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Council move to cut animal shelter costs

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CITY Hall will use a Melbourne company to run its pounds in a bid to cut costs and reduce the number of pets being put down

The Lost Dogs Home will take over the Willawong and Bracken Ridge shelters in a privatisation deal the Brisbane City Council says will save \$1 million a year.

The non-profit organisation has been set a target of finding homes for 100 per cent of healthy cats and dogs that come through the Brisbane shelters within three years.

Council figures say 4200 stray from shelters in 2009/10 - 16 per-cent of dogs and 68 per-cent of cats were put down.

According to The Lost Dogs Home's 2010 report, its euthanasia rate for dogs across various shelters in Victoria and New South Wales ranged from 33 per cent to 11.6 per cent.

For cats, the rate of euthanasia across the shelters ranged from 85 per cent to 29.6 per cent.

The Lost Dogs Home managing director Dr Graeme Smith said he did not think it would be possible to reach 100 per cent rehoming for cats and dogs with the company to aim for euthanasia rates of 9 per cent for dogs and 24 per cent for cats in the medium to long term.

He defended the higher kill rates of its shelters in Victoria as primarily a result of a recently repealed code of practice which only allowed animals to be kept in shelters for a maximum of 28 days.

Dr Smith said there was also an active cat trapping campaign across many Victorian council areas leading to more cats being sent to pounds.

“We expect our figures that we will achieve in Brisbane will be more like our figures for the Shire of Wingecarribee (in NSW),” he said. “There are similar numbers of animals coming through.”

About 11.6 per cent of dogs and 29.6 per cent of cats were euthanised at the Wingecarribee shelter in the 2009/10 financial year.

He said the company aimed to extend the holding time for dogs and cats and would use microchipping and desexing campaigns along with partnerships with the RSPCA and pet shops to help boost adoption rates and lower euthanasia rates here.

Currently unidentified Brisbane pets are held for three days and identified pets for five days, he said.

“In NSW its seven and 14 and in Victoria its eight (days) whether they are identified or not,” Dr Smith said.

“We said we will keep them for another day or two to give a better chance for owners to come forward.”

Council Brisbane Lifestyle committee chair Cr Geraldine Knapp said council would continue to set fees and charges for the pounds and staff would be offered the chance to work for the new company or be transferred elsewhere in council.

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