



# Forming Coalitions to drive change

A Case Study

## The Cat Crisis Coalition

Dr Carole Webb

BVSc MACVS (Feline Medicine)

Executive Director

CAT PROTECTION SOCIETY

# Comments

- 👉 **Congratulations to Joy and the AWL Team for an excellent summit and opportunity to share progress and ideas from across Australia**
- 👉 **Congratulations to Tasmania for their enlightened view that Cats require a separate Act and one that contains compulsory desexing**
- 👉 **Congratulations to WA and Cat Haven for the Premiers commitment to compulsory desexing and to Bunbury who have introduced Desex in the City**
- 👉 **Congratulations to Moreton Bay and NZ for working with the veterinary profession with their Desexathons – and just a comment re Dogs hunting Cats – The Cats won the Grand Final – Dogs Beware**
- 👉 **Total agreement with the single issue focus – we need to stop the killing and we need to do it together**



The Inaugural  
**National Summit to End  
Pet Overpopulation**

## Resolutions from the Inaugural Summit

- 🐾 Relevant government bodies to introduce legislation for all cats and dogs to be desexed and microchipped prior to sale or exchange (unless to another registered breeder)
- 🐾 National Coalition of stakeholders be formed to pursue all of the Summit resolutions



Formed  
August 2004

A UNIQUE alliance of leading  
Victorian Animal Welfare Groups  
UNITED

through our commitment to urgently  
address the current cat crisis  
by achieving the introduction of  
COMPULSORY DESEXING OF CATS



**30,000  
members**

☞ **Australian Animal Protection Society**

☞ **Blue Cross**

☞ **Cat Protection Society of Victoria**

☞ **Geelong Animal Welfare Society**

☞ **Humane Society for Animal Welfare**

☞ **Lort Smith Animal Hospital**

☞ **Mirboo North & District Animal Aid**

☞ **RSPCA Victoria**

☞ **Save A Dog Scheme**

☞ **South Gippsland Animal Aid**

☞ **The Lost Dogs Home & Western Suburbs Cat Shelter**

☞ **The Victorian Animal Aid Trust**



## OUR MISSION

To ensure legislation is enacted in Victoria to require that all cats over the age of 12 weeks are desexed unless registered to a licenced breeder and require that all cats and kittens offered for sale or acquired be desexed

# Cat crisis Coalition

Four cute kittens.....  
One will live, Three will die

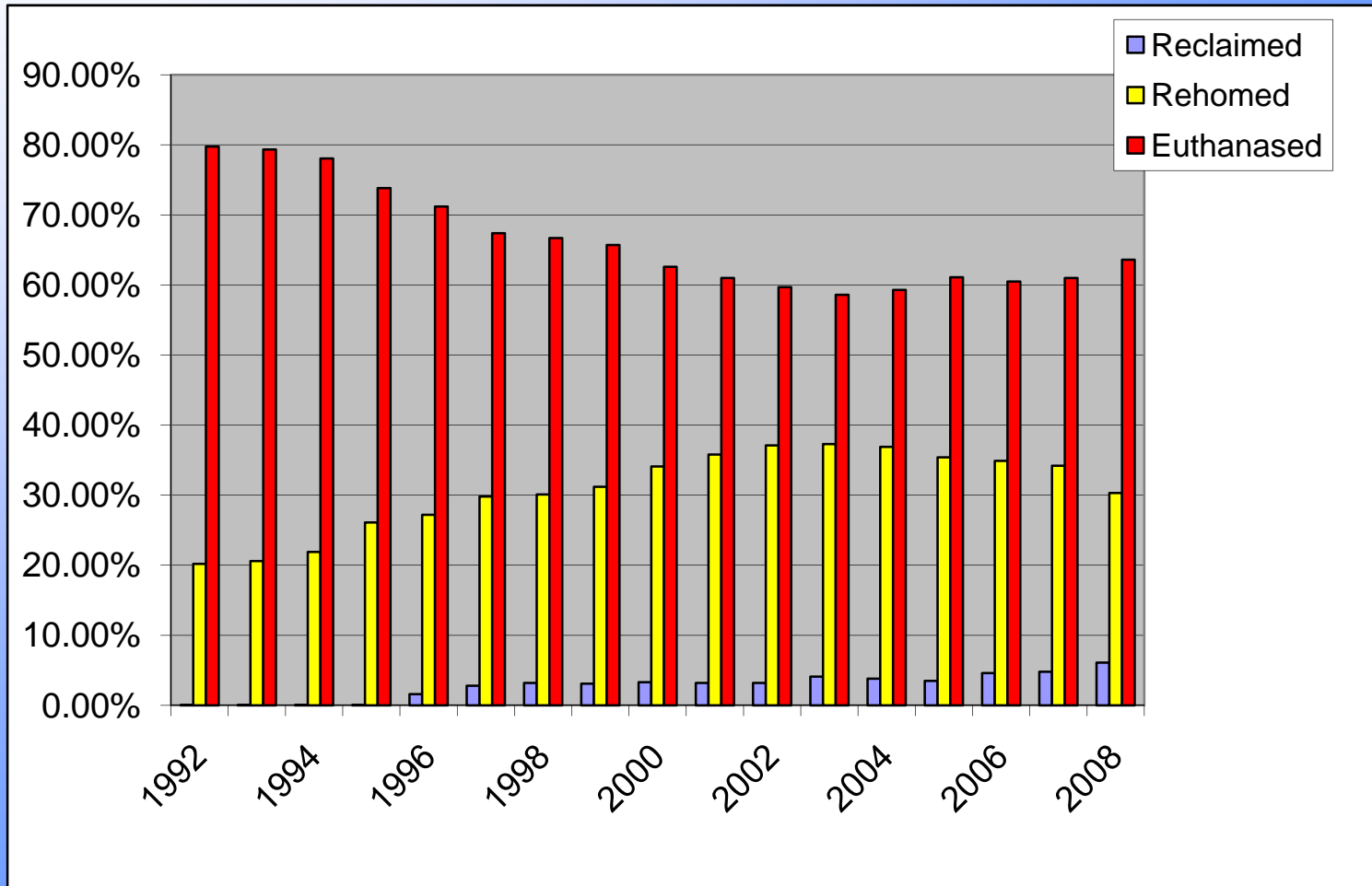
YOU CHOOSE

## WHY 2004?

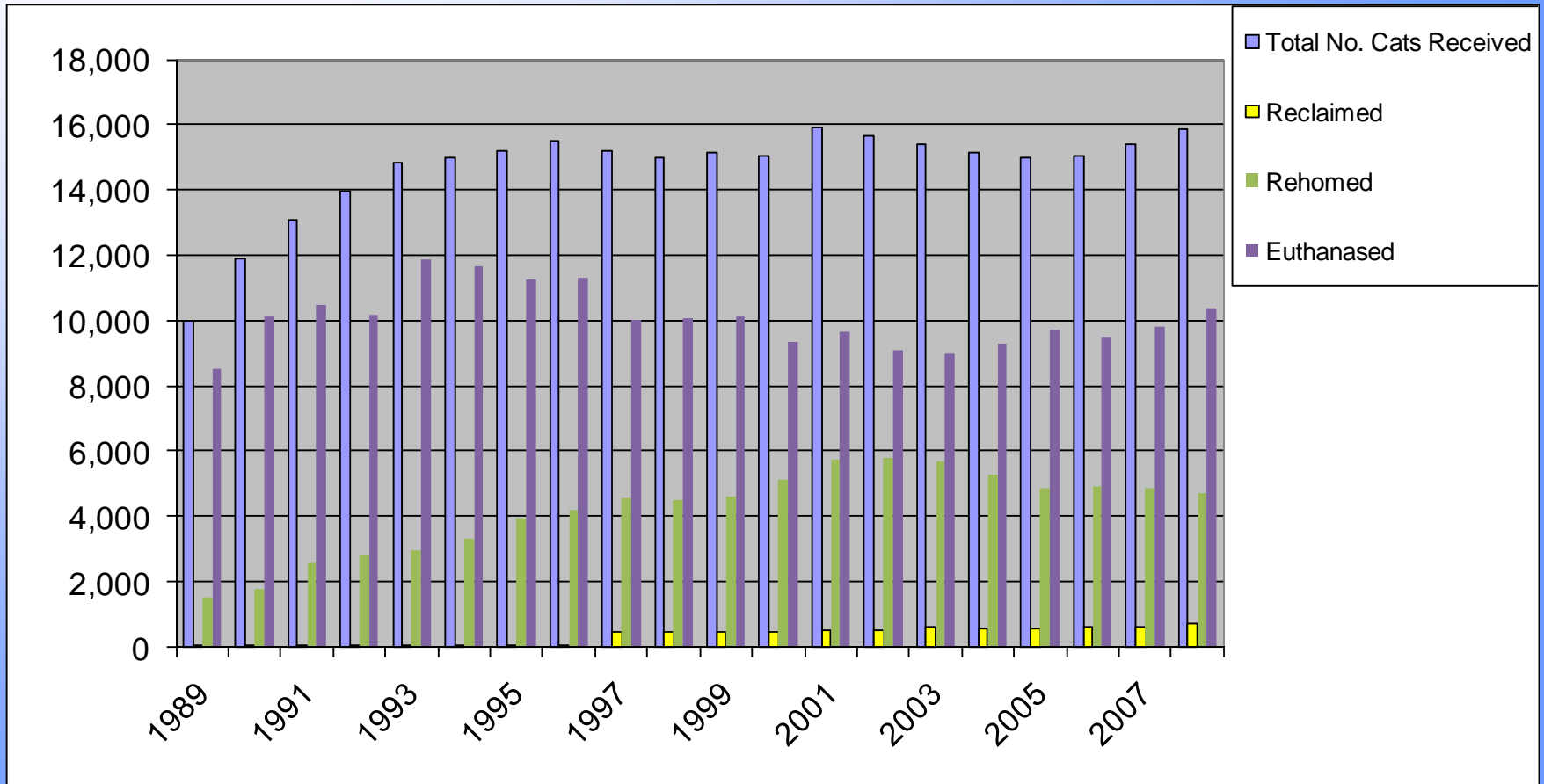
- Pre 1996, no laws re cats
- 1996 Domestic Animals Act did not address desexing, dog focused
- Large numbers of unwanted cats are euthanased – not decreasing with time
- Emotional stress on shelter workers
  - Financial burden on shelters
- Community expectations changing



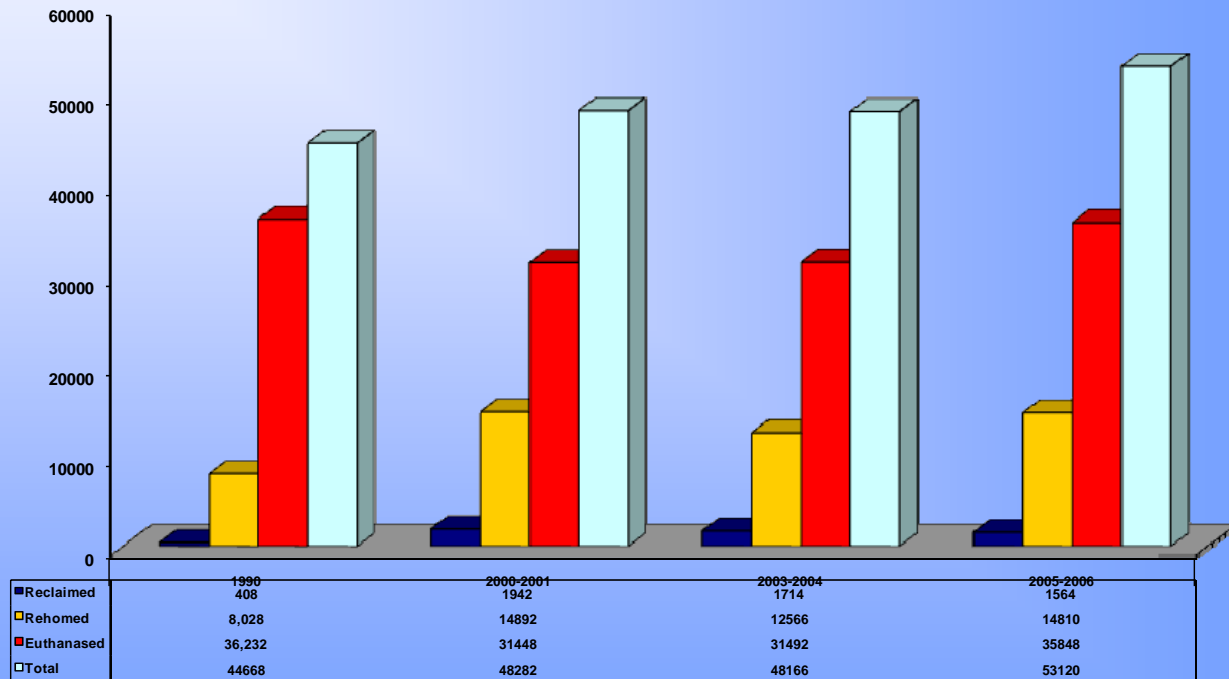
# CPS Intake and Fate – 1989 - 2008







Comparison of total number of cats received by Victorian Shelters from 1990 to 2006



**Conservative Figures – smaller rescue groups not included**

# 2001-2002 Benchmarking Survey by Bureau of Animal Welfare

🐾 76 out of 78 Councils responded

🐾 41% of cats were registered, 82% were reduced fee

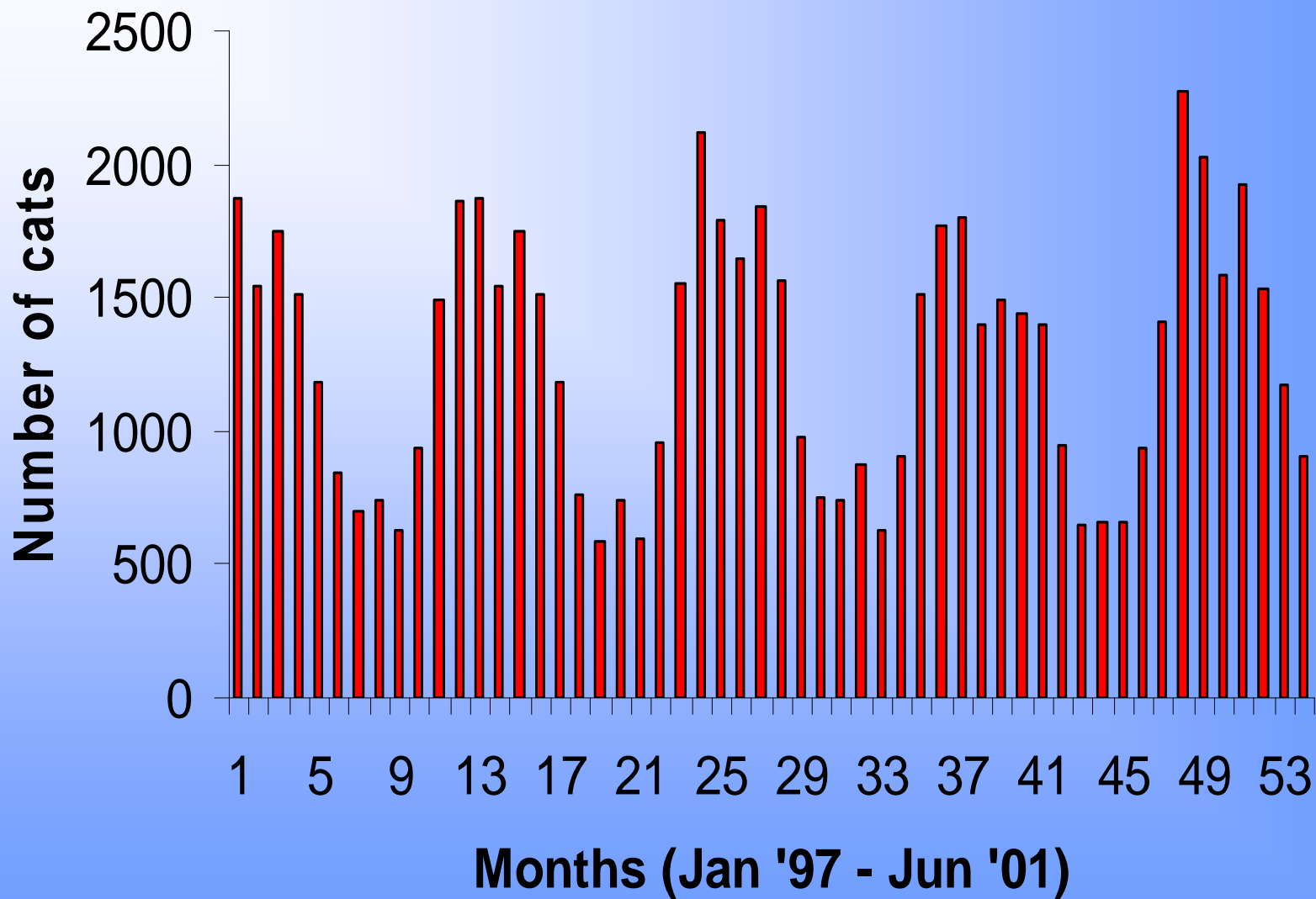
🐾 More dogs were impounded per 1,000 residents than cats (11 cf 6) and the fate for cats was poor:

🐾 11.5% reclaimed

🐾 75.9% euthanased

🐾 15.6% rehomed

No significant change in 2005-6 Survey



# A Common Goal

- ❖ Different philosophies but a common problem, differences/judgements put aside to address the problem
- ❖ The cat problem is complex because there are several populations of cats – a cat continuum, these are not isolated and all populations are important
- ❖ It is different to the dog problem – cats are not honorary dogs, they reproduce rapidly and feline specific solutions are required
- ❖ Largely, the cat problem consists of two components:
  - ❖ Overpopulation/Surplus
  - ❖ Surplus cats and irresponsibly owned cats cause community problems

- ❖ When supply exceeds demand, only 3 solutions exist:
  - ❖ Increase demand – this has a limit
  - ❖ Euthanase surplus – current situation - unacceptable

### ❖ **Reduce supply – Holistic cat welfare plans**

❖ In veterinary terms we are currently treating the condition, not preventing it – the type of treatment can cause friction whereas prevention is a common goal

❖ Our common goal

**EVERY CAT DESERVES A LIFE**  
**and should have a responsible home/carer**

# Holistic Cat Welfare Plans

- 🐾 Improved image for the cat – a value as a companion
  - 🐾 Compulsory Microchipping and registration
  - 🐾 Compulsory desexing – the wish of the welfare lobby
  - 🐾 Low cost/Subsidised/Accessible desexing programs – it is cheaper to desex the cat then address the problems it may cause
  - 🐾 Increased/extended/innovative rehoming programs
  - 🐾 Education re Responsible Cat Ownership for those cats that are owned
  - 🐾 Education re not JUST feeding cats at large – taking responsibility breaks the continuum into discrete populations that can be better managed
  - 🐾 Trapping of unowned cats – TNR and how or euthanasia?
- 🐾 ALL OF THESE ARE NEEDED, ONE ALONE WILL NOT BE EFFECTIVE**

# Benefits of Compulsory Desexing

- ✔ No laws, laws with differential registration fees, education programs, adoption programs, incentives and subsidised desexing programs in place for many years with no change in intake
- ✔ Legislative requirement increases awareness within the community of importance of desexing and sets the community standard or benchmark
- ✔ Legislation tightens the net - it addresses 50% of the source of cats ie shelters, pet shops, breeders, thereby reducing the problem - eventually cats will be acquired actively cf passively thereby improving responsible ownership
- ✔ Requirement for desexing at 12 weeks of age removes the 13% that have one litter before being desexed
- ✔ Legislation allows shelters to address repetitive problems



- ✔ **Legislation will reduce the numbers of unwanted cats entering shelters, thereby reducing the financial and emotional burden on these and allowing allocation of resources to more positive activities**
- ✔ **Legislation will not be onerous to enforce - no additional burden to that of registration.**
- ✔ **Legislation will reduce the number of cat complaints within the community (as most relate to undesexed cat behaviour) thereby reducing burden on Local Government and improving the cat's image in the community – cheaper to desex the cat than address the complaint**
- ✔ **The reduction in the surplus domestic cats will reduce replenishment of the wild colonies and allow these to be more effectively addressed.**
- ✔ **Most importantly, desexing is in the cat's best interests - a desexed cat lives a longer and healthier life**
- ✔ **Alternatives to desexing are risky and impractical (contraception/confinement)**



- ❖ Subsidized desexing scheme - MYCAT
- ❖ Collation of Statistics
- ❖ Lobbying

## ACTIVITIES

- ❖ Appointment of a campaign manager
- ❖ How to help booklet
- ❖ Petitions and Letters
- ❖ Official Launch
- ❖ Media and Publicity
- ❖ Website

[www.catcrisis.com](http://www.catcrisis.com)



## SUCCESSSES

- ❖ Remain united and committed to the cause
- ❖ State Legislative Change
  - ❖ Lowering of the registration age from 6 months to 3 months - important because lowered age for desexing
  - ❖ Section 10 A introduced into the Domestic Animals Act
  - ❖ Introduction of DAM Plans for each Council - requirement to address overpopulation and high euthanasia rates in their municipality and document statistics - this generally raises the profile of animal welfare within the Council framework



## SUCCESSSES

- ❖ Raised community awareness - surveys conducted with the DAM Plans - 14 Councils conducted surveys with an average 73.9% support for compulsory desexing. State Government 84%
- ❖ Local Legislative Change -in reviewing the 79 DAM Plans:
  - ❖ 21 have orders or imminent for compulsory desexing
  - ❖ 22 in the pipeline - consultative phase
  - ❖ 6 Councils unsure
  - ❖ 30 continuing with RCO education and incentives



## DIFFICULTIES

- ❖ Resources
- ❖ Understanding change takes time
- ❖ Opposition to compulsory and early age desexing from the veterinary profession and sections of the pet industry

# A Common Goal

- 🐾 Different philosophies but a common goal

**We all want cats in responsible homes living to an old age**

- 🐾 We ask for assistance with desexing – if not mandatory then help with low cost high volume desexing clinics. If we prevent the problem via desexing, we have no need to use resources to treat it and they can be better utilized elsewhere.

- 🐾 The owned desexed cats are not affected by compulsory desexing – they are already desexed

- 🐾 The community support it – increased profile for vets

🐾 The owned undesexed cats are generally not part of the veterinary clientele and are a significant proportion of the cat population – an untapped clientele, desexing brings them to your clinic and keeps them there to an old age as desexed cats live longer - City of Coburg, Benjamin

🐾 Reducing numbers of unwanted surplus cats that cause problems and a poor image of the cat, improves the value of the cat as a companion – clients will spend more if they value their pet

🐾 If increasing desexing percentages in the owned population can prevent any breeding with the unowned or semi owned population that is a plus – all reductions are important and save lives – the unowned populations are important too

☛ Cat Tracking Project showed that shelters were the contact point for undesexed cats – need compulsory desexing to target these

☛ We will not run out of cats

*CPS vision 1996:*

*That by 2005 there will be so few unwanted cats that the CPS will become a licenced breeding centre for wanted cats*



## POPULATION MODEL - CITY FELINE (Cats Rule!!!)

Owned cat population = 500,000

Average life span of a cat = 7 years

Hence

No of kittens required for replacement each year = 71,428

On average population spread of 52% females,

No of Female cats in population = 260,000

Average litter no/year = 2.1

Average litter size/year = 2.85 kittens (allows 30% mortality)

Average no kittens/year/undesexed female = 5.99

% of females not desexed = 9.8%

No of females not desexed = 25,480

hence kittens produced per year = 152,625

% of females having one litter before desexing = 18%

hence contributing kittens per 7 years = 133,380

thus kittens produced per year = 19,054

**TOTAL KITTENS PRODUCED PER YEAR = 171,679**

**NEED 97% DESEXING RATE FOR ZERO GROWTH (Huxley)**

# Overview Cat Tracking Project

- 🐾 **Huge project**, some 25, 810 cats tracked through 3 shelters over 13 months – CPS contributed 16,208
- 🐾 78.51% were stray admissions, 21% surrenders
- 🐾 Shelter workers were also asked to evaluate – their figures 40.6% owned, 39.8 colony, 19.5 no contact with humans. This correlates with matching shelter statistics with the DAM Plan statistics which show Council impoundment of 30,000 cats, leaving 23,000 in the shelter stats as owned = 43.4%
- 🐾 **No 1 reason (36.4%) for surrender - “Too many cats”**
- 🐾 38.7% were trapped colony cats
- 🐾 Overall 2.81% were desexed, **only 7.6% of surrenders were desexed and only 1.2% were registered**
- 🐾 **47.8% of queens with litters were juvenile, only 9.7% were feral**

🐾 **58% of all admissions were kittens, 23.4% without the mother – 40% of euthanased kittens were sociable, 18% were too young.**

🐾 **72.8% received optimum body score**

🐾 **Cat flu was recorded in 31.2% and in 77% of colony cats**

🐾 **Overall, 64% were PTS, 32% sold and 4% reclaimed**

🐾 **Study provided strong evidence that there is a group of cat owners in the community who, although they claim ownership of their cat when relinquishing it to a shelter, do not register nor desex the animal**

🐾 **Study showed that the person bringing in kittens is a possible access point to the fertile queen to enable desexing to prevent further kittens being born – Last Litter Fund**

🐾 **The shelter problem – reasons for euthanasia – treatable in a private setting – too young, mild flu**

# The Cat Continuum

## Owned Cats

41% Registered  
82% desexed  
.2% INTAKE

## Owned Cats

59% NOT Registered  
7.6% desexed  
20% INTAKE

## Semi-owned Cats

0% Registered  
1.5% desexed  
Carer is feeding only – 22% of population do this  
40% INTAKE



## LOST/STRAY Cats

.4% Registered  
82% desexed  
3.87% OF INTAKE

## Unowned Wild Cats

0% Registered  
0.1% desexed  
REPRESENT THE COLONY CATS TRAPPED IN SUBURBS – 38.7% OF INTAKE

## Feral Cats

0% Registered  
0% desexed  
RARELY SEEN IN URBAN SHELTERS

# The Gap - Updated

🐾 82-90% of the **Registered** Owned Cat Population is Desexed – **only 41% of the owned population is registered** (Benchmarking Survey)

🐾 **7.6% of unregistered owned cats relinquished to shelters are desexed** (CTP)

🐾 Only 36.6% of cats under 12 months of age are desexed (Reark)

🐾 Only 1.5% of Semi-owned cats are desexed

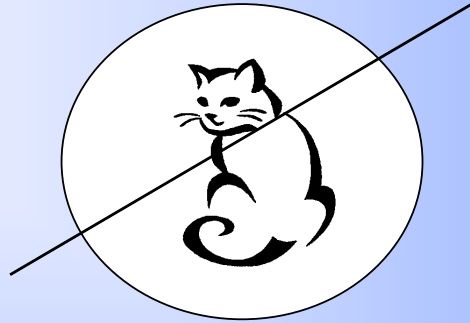
🐾 15-18% of female cats have had at least one litter before being desexed (lit search ) Victorian figure shows 13%



## FUTURE DIRECTION

- ❖ Continue to lobby Local Government
- ❖ Return to State Government with local support
- ❖ Establishment of low cost high volume desexing units
- ❖ Development of a National focus through State based Coalitions

*A Stitch in Time*



*Saves Nine Lives*





**EVERY  
CAT  
DESERVES  
A  
LIFE**

**Phoenix**