

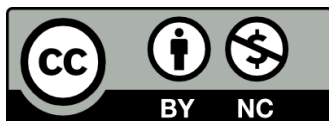
Review of NSW Companion Animal Regulatory Issues

Recommendations for Effective Cat Management (Supplementary Materials)

Final Version

29 September 2021

(Supplementary Materials)



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Appendix 1: Approaches to funding desexing programs

This Appendix sets out detailed information on some successful approaches to funding desexing programs referenced in Recommendation 5.

Victorian Government desexing support program

Animal Welfare Victoria oversees the Animal Welfare Fund Grants Program. This program was established in 2012 to support improvement of companion animal welfare in the Victorian community. In 2020-21, Round 1 of the Pet Desexing Grant offered a total pool of \$500,000 to support local councils and not-for-profit organisations to provide free or low-cost desexing programs for cats and dogs owned by vulnerable and disadvantaged Victorians. All eligible applications underwent an assessment process, led by Animal Welfare Victoria. Applications were assessed on the level of expected improvement in animal welfare outcomes relative to the amount of funding requested. Preference was given to projects that leveraged other projects and/or to which some financial co-funding or in-kind contribution was made by the project proponent to the funds being sought. Only one grant application was permitted per organisation.

Council-funded desexing programs

Animal management staff at some Councils have shown initiative and coordinated their own desexing subsidy programs with funding approved by Council in the annual budget. For example, free desexing programs for cats have been used successfully in Banyule City (population 130,000). Banyule City Council's program aims to meet the objectives of Council's animal management and environment departments. Banyule Council started the program in 2011/12. Initially the funding was approximately \$5,000 per year but in more recent years Council has been contributing \$30,000 per year for a free cat desexing program which includes free microchipping and registration, and transport support to get the cat to the clinic if required. The program is promoted for a couple of weeks twice a year - in April and in late August before kitten season. However, pregnant cats or litters of kittens that are too young at the time of program promotion undergo desexing when appropriate. There is no restriction on the number of cats per property and all kittens are desexed, even if they go to rescue groups for rehoming, as this reduces the burden on rescue groups.

The Banyule free cat desexing program has been running since 2013 and 780 cats had been desexed, microchipped and registered free of charge up to 2019/2020. Vet clinics are paid \$7,000 for desexing 60 cats i.e. on average \$117 per cat, whether male or female. The vet clinics also microchip and

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register the cats/kittens on behalf of Council at no cost to the owner and pass over the registration paperwork. Two programs have been on offer, one to the general community and the other targeting low socio-economic areas with the most cat-related complaints and cat surrenders, to convert semi-owners to owners by offering free desexing, microchipping and Council registration. The Senior Municipal Laws Officer actively promotes and supports people to participate in the program by approaching people who need help, gathering and providing the details of owners and cats to the 2 participating vet clinics who then call the cat owners and book them in on a day/time that suits them.

This desexing subsidy program has reduced cat impoundments from 1,004 in 2010/11 (7.7 cats/1,000 residents) to 154 (1.2 cats/1,000 residents) in 2019-20, and euthanasia from 578 (4.4 cats/1,000 residents) to 24 cats (0.2 cats/1,000 residents).¹ The greatest reduction in intake and euthanasia occurred in the last 3 years of high-intensity free desexing targeted to suburbs with the highest number of cat-related complaints and impoundments, as well as being offered to the broader community, with cat impoundments decreasing by 70% and euthanasia by 76% (see Aust Community Cat Program for detailed data).

NDN Cooperative Desexing Programs

The National Desexing Network (NDN) currently runs NDN Cooperative Desexing Programs free of charge for Councils in several states including NSW. Costs of cat desexing and microchipping are shared between residents, Council, veterinarians and NDN. This program is offered in such a way as to make it easy for Councils to implement and to be cost effective, with set payments to veterinarians, and an affordable payment of \$50 for many residents on low incomes or with too many cats. Councils pay the balance of \$50 for a male cat desexing and \$100 for a female desexing, plus any supplement for pregnant or in-season cats. Alternatively local councils can choose to subsidise the whole cost and offer free desexing to some or all of their residents. In summary:

- Councils fund an annual amount e.g. \$5,000 to \$50,000, to subsidise cat desexing costs for residents in need i.e.
 - holders of pension, concession or health care cards
 - people on low incomes
 - people with large numbers of cats

¹ Banyule City Council, Submission No 141 to House Standing Committee on the Environment and Energy, Parliament of Australia, *Inquiry into the problem of feral and domestic cats in Australia* (2020).

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- semi-owners willing to take responsibility for stray unowned cats and desex and microchip them.
- Residents' payments are set low enough for most residents in need to afford to contribute (Option 1 below), or Council can choose to make the program free (Option 2).
- Veterinary costs are set at a fair price to cover all veterinary wages and materials. Prices are reviewed every few years and adjusted if necessary.
- Council subsidises part or the full amount of the set veterinary cost.
- NDN manages the program free of charge (contacts vets, provides promotional materials, receives all calls, issues vouchers, reimburses vets with Council funding, and keeps records).

Table 1 Option 1 – Owners contribute to the cost of desexing

PROCEDURE	Owner pays	Council Subsidy	Vet receives
Male cat castration	\$50	\$50	\$100
Female cat spey	\$50	\$100	\$150
+ Pregnant or In-season	-	\$55	\$55
Microchipping (with desexing)	\$5	\$25	\$30

Table 2 Option 2 – FREE DESEXING for residents in need

PROCEDURE	Male cat castration	Female cat spey	+ Pregnant or In-season	Microchipping (with desexing)
Council Subsidy	\$100	\$150	\$55	\$30

The following consistent conditions apply across all participating vet clinics:

- 24-hour pain relief included at no extra cost.
- No requirement to vaccinate before desexing. Vet clinics may choose to allocate a particular day for desexing and/or a section of the clinic if they are concerned about having unvaccinated animals in their clinic.
- If animals are pregnant or in season, owners are not to be asked for additional payment. Instead, vets can claim an additional standard rate of \$55 from Council funding.

The program runs all year round and is promoted at the start of the program and whenever needed. Councils are encouraged to be proactive in locating residents who need this support and offering

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help to ensure that low income residents are able to access this service e.g. provision of carry cages and transport of the animal to and from the clinic.

Intensive multi-pronged approach to desexing

Strategies used by Animal Welfare League Queensland (AWLQ) in the City of Gold Coast (population 600,000, and the 2nd largest local council in Australia), have focussed on the availability of low cost desexing all year round for residents through the following services and programs:

- an AWLQ Community Vet Clinic (established in 2001/2) provides ongoing low cost desexing for the general public and lower rates for pension/concession card holders and anyone else in need
- Council-subsidised NDN Cooperative Desexing Program (from 2010/11) for pension concession card holders, people on low incomes, and people with too many cats
- intensive National Desexing Month campaigns with local participating vets, and
- high numbers of desexed animals rehomed in the community.

This has produced a decline in the combined pound and shelter intake in the whole city from 9 cats/1,000 residents in 2001-02 to 3.2 in 2018-19. Euthanasia has been reduced from 4.5 cats/1,000 residents in 2001/2 to 0.3 in 2018/19.

Australian Community Cat Program

The Australia Community Cat Program is a research project initiated and led by the Australian Pet Welfare Foundation and is currently operating in 4 states (Qld, Vic, SA and NSW). The program is focused on evaluating the effects of high intensity, free desexing programs in areas with high cat intake into shelters and pounds. It is aimed at desexing owned entire cats, and cats being cared for by semi-owners (defined as people who did not regard the cat as their property). It also incorporates management of cats by adoption of kittens where possible and desexing adults in situations where groups of 6 or more cats are being cared for on private/business property (all states) and on public land (covered by a Queensland Government restricted matter permit for research purposes). This project is expected to demonstrate significant benefits for the community and people who care for cats, and has multiple fields of research including ecology, social science, economics and infectious disease. Based on data collected, approximately 70% of unwanted kittens emanate from queens owned by people who cannot afford to pay for desexing, and 30% are from semi-owned queens. Initial data demonstrate that within 12 months, this high intensity and targeted approach results in a 30% to 50% decrease in shelter intake and a 50% to 80% decrease in euthanasia following desexing

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of 7 to 30 cats/1000 residents. Microtargeting within the target area results in a larger decrease for a given number of cats desexed.

Victoria

In mid 2017, the City of Banyule added a high intensity program to their city-wide program and targeted it to 3 suburbs with highest cat-related calls to the municipal office. The Cat Protection Society provided 200 free cat desexing to support the program. After 3 years of the program providing free desexing for owned and semi-owned cats, in 2019/20 the City of Banyule (pop 130,000) had decreased impounded cats from 4 cats/1000 residents to only 1.2 cats/1000 residents (compared to the Victorian average of 7 cats/1000 residents), and euthanased just 24 cats (0.2 cats/1000 residents compared to the Victorian average of 3.3 cats/1000). Other Victorian sites of the Australian Community Cat program include the cities of Melbourne and Greater Shepparton.



Free Cat De sexing

Banyule Council is once again offering residents free cat de sexing, microchipping and registration as part of its successful campaign to reduce the number of unwanted litters of kittens and stray cats.

If you have a stray cat/s or kitten/s you have been feeding for quite some time or have acquired a new cat or kitten that is not de sexed, please give us a call and book your cat/ kitten in. This is not limited to one cat per household and this is a free service provided by Council, for Banyule residents and cats/ kittens only.

Our aim is to reduce overpopulation of cats in your area.

When: September/ October 2019

How to book: Just call council's customer service and leave your details along with you cat/ cat's details for us to add you too the list.

What is included: De sexing, Microchipping and Registration with council for free.

Phone Council: 9490 4222 between 8.30am and 5pm Monday to Friday.

An high intensity free desexing program targeted to 3 suburbs with highest cat-related calls to the council was begun in 2017-2018. Letter-box flyers and door-knocking was instigated in these suburbs to maximize the number of of cats desexed. As demonstrated in table 3, cat impoundments for the whole of the city of Banyule decreased by 44% and euthanasia by 35% in the first year, and by the third year intake decreased by 68% and euthanasia by 76%.

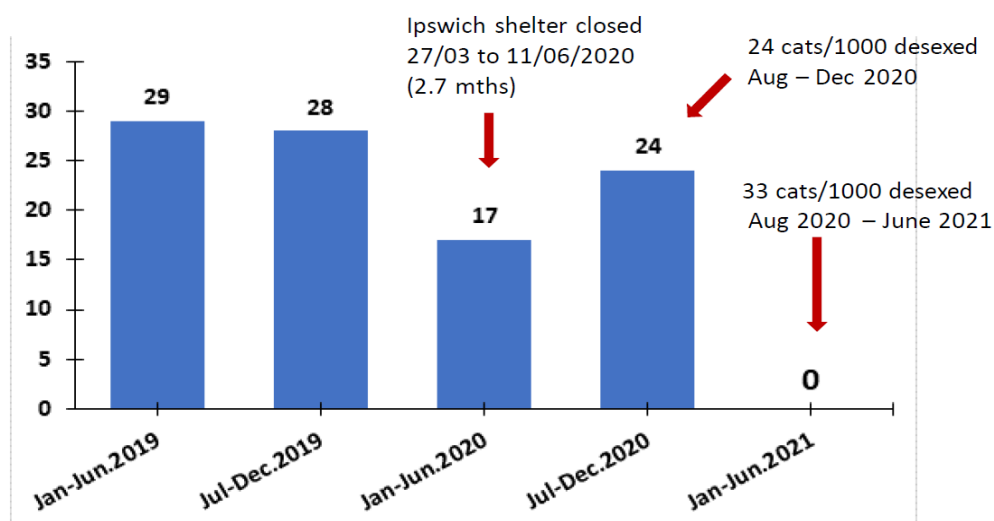
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Table 3. Cat intake and euthanasia over 4 years into the City of Banyule (population approx. 130,000).

	Intake	Banuyale intake per 1000 residents	Euthanased	Banuyale euthanasia per 1000 residents
2016-2017	486	4	102	0.8
2017-18	274		66	
2018-19	217		41	
2019-2020	154	1.2	24	0.2
VIC	44,791	7	13,885	2.1

Queensland

A successful high intensity targeted program in the city of Ipswich piloted in Rosewood, (pop 2800) with 35 cats/1000 residents desexed over 12 months, and has achieved a **50% decrease in cat intake within the first 12 months (see Figure 1)**. The pilot has been extended to Goodna (pop 10,000) and Redbank Plains (pop 20,000). As of June 30th, 12 cats/1000 residents were desexed in these 2 suburbs, and **intake decreased by 23% at the end of 6 months**. Of people enrolling a cat in the program, 85% were owners and 15% described themselves as semi-owners before they heard about the program. Following desexing, 99% of cats were owned, and only 1% of cats remained unowned (covered by DAF Restricted Matter Permit) and are being cared for daily.

**Figure 1. Cat intake into the RSPCA QLD shelter from the suburb of Rosewood (pop 2800)**

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High intensity desexing was begun in August 2020. As of December 31st 2020, 29 cats/1000 residents were desexed and by June 2021 a total of 35 cats desexed/1000 residents. Intake for the financial year 2020-21 is approximately half that of preceeding financial years.

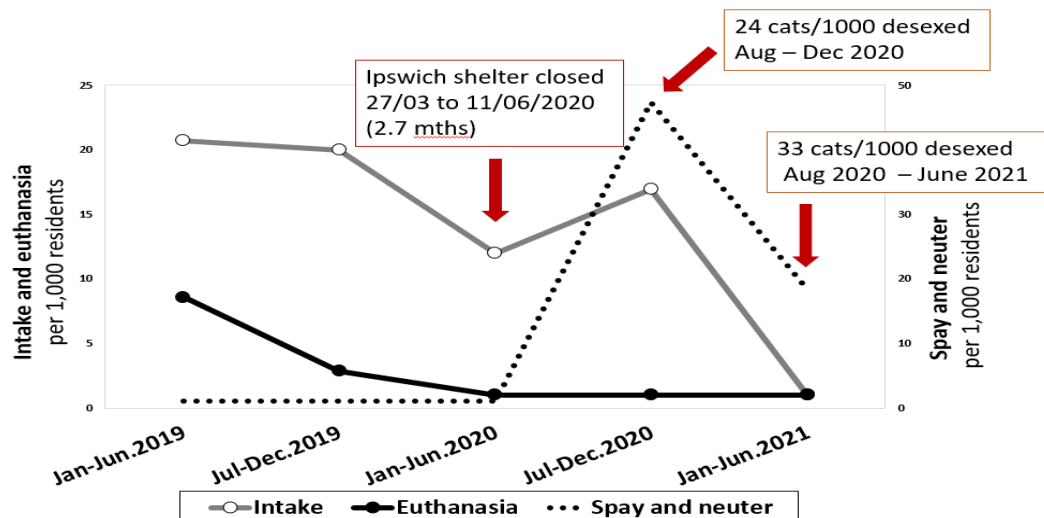


Figure 2 Number of cats admitted to RSPCA shelter, euthanased and desexed in Rosewood

New South Wales

A pilot program run by RSPCA NSW in collaboration with the city of Canterbury-Bankstown began mid 2020. The aim was to reduce the intake of over 2,000 cats and kittens per year from the city into the Yagoona shelter. Most (70%) cats are strays (22% are owner surrenders) and 75% are under 6 months of age. A Companion Animal Welfare Scheme had been operating since 2016 providing subsidized desexing for cats owned by people with a benefits card. It was low intensity and not targeted to problem areas. Despite this program, admissions to the shelter were constant over the last 5 years. In 2020, a targeted free desexing program for all cats (owned and semi-owned) was initiated for Greenacre and **after 12 months, shelter intake decreased by 31% from this suburb after 6.4 cats were desexed per /1000 residents**. A non-targeted program for the whole of the city (1.2 cats desexed /1000 residents) was run in parallel and intake decreased by 15% whereas **shelter intake from other local government areas increased by 7% in the same period**. Only 50% of cats desexed in this program were linked to people on benefits, highlighting the need for programs in target areas that provide free desexing for all entire cats. **Over \$100,000 was saved in sheltering costs in the one year.**

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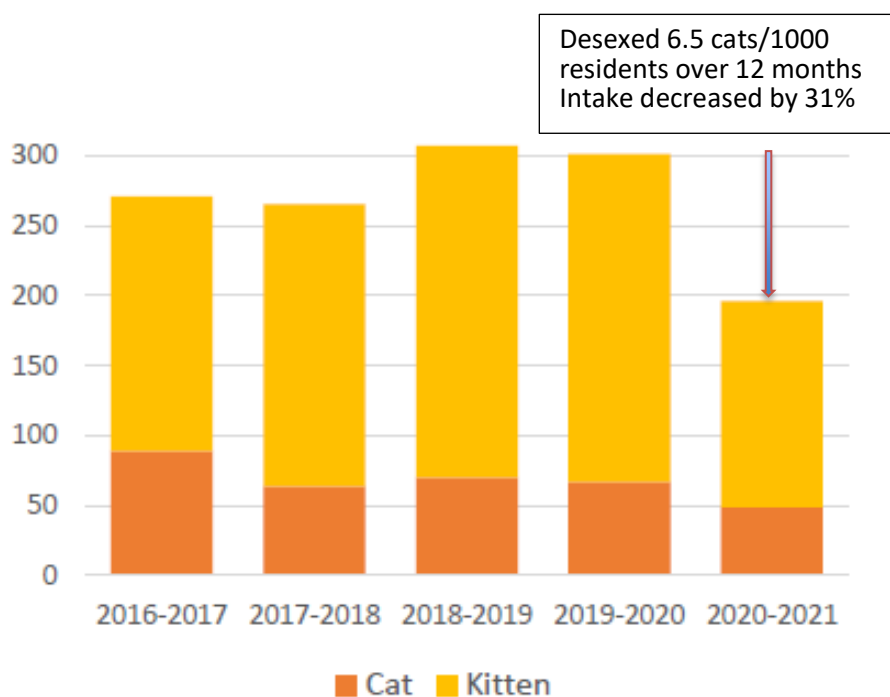


Figure 3. Cat intake into the RSPCA NSW shelter from the suburb of Greenacre by financial year.

High intensity desexing was begun in the first quarter of 2020 and continued throughout the financial year with 6.5 cats/1000 residents desexed, resulting in a 31% decrease in cat intake.

South Australia

RSPCA SA is conducting a program in conjunction with the city of Onkaparinga and to date has desexed 3.5 cats/1000 residents and aims to desex 10 cats/1000 residents in over 18 months.

Appendix 2: Adverse psychological wellbeing associated with ineffective urban cat management: Post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and Compassion fatigue

Staff in shelters and municipal facilities involved with euthanasia of healthy and treatable animals are at risk of developing post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) which increases their risk of depression, substance abuse and suicide.² People caring for cats that are culled by authorities are also at risk of developing PTSD.

Individuals involved in cat rescue and animal sheltering experience compassion fatigue and burnout, similar to wildlife rescuers and other people employed in caregiving professions.³ Shelter staff and cat rescuers are often faced with an overwhelming number of cats and kittens needing assistance which exceeds their capacity to provide it, leading to stress and distress. This adversely affects their mental wellbeing and morale, and can lead to high turnover of volunteers and staff.

Cat rescuers are also often working in the field, frequently in the evening in low socioeconomic areas, and are at increased risk of verbal and physical threats.

The negative psychological wellbeing impacts on people are widespread as a result of poor urban cat management based on reactive (impound-adopt-kill) rather than proactive (desexing) methods to decrease kittens being born.

² Allison Andrukonis, Nathaniel J Hall and Alexandra Protopova, 'The Impact of Caring and Killing on Physiological and Psychometric Measures of Stress in Animal Shelter Employees: A Pilot Study' (2020) 17(24) *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health* 9196; Stephanie S Frommer and Arnold Arluke, 'Loving Them to Death: Blame-Displacing Strategies of Animal Shelter Workers and Surrenderers' (1999) *Society and Animals* 7(1) 1; Reeve, Charlie L, Steven G Rogelberg, Christiane Spitzmüller and Natalie Digiacomio, 'The Caring-Killing Paradox: Euthanasia-Related Strain Among Animal-Shelter Workers' (2005) 35(1) *Journal of Applied Psychology* 119; Pauleen Bennett and Vanessa Rohlf, 'Perpetration-Induced Traumatic Stress in Persons Who Euthanize Nonhuman Animals in Surgeries, Animal Shelters, and Laboratories' (2005) 13(3) *Society and Animals* 201.

³ Rebekah L Scotney, Deirdre McLaughlin and Helen L Keates, 'A Systematic Review of the Effects of Euthanasia and Occupational Stress in Personnel Working with Animals in Animal Shelters, Veterinary Clinics, and Biomedical Research Facilities' (2015) 247(10) *Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association* 1121; Rebekah L Scotney, 'Occupational Stress and Compassion Fatigue: The Effects on Workers in Animal-related Occupations' (PhD Thesis, University of Queensland, 2017).

Appendix 3: Cat rescue groups

This Appendix sets out information and experiences of cat rescue groups referenced in the main document. Cat rescue groups are key stakeholders in many of the recommendations in this submission (notably recommendations 1, 2 and 5). This section is included to provide insights into the value delivered by these individuals and groups and has been sourced from Love Rescue Collaborate webpage (www.loverescuecollaborate.org).

Who and what are cat rescue groups?

Across NSW there are hundreds of individuals and groups of people rescuing, desexing, microchipping, registering and rehoming cats because of their compassion for animals. They are responsible people who are saving cats directly rather than surrendering them to council pounds and animal shelters, and collectively save councils and shelter facilities hundreds of thousands of dollars each year in resources and funds, and save thousands of cats being euthanased.

Cat rescue groups are generally characterised by the following:

- operate under a rescue group identity and not personal names,
- house rescued animals on private property,
- are responsible in terms of desexing, identifying with a microchip, registering the cats and kittens in their care, and seeking appropriate vet care when needed,
- each group may be small in terms of people power (e.g. from 1 to 30 foster carers) and the geographical area they support,
- are mostly run independently from council pounds, with most if not all team members being volunteers, many with professional careers in other fields of specialist expertise, while some are retired individuals,
- have had experience either working or volunteering with other rescue groups, large animal shelters (RSPCA, AWL NSW and CPS) and/or vets, or completing formal studies with certificates/accreditation, and/or from extensive practical cat care over decades (a small proportion are “newbies” motivated by their love and care for abandoned cats),
- are often seen as more merciful with lower cat euthanasia rates than council pounds and large animal shelters, and
- some rescues are registered charities, some rescues are not-for-profit businesses
- the magnitude of the contribution of rescue groups to decreasing cat intake and euthanasia in pounds and shelters is difficult to estimate because most rescues that are not Rehoming

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Organisations do not publically report intake and outcome data, and most do not provide these data on request.

Their network relationships vary with vets, councils, pounds and other rescue groups, and are usually reliant on historical personal relationships, being in close geographical areas, working collaboratively on complex or demanding rescues, and/or providing similar services.

Enabling community “DIY” rescue & funding mass desexing

Cat rescue groups are becoming overwhelmed year round, not just during the summer breeding season. Some cat rescue groups are expanding their services to enable those inexperienced in the community to “DIY” rescue and rehoming, providing practical advice, references to other organisations who may help with resources, offering their own desexing vouchers, food, standard flea and worming treatments, assistance with vet bills, and even lending equipment.

One cat rescue group helps desex hundreds of cats per year with desexing vouchers, while also rehoming several hundred desexed cats per year. Another cat rescue group under one desexing program helped desex 800 cats with the assistance of reduced rates from vets, while also continuing their foster and rehoming services for approximately 100 cats and kittens per year.

Some councils recognise the individuals and groups who are seen performing responsible cat rescue and completing the government obligations including microchipping, desexing and registration.

Increased pressure on cat rescue groups

- From feedback from several cat rescue groups, it appears that the number of people seeking help for cats from cat rescue groups is increasing, likely compounded by COVID which affected the capacity for shelters and pounds to take animals. There has been a noticeable increase in requests for help for semi-owned or unowned cats and kittens – estimates vary from 30% to much more - in forms of direct requests (phone, email, Facebook messages) and requests on social media on a number of Facebook group pages.
- In areas where semi-owned/unowned cats congregate (most often on private property and less often around schools, hospitals, aged care facilities, government housing and in parks or light industrial areas), new cats continue to be “found” at a more rapid rate than previously. This is beyond new kittens being born to cats in the group because other cats in the group have often been desexed.

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- There has been a significant increase in the number of cats surrendered or socialised cats found without an owner in a yard, street, school, park etc. who are either pregnant females or females with a litter of kittens.
- There has been a noticeable increase in illness amongst the cats found (unowned or semi-owned cats), resulting in increased veterinary costs for rescue groups.
- Small rescues are being asked more often to assist vets, businesses and council pounds in taking on the “harder” cases involving ill cats/kittens that need more resources than a business-run facility can take on (based on costs decisions).

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