining these areas detailing the problems that occur by free ranging cats and providing information on how to minimise these problems and contain their cats.

Belling of Cats

We have no legislative power to require that all cats be belled so that they warn native animals and birds of their presence. A number of studies have shown that the provision of bells on cats does not effectively provide a warning to native animals and birds as cats are very capable predators and use their stealth to overcome the bell.

Conclusion

To endeavour to minimise the impact of stray cats, we will run an education program and Operation Cats program in partnership with The Cat Protection Society to educate people about feeding stray cats and to provide support for the de-sexing and microchipping of cats. We will also work with the NDN in August to promote their National De-sexing Month.

RECOMMENDATION:**THAT**

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2. We work with the National De-sexing Network in August to promote their National De-sexing Month.
3. We continue to run our advertising campaigns in local papers and on our website to remind our residents of their obligations for responsible cat ownership.