



G2Z National Cat Action Plan FAQ's

Breeder Permits

1. Does a Breeder Permit morally justify breeding animals in order to sell them?

A Breeder Permit system is an educational and legislative tool to help develop responsibility for animals' lives in human-dominated environments. It raises awareness of social responsibilities and encourages modification of breeding behaviour e.g. considering beforehand the availability of homes for their litter, and not breeding if there are insufficient homes. It requires support for the breeding animals and their litters to prevent suffering and continue support for their lifetime. By aiming to reduce suffering and loss of life, Breeder Permits are therefore preferable ethically than maintaining the status quo, where too many people do not recognise their responsibility to prevent suffering through abandonment, and loss of life of cats and dogs in pounds and shelters.

It could be argued that it is more ethical for animals to be allowed to breed to fulfil their natural functions of living in their normal family social structure, having litters, roaming in their natural habitat, hunting, and raising their young. However where this currently occurs animals are often killed, injured, treated cruelly, etc. as humans dominate space, resources, and perceptions of who is valuable and who is vermin.

From an individual's viewpoint, allowing a companion animal to breed, providing comfort and care, and ensuring responsible homes for the litter is not immoral as there is no suffering or loss of life in this process. From a whole community viewpoint, while there are healthy sociable animals currently waiting for homes and being killed in pounds and shelters, it is more ethical to provide homes for these cats than deliberately breed more. For this reason large intensive breeding businesses are unethical. We need to reflect on humans' desire for fashionable breeds or appearances and appreciate the beauty and intelligence of all animals.

If humans deliberately breed domestic animals they have an ethical responsibility to support them throughout life, so they do not suffer from pain, frustration, fear, loss, illness, injury, or early death. This means keeping in contact with new owners to ensure they are managing to care for the animals and being available to offer advice, and if necessary take back the animals if they are being abandoned or suffering. The Breeder Permit system aims to set the standards and inspection process to prevent suffering and achieve better quality of life for cats and dogs, humans and other animals who may be impacted by socially irresponsible breeding and commercialisation.



2. Should there be different Breeder Permit registration and inspection requirements according to the number of animals kept?

Regardless of the numbers of animals kept by the breeder, animal health, welfare and management concerns still apply. Inspections are needed to establish in what conditions the animals are being kept to prevent over-breeding and suffering. If small scale breeders were exempt from inspection, their animals may still have been over-bred and/or poorly cared for. In addition, for consumers to be able to choose to purchase well-cared for, socialised and healthy animals, it is necessary for them to be able to identify breeders who are responsible. A Breeder Permit number should be evidence they have had an inspection and demonstrated compliance with ethical standards.

3. Is Local Government the best body to oversee and implement the Breeder Permit systems?

We believe that Local Government Animal Management Officers are best as they are experts in checking compliance and provide the necessary independence to ensure the integrity of the system. Local Government officers are also familiar with their local area, already in the community visiting properties for a variety of reasons. Local Government has a vested interest in prevention of unwanted or poorly socialised litters, and indiscriminate sale of animals to poorly prepared owners, as these become the nuisance issues and impounded animals whose cost to manage is then born by the whole community. So it is more efficient for them to check breeders against ethical standards to reduce the prevalence of nuisance and abandoned animals.

Currently Animal Welfare agencies are not sufficiently resourced to undertake the inspection requirements of the Breeder Permit systems. However, using Breeder Permit fees, **it would be possible for these agencies to employ more staff to undertake this role on behalf of or in conjunction with Local Government.** In the meantime, if serious non-compliance is evident in relation to animal welfare, then Animal Welfare agencies currently can be called in to manage the neglected animals and prosecute.

4. Will Breeder Permit systems affect non pedigree breeding which brings the advantages of hybrid vigour?

As long as the breeder of non-pedigree cats has the inspection and breeder permit, non-pedigree breeding can still take place, but under the same controlled conditions that assure acceptable levels of animal care and traceability of offspring.

5. What are the best punitive measures to ensure that Breeder Permit systems are effective and fair?

- a. The important feature of a Breeder Permit system for cats is recognising that anyone who breeds kittens (even accidentally) is a breeder. Anyone who has a litter is therefore subject to the Breeder Permit System, and can be instructed by local government to desex their cat, or face a fine for breeding without a permit.
- b. In tandem with the permits, a Breeder Permit System includes local governments having a subsidised cooperative desexing program, so that officers can provide vouchers, and assistance with transport if necessary, for those who can't afford the desexing or don't have the capacity to transport their cat to the vet.



The Breeder Permit System is therefore a proactive support system more than a punitive system, **for both people and animals.** If publicised well:

- the general public will support Council to inform them, when people are breeding without a permit and not desexing their cats, thus reducing unwanted cats and nuisance issues
 - Owners who are struggling to manage a breeding cat will be supported to desex and keep their cat
 - Breeders who take good care of their animals will be identifiable and therefore consumers will know from whom to purchase
 - Cats are less likely to be wandering, fighting or surrendered with their litters, if they are desexed prior to sale transfer.
- c. If a breeder with a permit does not follow the Standards, this should attract penalties equivalent to the size of the operation and the income from breeding cats, including revocation of the permit until standards are met or if the standards are poor, removal of the breeding cats and involvement of inspectors under the relevant animal protection act.
- d. Penalties for those breeding without a permit:
- If a person is found breeding their pet without a permit, an officer would contact the animal owner and inform them of the local law requirements. If the person has no previous history, desexing vouchers would be offered for any undesexed cat and kittens, and a notice requiring them to not breed unless they have a current permit. They should be advised to desex the breeding cat and any existing kittens within 30-60 days (depending on the age of the kittens). This allows time for the mother to wean the kittens, milk to dry, and kittens to be of desexing age (over 8 weeks). Officers should follow up during this time, to check if appointments have been made and offer support as needed. Such follow up is a minor cost to Council compared with the cat continuing its cycle of breeding with further infringements and further excess cats creating nuisance issues and having to be impounded.
 - If the owner fails to get a permit or desex their breeding cat and kittens, they would be issued with a compliance notice and a requirement to desex their cat, followed by infringement notices with on the spot fines, then legal proceedings. If the permit or desexing do not occur, owners should be aware that the cat(s) can be removed, for desexing and rehoming by Council.

6. How much should the Breeder Permit fee cost?

- a. The Breeder Permit fee should cover the cost to administer the permit and conduct necessary inspections. Some Councils charge a 3 year permit fee of \$369; others charge an annual fee of \$120 - \$150. A reward system can be built in for reduced fees based on meeting all the standards and guidelines on a follow up random inspection, thus requiring less cost for frequent inspections and administration.
- b. It's important that there is a fee associated with this system to ensure that the system is financially viable for Council to deliver. This cost can easily be absorbed by breeders by adding a proportion of the cost to the price of each kitten (or pup) sold. The public and new owners should be informed that this cost ensures that they are getting kittens (and pups) bred in acceptable conditions (based on regular inspection) and with required follow up support services. Educating



new owners who want to purchase an animal from a breeder to ensure they have a breeder permit number and to inform authorities of any unpermitted breeders will support the interests of consumers and animals.

7. How are more responsible Breeders rewarded for doing the right thing?

More responsible breeders are rewarded by being able to identify themselves from disreputable breeders and sellers who provide poor welfare for animals and upsetting and costly experiences for pet owners. In the longer term there will be fewer non-compliant breeders competing with them. Once this system is uniformly applied nationally, a Breeder Permit System will mean more respect and business for compliant breeders.

8. Should the Breeder Permit Standards be based on minimum requirements or best practice?

The Breeder Permit Standards should represent best practice in animal care and welfare. This does not have to mean expensive facilities but facilities which provide for the comfort and well-being of the animals. It is in everyone's best interests including local governments' that the welfare standards are high to ensure purchasers are receiving healthy, well-socialised, desexed animals which are suited to their lifestyle so they are easy to care for and less likely to be abandoned or relinquished. Ultimately the community has to pay for poorly bred and sold animals through the costs of animal management. A Breeder Permit System puts the responsibility where it should lie with the breeders and owners, to prevent unwanted and neglected animals.

9. How do consumers know the Breeder has a Breeder Permit?

Breeder Permit numbers are required to be advertised with any kitten (or pup) sold or given away. So that prospective new pet owners can find responsible breeders they should also be accessible by the public via a national, state or local data base. National consistency with numbering for recognition by consumers would increase compliance with the system. Listing a simple nationally consistent breeder permit number is preferable to a listing of a microchip number, as consumers are not able to search microchip numbers to ascertain if they are valid or not. Also, a Breeder Permit number search is preferable to a microchip number search as for the first 6 weeks of life most animals are too small/young to microchip but may still be advertised for sale (although not ready to go to their new home). By empowering the consumers, the need for policing of the advertised numbers by authorities is reduced.

10. How is a Breeder Permit system which targets owned cats and breeders going to solve the basis of the problem if the majority of animals coming into pounds and shelters are unowned?

- a. A significant proportion of cats and kittens entering shelters are owned. "53% of felines entering shelters are kittens (< 3 months), and approximately 46% of those are from owned queens, and 52% are stray but socialised to people. Adult cats are 50% owned and 50% stray with over 90% socialised to people. ...Only 10% of cats are feral" (RSPCA national figures: Alberthsen PhD Thesis; and QLD figures: Alberthsen et al, 2012). Since the majority are socialised to humans



and socialisation at 2-7 weeks is key to their sociability, it indicates that even most of the strays are or have been owned at some stage, and that they most likely have had an owner who was their breeder.

- b. Under the proposed Breeder Permit system, all of these owners whose kittens or cats often end up at a pound or shelter will be included. They will have to recognise themselves as “a breeder” and get a Breeder Permit, or have their animals desexed. If they breed, they will also be responsible for desexing their kittens, and if they do not, they can be followed up by a local government officer who can issue an infringement notice, and offered desexing subsidy support to prevent the offence reoccurring.

11. If over 90% of owned cats in the general community are desexed, how is desexing going to help solve the problem?

- a. The 10% of owned cats who are not desexed can have 3-4 litters a year who then can breed so that the number of cats increases exponentially. As well, approximately 12 - 20% of owned cats have a litter before they are desexed.
- b. Currently most veterinary practitioners recommend desexing at 5-6 months, which allows for unplanned litters. Recommending that all cats be desexed before puberty i.e. between 8 and 14 weeks would be helpful.
- c. As well, 32% of owners who surrender cats indicate they just haven't got around to desexing yet (Gold Coast 2009/10 Statistics Report Fig.10 <http://www.awlqld.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2011/07/Statistics200910.pdf>). If all kittens are required to be desexed when they leave the breeder, this issue is overcome. However this can only be enforced if the breeders are identified and Councils have the resources from Breeder and Seller Permit fees to follow up and ensure that desexing occurs. Once consumers become aware that a Breeder Permit System exists, they can assist Animal Management Officers by reporting undesexed animals being sold.

12. If only 8% of adult cats and 2% of kittens coming in to shelters are pure-bred, and only 3% of these are euthanased (RSPCA Queensland figures; Alberthsen et al 2012), why should they be required to get a Breeder Permit?

- a. When a pure-bred breeder sells an undesexed kitten, 10-63% of these may breed before they are desexed (Webb, on DEPI Vic website; Toukhsati et al. 2007) and 10% may never be desexed. All of these may breed with a non-purebred animal. This may continue with breeding of subsequent generations and therefore increasingly add to the cross-breed animal population in shelters. Hence there is no guarantee that pure-bred breeders are not contributing to the ongoing problem, unless they all desex their kittens before they sell them.
- b. The breeder permit system has more than one purpose. It is not only to prevent unwanted kittens and cats entering shelters (by capturing those who are breeding indiscriminately or currently don't think of themselves as breeders), but also to provide a systematic process by which consumers can identify if the animals they are purchasing are being kept according to acceptable standards of welfare. The Breeder Permit system was developed for both dogs and cats, so that consumers



could have a recognisable and consistent system for how to ensure they acquire a healthy and well-socialised animal.

- c. Pure-bred breed organisations do not have the resources to inspect their breeder members to ensure high standards of welfare, desexing prior to sale, and litters going to responsible homes. They are not located near all their member breeders to inspect and follow up as local government officers are (See response to Question 3 above). As well, for public confidence in the system, inspections need to be independent. While it has been proposed that veterinarians could inspect breeders, there is no guarantee that these vets will be independent, or that they will not cost the individual breeder as much or more than the cost of a local government inspection.

13. Will the expense and inconvenience of a breeder permit system deter pure-bred breeders from breeding and open the way for more commercial breeders and kitten mills?

- a. Responsible pure bred breeders have been part of the development of the Breeder Permit System and recognise that it is important for their reputation to be able to prove that they have high standards, which in turn can lead to greater consumer interest and support.
- b. The inspection system can provide helpful advice to breeders to ensure they are providing the best welfare and management of their animals.
- c. Costs can be absorbed into the price of each animal and do not have to be prohibitive. Consideration needs to be given to a possible tiered fee with lower fees for small home breeders who are providing the optimal environment for health and socialisation take less time to inspect, and are likely to create fewer issues requiring animal management intervention. Commercial breeders of kittens should be required to pay a higher fee based on the greater income they receive, their greater contribution to the oversupply of kittens in the community, and the higher risk that they will not provide optimal health and sociability of their kittens with after-sale support. G2Z believes that any large scale intensive breeding of kittens should not be allowed on the basis of poor welfare and contribution to the oversupply.

Desexing

1. Isn't it preferable to provide the kitten with a desexing voucher rather than utilise Early Age Desexing?

No, desexing vouchers are commonly not utilised and require considerable work to follow up. Most animal welfare organisations have moved away from using vouchers due to this inconsistency of compliance by adopters/purchasers. It creates another area that needs to be policed by authorities and requires extra resources. In a study done at a Victorian cat shelter it was found that 25-40% of cat desexing vouchers were not redeemed, even though there was a free service for the new owner of the kitten.



2. Isn't subsidised desexing promoting the idea that pet ownership is cheap?

- a. Subsidised desexing is promoting the idea that for too long the lives of cats have been cheap. They have been disposable and abandoned, largely because we have not addressed their fast breeding rate.
- b. Subsidised desexing can therefore be promoted as a special welfare and community service being provided by those vets who acknowledge that it is their opportunity to contribute to the prevention of unwanted cats. Reducing the numbers freely available in the community will raise the value of cats as there will be fewer in over supply and less to create nuisance and destroy native wildlife etc.
- c. This strategy requires a bigger picture view by veterinary professionals by understanding that in the short term they may be providing a service at or below cost but in the long term it is the best outcome for their professional ethics. As a professional veterinarians would like to see all domestic animals responsibly cared for and taken to their local vet on a regular basis. Reducing the numbers of cats freely available will contribute to achieving this goal.
- d. It has been shown on the Gold Coast through AWLQ intake data, that one third of undesexed cats surrendered of desexing age (from 2 months) were not desexed because their owner didn't get around to it and 14% were undesexed due to cost of desexing. These people are unlikely to be already attending vet clinics. A further 34% were undesexed because owners thought their cat was too young, which also can be addressed through promotion by vets of the safety and benefits of early age desexing at 8-12 weeks. Promotion of the urgency of desexing and making it accessible to all through a Desexing Subsidy Program helps to address all of these reasons for not desexing i.e. 80% of people who surrender cats.
- e. Dr Jacqui Rand of University of Queensland ascertains that research shows that just over half of the cats entering shelters are kittens, and approximately 46% are from owned queens, and 52% are stray but socialised to people. Adult cats are equally stray and owned, and over 90% are socialised to people. Approximately 12-20% of owned cats have a litter before being desexed. Based on RSPCA statistics nationally (Alberthsen unpublished data in PhD thesis) and in QLD (Alberthsen et al, 2012), of cats entering shelters, 53% are kittens, and 47% are adult cats. Of adult cats, approximately 50% are surrendered owned cats and 50% are stray, mostly socialised to people (only 10% of cats entering shelters are categorised as feral and 92% are euthanased). Importantly, of kittens entering shelters, about 44% are from owned queens and 56% are stray (only 9% are categorized as feral). Data from the US suggests that people who do not perceive they own the cat that they are feeding will pay a maximum of \$15-20 for desexing. Ongoing subsidies for desexing will need to be made available to people feeding cats they do not perceive they own, because this is a major source of kittens – in the order of 60% of kittens coming into shelters are stray, but the queen is likely getting some care in the community because the majority of the kittens are not classed as feral.
- f. As this is a community problem, subsidies need to be provided by local governments along with animal welfare organisations through community donations and volunteer labour, to coordinate



these programs and save labour expenses for councils. Veterinarians can then still cover costs of desexing but keep the price low enough for low income earners to afford.

3. Doesn't offering cheap or subsidised desexing set up the expectation that all of the pets' veterinary care throughout life should be cheap?

- a. The simple answer to this commonly asked question is no. Desexing is one-off expense in being a responsible owner but unfortunately it can be a very expensive step. Often owners are able to cover the ongoing costs of owning a pet but desexing costs of hundreds of dollars are often out of their reach. Consequently this simple operation doesn't get done (or is done too late) and unwanted litters are born. This makes it more difficult for owners to afford normal health care for pets, due to having unplanned and too many pets to care for. When there is a reduced oversupply of pets, people will be able to plan for owning a pet more carefully and are less likely to feel obliged to take on caring for pets they cannot afford because there are too few homes. This will mean most owners will have the ability to pay for veterinary services.
- b. Offering cheap/free or subsidised desexing is a longer term view or big picture strategy to assist in the management of the community's pets. It may cost Council and animal welfare organisations more in the short term to provide this support but they are ultimately paying for the management of unwanted pets anyway. Dr Carole Webb states that \$1 spent on low/no cost desexing programs equals \$11 saved in animal management costs.
- c. Being desexed may mean that the pet keeps its home long term or for life as it will often be easier to care for and live with. As well as desexing being a good preventative health measure for pets, it is also often a good preventative behaviour measure.

4. Is early age desexing safe?

- a. Many studies have been conducted that show that early age (paediatric or juvenile) desexing is safe and effective in both the short and long term. While six months of age has been the traditional recommendation for desexing of puppies and kittens, it is unclear from the scientific literature how that conclusion was reached. It is now known that desexing an animal before the first season or heat prevents the development of mammary gland tumours later in life. Since kittens may go on heat at 4 months of age, waiting until 6 months risks accidental pregnancy and loses the protection against mammary gland cancer.
- b. It would appear that decisions about when to desex our cats are based more on the individual practitioner's familiarity with the surgical technique and anaesthesia rather than on any current scientific or medical evidence. Increasingly veterinary students are being taught about early age desexing and its benefits, but it will take time for this to influence veterinary clinics around Australia. Workshops have been held in some states to develop proficiency and awareness of the importance of early age desexing, but more could be done by veterinary organisations to progress such programs. You can read more about early age desexing and view reference articles [here](#).



Pet Shops

1. Should Pet Shops sell pets?

- a. Pet shops can serve an important role in helping to rehome kittens, cats and other shelter animals by making them available in easily accessible locations. Pet shop owners can make substantial profit from these sales by building a loyal customer base purchasing pet supplies from them. These days many people will only support pet supplies stores or those that rehome shelter pets, as opposed to pets purchased from breeders or wholesalers.
- b. Organising animals from shelters/pounds to be available through pet shops raises public awareness of the support needed for abandoned animals, and increases rehoming of desexed, microchipped kittens and cats, through greater exposure to the public. It replaces the need to breed and sell undesexed kittens. Pet shops can implement similar adoption processes to shelters to ensure a good match with the new owner and can also provide educational resources and other supplies such as cat containment systems.
- c. Pet shops have often provided a service for people with unexpected litters to find homes for their kittens. However unless these kittens are desexed prior to sale, the cycle continues with too many cats in the warmer breeding months than can be accommodated in either pet shops or shelters/pounds. This is why a Pet Shop Permit system with a requirement to desex all kittens and cats prior to sale also needs to be in place until all states have a Breeder Permit system which requires desexing of cats and kittens by breeders before sale.

Registration

1. Should pet registration be annual or lifetime?

- a. Lifetime registration has a significant number of disadvantages such as:
 - lack of revenue to employ sufficient officers to collect stray animals and return them home
 - owners not updated with Council requirements
 - owners not reminded to update contact details
 - no reliable data garnered in terms of animal numbers and specifics

2. Why should cat registration be cheaper than dog registration?

- a. Cat registration should be cheaper than dog registration because:
 - i. cats are in oversupply and not valued by some as much as dogs
 - ii. cats generally require less intervention from Council officers due to not having barking and aggression issues
 - iii. a lower fee will make it more attractive for those not currently registering
 - iv. the more people who register their cats increases the level of public knowledge around the legislation and it will become regular practice as it is for dogs



3. Does registration cause people not to microchip?

Registration needs to be better marketed by Councils so that the public are better informed about the advantages of registration and the differences from microchipping. Both forms of identification are important for different reasons. Registration is a visible sign that a cat is owned, making it easy for local residents to identify the owner by calling Council and returning the cat. While wearing an address tag also means locals can easily return an animal home, if a registration fee goes to local councils they can offer a collection and keep-safe service if the pet wanders or if a finder cannot care temporarily for the pet. They also can send out reminders to owners to update address and phone numbers annually. A microchip is hidden but permanent and therefore a back-up in case the pet loses the collar, which is common with cats. If a microchipping system was also able to remind owners to update their details annually it would be helpful. Doing both provides a double indemnity to ensure an animal can be returned home.

Accommodation

1. Why should landlords and Real Estate Agents be encouraged to rent to pet owners?

- a. Sheer numbers of potential renters. According to the Australian Companion Animal Council two thirds of households in Australia own pets and over half of all households own a dog and/or cat. 91% of pet owner's reports feeling "very close" to their pet, reinforcing that pets are an integral member of the family unit. More than 83% of Australians have had a pet at some time during their lives and of the people that do not currently own a pet 53% would like to do so in the future. There are more pets in Australia than people.
- b. It supports honesty, avoiding hidden pets and future problems. In many cases tenants, both responsible and irresponsible, do own pets and are just hiding it from the landlord and agent. It is better to regulate the practice and allow, than have people hiding their pets and therefore not having to prove responsibility before moving in to a property. The following links provide useful information for landlords, tenants and agents when looking at the issue of allowing pets in rentals.
http://www.humanesociety.org/animals/resources/tips/rental_manager_resources.html#.Uw2McqRWGpo
<http://www.petsinthecity.net.au/>
- c. There is a huge amount of scientific evidence suggesting that pets are good for people. Pets are usually considered part of the family. They encourage activity - walking, running and playing with pets. Pets encourage interaction, caring and support between people and therefore friendlier communities. The elderly can often stay in their homes longer if they have the companionship of an animal. Unfortunately in many areas the rental market is tight and those pet owning tenants seeking properties are often overlooked due to negative perceptions.
- d. Lack of pet friendly accommodation is the direct cause of many pets being surrendered to pounds and shelters. Pet owners and pets suffer terribly from being separated from their families, and many healthy animals are killed due to excess numbers in these facilities.



Animal Management and Welfare practices

1. Is it better for animal management to impound a wandering animal or return it home?

- a. Impounding is a short term solution to an often longer term problem. As achieving compliance is the primary goal, it is better to address the cause i.e. why/how did the pet get out of the yard? Are there issues with fences, or an antagonistic neighbour? Are there behavioural issues present? Is the cat undesexed? Most causes of cats wandering are a lack of knowledge about how to contain a cat, lack of resources to build/ install a cat safe fence, accidents (kids left the door open), lack of desexing or lack of training to keep the cat indoors.
- b. Given that cat reclaim rates are low, it is better that the owner is supported to find a resolution to the issue than to impound the cat and have to provide staff and facilities to care for it, and then have the stress of having to euthanize up to 60% of cats. Building a relationship with the owner in order to educate and support is a more effective medium to long term solution for most situations.
- c. Impounding is a more expensive option to Council than returning the cat home. Costs to catch, transport to pound, hold and care for and then dispose of a pet can run to \$200-\$300 per animal. If the reasons why the pet is straying are not addressed it can cost Council many hundreds of dollars to keep going out and chasing and catching a repeat offender. If the pet isn't claimed these costs cannot be redeemed and it is common for Council to have to go to great lengths to have fees and fines paid by owners of straying pets. Ultimately it is the community that pays this debt as it is the community that finances Council operations and services.
- d. Because many wandering cats will return home of their own accord, impounding them prevents this occurring, and owners are less likely to look for their cat at the pound thinking it will come home. This results in higher euthanasia rates.
- e. Taking more proactive action to prevent wandering will provide more positive rewarding jobs for Council officers and more community support for Council. Breeder permit inspections and checking breeders and pet shops to ensure cats are being microchipped and registered on a microchip database before sale, and being suitably homed with responsible caring owners with appropriate enclosures will prevent stray and unowned cats. For existing owners, providing incentives and support to microchip and prevent wandering e.g. desexing and microchipping vouchers, web resources on how to build cheap cat safe fences, and promotion of these services will also be more positive and efficient.

2. Why foster and rehabilitate cats and kittens when there are so many unwanted cats out there?

- a. Volunteers with the capacity to assist cats in need can be invited to participate in a foster program which increases understanding of, and engagement with, the issues facing cats in the community and the organisations working with them. There are community members out there who are well suited to, and willing to, provide this kind of support. Initiating a positive program



such as a foster program not only saves lives but increases support for the organisation or department involved as well as showing the community that although the situation for cats is often dire there is hope and positive steps that can be taken. Making the most of the many and varied resources available via the community expands the resources available to organisations and departments to use in their mission to care for and manage the communities pets.

- b. Animal management and welfare practices have advanced significantly over the past 10 years and the community perceives catching and killing of cats that are healthy and treatable an unethical option. The old fashioned culture of pounds (and shelters) killing these animals has moved on to a culture of recognising that all life is valued and there are often alternative options for the animals that come into care. In addition there is a move to preventative policies and practices. As these policies and practices begin to take effect more resources can be put towards treating animals in foster care, just as they would be treated if they were in an existing home.
- c. The role of local government is to meet the needs of the community while following ethical principles which includes respect for all life. The decision to not offer a foster program to those cats and kittens able to be treated and rehabilitated then means that euthanasia is the most commonly chosen outcome. Euthanasia should always be a last resort after all other options are explored and implemented.
- d. Developing a foster program takes less internal resources than people think and can be started on a very small scale to begin with. It's important to allow the community to offer their resources to assist in saving lives. Here are some links to further information and guidance on setting up a foster program.

[ASPCApro](#)
[Animal Sheltering](#)
[Maddies Institute](#)
[Pet Foster](#)

3. Why should Local Government provide vet care to pound and shelter animals?

- a. Provision of health care, preventative treatments and good husbandry is now recognised as best practice in the field of animal management and welfare.
- b. Local government is tasked with the responsibility of caring for the community's pets temporarily when they are lost or homeless. The community's expectations include that animals in care have appropriate food, water, bedding, veterinary care, exercise and behavioural support.
- c. Depending on the size of the operation it may be more financially viable and efficient to have a small onsite clinic rather than contract the veterinary services out to a local clinic.
- d. Ethics requires adoption opportunities and a chance at further life to impounded pets as they value life and well-being. A certain amount of veterinary work is therefore necessary. Basic procedures such as vaccination, flea and worming treatment protect the animals' health. Microchipping and desexing protect the animals and the community from unwanted and nuisance animals and reduce future Council spending on managing wandering animals and unwanted litters. Offering adoption also increases knowledge in the community of the animal management and welfare issues facing the region. The community comes to realise that adoption is an ethical



choice which then goes on to change the perceptions in the community and consequently the culture of the community.

- e. Increasing the number of desexed cats in the community, either by Council desexing prior to adoption or organising cooperative cat desexing subsidy programs, is a positive step in changing the proportion of desexed cats in the community and helpful in the overall management of cats. Desexed cats are less likely to cause problems that may lead to being surrendered or lost such as wandering and breeding.

4. Why should Council open the pound facility after hours and on weekends?

- a. Animal management is a council service run for the community. In order for the community to be able to access this service, opening hours need to be accommodating. Many members of the community work full time which precludes them from visiting a pound or shelter during business hours. Consequently these services need to be open after hours and on weekends to facilitate reclaims and adoptions.
- b. The quicker lost and homeless animals leave the pound facility the less cost to Council to care for them. It reduces the chance that they become unwell from stress and close confinement, and exposure to contagious disease, which in turn reduces the costs involved in care for the pound operator.
- c. Volunteers can be utilised to reduce staffing costs for the pound operator. There are many people in the community willing to volunteer their time and other resources in order to make the area that they live in the safest that it can be for the whole community, including the pets.

5. Should proactive adoption programs include low and no cost adoption promotions?

Over the last few years more and more adoption agencies have been implementing low cost or free promotions, particularly for cats. Initially there were concerns that to reduce or remove the adoption fee would have negative effects such as reducing the value of the cat in the eyes of the new owner and community, decrease the attachment of the new owner to the cat and that the new owners may not be able to afford the ongoing care of the cat if they could not afford the adoption fee. There has been a large amount of research done to look at these issues, as well as significant evidence from those organisations that have been willing to explore this opportunity, which has shown that there are no negative impacts on pets as a result of these promotions. You can read more about why low and no cost adoption promotions should be considered [here](#) and [here](#).

Legislation

1. Why go down the legislation road?

- a. Legislation is a mechanism to change community culture, standards of behaviour, expectations and levels of understanding about a particular issue. It can provide an incentive for those contributing to a community problem to change behaviours which adversely affect others e.g. smoking responsibility. It does not have to focus on punishment. It raises awareness of the



importance of socially responsible behaviour to prevent indiscriminate breeding, just as a combination of legislation and promotion has reduced smoking and drink driving.

- b. Legislation is often seen to be a fixed plan which needs to be fully rejected if it is not working. If legislation is not working, crucial implementation elements may be missing rather than it being a problem with the legislation itself. Legislation is not a quick fix, just as education is not. It is a complex process of consultation to negotiate fair and ethical responses to problems, and combining with other strategies which encourage action i.e. incentives, knowledge, and skills training. Legislation requires persistence to review and adjust some elements of the legislation that may not be working, and to constantly refresh a range of implementation strategies.
- 2. Doesn't current animal welfare and protection legislation adequately protect animals being kept for breeding?**

Current animal welfare legislation is largely based on punishing unnecessary cruelty rather than providing guidance to achieve good animal welfare. It generally relies on a reactive approach whereby someone reports an infringement and the issue is then investigated by the appropriate authority. If a complaint is made this generally means that an animal is already suffering. The Breeder Permit Standards and accompanying inspection are designed to prevent issues from arising, increasing. Social responsibility in terms of cat owning and breeding and raising awareness in the general community of the issues that need to be addressed.

- 3. Would a better option be to have all pet owners licensed?**

The issue of an excess of cats needs to be dealt with at the source to create a more immediate change. In a perfect world pet owner licenses would be a useful strategy and may be worth looking at in the future. Potential pet owners could undertake an education program before achieving their pet owning license and then go ahead and adopt an appropriate pet. However, reducing the oversupply is essential first as pet owner licenses may even reduce the availability of homes. There are fewer pet breeders than pet owners, so it is more efficient to develop responsible breeding and as this includes all breeders rehoming carefully and providing support for the owners, the issue of irresponsible owners will also be addressed.

