

Low income cat owners get support for desexing

Wednesday, 05 September 2012 06:00

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PENSIONERS and low income earners can now afford to sterilise their cats and contribute to lessening the impact of stray and unwanted kittens.

Local Government Minister, Mr John Castrilli, recently announced a \$3 million grant program to support the Cat Act introduced in November 2011. Some grants will support programs for low income earners to sterilise cats at discounted rates.

“We already offer a number of low-cost sterilisation and microchipping programs, but we hope these grants can help us expand the programs even further,” says Mr David Settlemaier, Cat Haven’s spokesman.

Cat Haven has sterilised more than 3600 cats since the introduction of the Cat Act. The Act requires all domestic cats to be microchipped, sterilised and registered and comes into effect in November 2013.

The aim is to reduce stray and feral cat numbers and prevent damage due to predation on native wildlife. The Australian Bureau of Statistics states that by November 2011, 45 per cent of 121 listed mammal species were vulnerable with 32 per cent were either endangered or critically endangered and the rest deemed extinct, with feral cats a significant contributing factor.

The Invasive Animal Cooperative Research Centre estimates the feral population of *Felis catus* at between 5 million and 18 million across Australia.

Feral cats are predatory threats to around 80 endangered and threatened species, according to the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act (1999). They can also carry sarcosporidiosis and toxoplasmosis which can cause miscarriage and birth defects in humans and other animals.

The grants will also help provide and extend existing cat management facilities and enable local government funding for the purchase of microchip readers, cat traps and ranger training.

Mr Castrilli suggested that local governments should work with non-government organisations to share facilities.

“Local governments may be able to work with organisations like vet surgeries or catteries to enhance the facilities already in place within a district, such as increasing the number of cages available,” he says.

Cat Haven has adopted the suggestion, inviting local councils to set up pounds on its Shenton Park site.

“We are planning to construct purpose-built pound facilities which will place animal welfare at the centre of their operations,” says Mr Settlemaier.

“But we also want to include a rehoming component, so that lost or abandoned animals suitable for rehoming get a second chance at life rather than being put to sleep,” he says.



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