



**Submission to State Government on
“Managing Unwanted Cats and Dogs”
discussion paper**



IPSWICH CITY COUNCIL RESPONSE

August 2007

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

On 4 July 2007 the State Government released a discussion paper called "Managing Unwanted Cats and Dogs". This discussion paper explores the issues associated with unwanted cats and dogs, and identifies possible solutions through five options.

IPSWICH CITY COUNCIL'S PREFERRED OPTION

The best outcome for State Government and Local Government would be a holistic approach to developing a legislative system that encompasses all aspects of cats and dogs ie environmental and social impacts, animal welfare, and management of administrative functions and strategic opportunities (incl research).

We ask that State Government consider this approach.

In responding to this discussion paper however, the Ipswich City Council (ICC) has engaged with internal and external stakeholders in the preparation of this submission. The external stakeholders include:

- Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA)
- Animal Welfare League (AWL)
- Ipswich Dog Obedience Club
- Greys 4 Pets
- Local breeders

The ICC is supportive of a variation on Option 5 (State-wide mandatory registration, identification and desexing).

The ICC's preferred option is:

State-wide Compulsory registration, identification with regulated breeding and trade (with incentives)

KEY PRINCIPLES OF THE ICC PREFERRED OPTION

- Local Governments will retain responsibility for the management of cats and dogs in their communities supported by State-wide legislation.
- Local Governments will set their own fees and charges in relation to cat and dog management (ie the legislation will not dictate what fees a council can charge).
- Local Governments will receive registration monies and details and enter into a State-wide database.
- State Legislation will "cover the field" in terms of managing domestic dogs and cats and not be restricted to the issue identified in the discussion paper;
- Local laws will still be required for other animal management related issues (outside of cats and dogs).
- A staged implementation approach of legislation and enforcement will be crucial to the success of this option (similar to Smoking Legislation). That is, a strong education and promotion campaign in the first 12-18 months of the new legislation with enforcement to commence after this.
- The word 'mandatory' may be viewed as too abrasive for the community and ICC prefer the word 'compulsory' to be used where relevant.
- Compulsory identification method to be microchipping. The technology (eg type of chip) used should be consistent across the state and aiming towards a national consistency.

- The community will be provided an opportunity to keep their cats and dogs sexually entire by paying a yearly fee which is priced appropriately (similar to ACT) , which is why we have not used the term 'mandatory desexing'. Conditions will be applied to the fee.
- Non-discounted fees to Keep a Dog or Cat Sexually Entire should have a similar pricing structure to the ACT eg. The registration fee to keep a dog or cat sexually entire is greater than the cost of desexing. The cost of the fee will provide dog and cat owners the ability to consider both options, that is, "do I pay this fee (which is more than the cost of desexing) or do I desex my animal?".. *(This thought process combined with a positive promotion of the benefits of desexing has increased the number of desexed animals in the community whilst reducing the number of "unwanted animals" in the community with the ACT.)* This approach could be classed as 'encouraged desexing'.
- Owners of cats/dogs that are registered with member associations such as the Canine Control Council, Greyhound Racing Control Board of Qld, 'show' dogs and cats (which must be kept entire to be able to show) etc will be able to source a discounted fee to Keep a Dog or Cat Sexually Entire.
- Financial and non-financial incentives to be considered such as desexing vouchers, access to Dog/Cat Community Clinics where they can be registered/vaccinated/microchipped and desexed in the one visit. Partnerships with the RSPCA and AWL could be established to assist with these types of activities. Non-financial incentives may include reduced holding times for dogs/cats impounded that are non-identified (effective promotion will need to be carried out).
- Stricter provisions for the sale of cats and dogs should be covered in the new legislation ie an entire dog or cat can only be bought from a registered breeder. This way breeders can sell entire animals but with provisions that they must keep records of who they sell to. This way Councils can audit the records to check that the animals are registered as entire or otherwise with their new owners. Registered breeders can also sell desexed dogs and cats in addition to sexually entire dogs and cats.
- Pet shops (and other operators) should only be able to sell desexed dogs and cats (registered breeders can only sell entire dogs and cats), and in addition they must keep records of who they sell them to so Councils can audit the records and check animals are registered.
- A Code of Practice to be considered for Pet Shop Operators (and any other point of sale/transfer) under the legislation. Increasingly, more cats and dogs are being sold/transferred to members of the community without giving them the correct advice or providing them with inaccurate information eg how big a dog may grow. The primary aim is to provide more education at the point of sale/transfer.
- Funding for State-wide education and promotion campaigns in addition to research could be funded through joint State and Local Government funds. Council could contribute a percentage of their dog/cat registrations to a Dog & Cat Management Fund that is administered by a Independent Board that is set up under the proposed legislation and relevant Minister. The Board would consist of appropriate representation from Local Government, State Government. and any relevant external stakeholders such as the RSPCA and AWL . All funds would be legislatively quarantined to ensure that funds are not siphoned off into general government revenue.

- Appropriate enforcement tools need to be included in the rollout of any new proposed legislation, for example a fully robust State-wide database that is able to be interrogated easily to assist in sending out bulk correspondence on the status of their dog/cat and assisting owners to comply with the new regulations. A robust database will automate enforcement where relevant which will reduce costs in other areas of animal management.
- Strong linkages with other State's that undertake a form of compulsory registration/identification/desexing should be made so Queensland does not have to 'reinvent the wheel'. The lessons learned by other States will be invaluable to the success of any Queensland legislation.

INTRODUCTION

On 4 July 2007 the State Government released a discussion paper called "Managing Unwanted Cats and Dogs". This discussion paper explores the issues associated with unwanted cats and dogs, and identifies possible solutions.

DISCUSSION PAPER DEVELOPMENT AND OBJECTIVE

Ipswich City Council is very supportive of the initiative undertaken by the State Government in recognising this important issue.

However, it is disappointing to see the lack of recognition in the both the development of the discussion paper, and subsequent paper that was released, for the role local governments play in managing cats and dogs in communities.

It would appear that there is some urgency with this issue as the development of the discussion paper and consultation phase seems 'rushed'. The reasons to support this are:

1. There is no recognition of the fact that many local councils impound animals and euthanise animals in the discussion paper. This fact would mean a considerable increase in the figures (in the discussion paper) used to indicate the number of cats and dogs euthanised in Queensland. (see Tables 1 and 2 which include a sample of councils from across South East Queensland)

TABLE 1

**Dogs & Cats Impounded by Sample Councils – Percentage Euthanased
Based on 2006/2006 financial year figures. Some council figures were extrapolated.**

Ipswich City Council ▪ Dogs 32% ▪ Cats 81%	Gatton Shire Council ▪ Dogs 44% ▪ Cats 96%	Pine Rivers Shire Council ▪ Dogs 14% ▪ Cats 68%
Toowoomba City Council ▪ Dogs 23% ▪ Cats 60%	Laidley Shire Council ▪ Dogs 15% ▪ Cats N/A	
Esk Shire Council ▪ Dogs 66% ▪ Cats 90%	Brisbane City Council ▪ Dogs 13% ▪ Cats 84%	

TABLE 2

Comparison of Statistical Information

Impounded	RSPCA	AWL	Sample Councils	Average %
Dogs (euthanased)	43%	19%	28%	30%
Cats (euthanased)	67%	42%	78%	62%

2. The insufficient engagement with Local Government in developing the discussion paper. The Local Government Association of Queensland (LGAQ) and other key stakeholders eg Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA) and the Animal Welfare League (AWL) were given one week to provide feedback on the draft discussion paper. This is not an acceptable timeframe for these key bodies to provide valuable input into the issues and options identified in the paper. Longer engagement would ensure issues as identified in point 1 would have been alleviated.
3. The short consultation phase (1 month) means councils do not have the opportunity to go through the normal council approval procedures for submissions, that is endorsement at a council meeting. There are also internal and external consultations that need to occur as part of the submission development. These factors compromise a quality submission being developed.

4. The discussion paper that is available on the Department of Primary Industries (DPI) website (www.dpi.qld.gov.au) (as of 6 July 2007) is incomplete. The table of contents lists a Response Form which is not included in the paper.
5. There is no clear objective stated in the paper. The euthanasia rates have been high for some time. What is the precursor for this initiative happening now? The issue is also much broader than animal welfare. Reduction in environmental impacts need to be considered such as stray cats recruited to the feral cat population and the direct impact they have on wildlife. Also, public safety risks (dog attacks) and the management costs associated with controlling unwanted animals. The best outcome for State Government and Local Government would be a holistic approach to developing a legislative system that encompasses all aspects of cats and dogs ie environmental and social impacts, animal welfare, and management of administrative functions and strategic opportunities (incl research).
6. There are other State's that are undertaking such initiatives as mandatory desexing. Whilst the paper does make reference to how other States in Australia legislate, it only makes a brief reference about some of the outcomes. A more detailed analysis of the lessons learned by these States would help inform the paper's audience.

An extension of the submission deadline was sought from the Department of Primary Industries (DPI) on 5 July 2007. On 16 July 2007 DPI advised that councils would be given a two week extension (to 17 August 2007) should they need it (case by case request). Ipswich City Council has decided to take up this extension.

Ipswich City Council have also submitted a motion to the Local Government Association of Queensland (LGAQ) Annual Conference 2007 asking the LGAQ to call upon the State Government to develop, in collaboration with Local Government, state-wide legislation for companion animals. See Appendix A for further information.

DISCUSSION PAPER OPTIONS

Five options were considered for the management of unwanted cats and dogs in the discussion paper:

- 1. Maintain the current system**
 - Councils currently manage animals through local laws to register and identify dogs mostly through identification tags. Most councils do not impose cat registration and identification. Desexing of either dogs or cats is not a provision in most local laws. It is also not compulsory for councils to manage animals through local laws.
- 2. Enhance the current system through non-compulsory measures**
 - Improving education material for dissemination across the State.
 - Improving voluntary model local laws that could include desexing. Councils could voluntarily adopt model local laws with or without the desexing provisions.
- 3. State-wide voluntary registration, identification and desexing with incentives**
 - Voluntary registration and identification across the State available for councils.
 - Voluntary desexing promoted through discount vouchers/subsidised costs in partnership with vets in the community.
- 4. State-wide mandatory registration and identification, and voluntary desexing with incentives**
 - Mandatory state-wide approach to registration and identification
 - Voluntary desexing promoted through discount vouchers/subsidised costs in partnership with vets in the community.
- 5. State-wide mandatory registration, identification and desexing**
 - Mandatory state-wide approach to registration, identification and desexing. No incentives identified other than discounted registration fees.

BRIEF ASSESSMENT OF OPTIONS

Option	Disadvantage	Advantage
Maintain the Current System	The euthanasia of unwanted cats and dogs will continue to rise. The Discussion Paper has identified that the current system is not working.	N/A
Enhance the Current System through Non-Compulsory Measures	All four management tools identified (education, registration, identification and desexing) are being applied in a non-compulsory way currently. All councils have these tools to manage dogs and cats in their communities. This system only captures responsible pet owners and allows 'unregulated' breeding and sales to occur.	N/A
State-wide voluntary registration, identification and desexing with incentives	As above. A voluntary approach to applying these initiatives State-wide will not reduce unwanted dogs and cats. Councils can already implement these tools to manage cats and dogs in their communities voluntarily and it is not working. Desexing initiatives already exist through discounted registration fees and some councils offering desexing vouchers.	N/A
State-wide mandatory registration and identification, and voluntary desexing with incentives	Voluntary desexing only captures responsible pet owners and allows 'unregulated' breeding and sales to occur, which in turn will contribute to the statistics of unwanted cats and dogs.	A mandatory consistent approach across Queensland for registration and identification will help in returning cats and dogs to their owner. Community expectations will be met if they move from town to town/region to region etc – the same rules will apply. (fees will differ though)
State-wide mandatory registration, identification and desexing	Community may feel their rights have been taken away if a strong promotion and education campaign is not delivered before enforcement commences.	Reduction in unwanted cats and dogs will occur across the State through a consistent state-wide approach and mandatory desexing in particular. (see ACT Case Study)

The discussion paper does highlight that the Australian Capital Territory (ACT) enforces mandatory desexing. There are lessons to be learnt from others who are 'already doing it'. As a State we do not need to reinvent the wheel. A brief case study of the ACT model is listed below. The ACT model is very similar to the ICC's preferred option.

CASE STUDY – MANDATORY DESEXING IN THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY (ACT)

Since, 2000/2001 the ACT have enforced mandatory desexing of dogs and cats under the Domestic Animals Act 2000, that is:

A person must not, without reasonable excuse, keep a dog or cat that has not been de-sexed unless the person is the holder of a permit for the cat or dog. However, this does not apply if a dog or cat is:

- (a) under 6 months old; or
- (b) bought by, or in the possession of, its owner for less than 28 days; or
- (c) born before the commencement of this section.

An individual may apply to the registrar for a permit to keep a dog or cat that is not de-sexed. (So in essence, it is not mandatory desexing as an option is provided)

In the ACT you can obtain a **Permit to keep a cat or dog sexually entire**. The cost of the permit is below.

Permit to keep a cat or dog sexually entire	\$277.80
Permit to keep a cat or dog sexually entire: pensioner or benefit recipient, or member of the ACT Canine Association, Capital Cats Incorporated or the Canberra Greyhound Racing Club Incorporated	\$ 55.50

The cost of the permit will provide dog and cat owners the ability to consider both options, that is, “do I pay for the cost of the permit (which is more than the cost of desexing) or do I desex my animal?”. This thought process combined with a positive promotion of the benefits of desexing has increased the number of desexed animals in the community whilst reducing the number of “unwanted animals” in the community.

The ACT have, since 2000, reduced their unwanted dog (euthanased) statistic from 25% to 3.88%. The ACT do not currently register cats so were unable to provide information for them, however, they have been advised by veterinary associations/representatives etc that it is a similar take-up to dogs for desexing cats.

The ACT have experienced some problems with operational and enforcement issues since the implementation of the legislation.

The inability to access a database that is easy to interrogate has meant that they cannot send correspondence such as non-desexed cat and dog owners of the requirements to desex or apply for a Permit to keep a sexually entire cat or dog. This means that their enforcement has not been as automated as it could be.

The ACT believe that following on from trends based over the last seven years, combined with the implementation next year of a fully robust database, the ACT will have 80% of the territory population complying with animal management objectives in five years.

IPSWICH CITY COUNCIL'S PREFERRED OPTION

The best outcome for State Government and Local Government would be a holistic approach to developing a legislative system that encompasses all aspects of cats and dogs ie environmental and social impacts, animal welfare, and management of administrative functions and strategic opportunities (incl research).

We ask that State Government consider this approach.

In responding to this discussion paper however, the Ipswich City Council (ICC) has engaged with internal and external stakeholders in the preparation of this submission. The external stakeholders include:

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- Local Governments will set their own fees and charges in relation to cat and dog management (ie the legislation will not dictate what fees a council can charge).
- Local Governments will receive registration monies and details and enter into a State-wide database.
- State Legislation will "cover the field" in terms of managing domestic dogs and cats and not be restricted to the issue identified in the discussion paper;
- Local laws will still be required for other animal management related issues (outside of cats and dogs).
- A staged implementation approach of legislation and enforcement will be crucial to the success of this option (similar to Smoking Legislation). That is, a strong education and promotion campaign in the first 12-18 months of the new legislation with enforcement to commence after this.
- The word 'mandatory' may be viewed as too abrasive for the community and ICC prefer the word 'compulsory' to be used where relevant.
- Compulsory identification method to be microchipping. The technology (eg type of chip) used should be consistent across the state and aiming towards a national consistency.
- The community will be provided an opportunity to keep their cats and dogs sexually entire by paying a yearly fee which is priced appropriately (similar to ACT) , which is why we have not used the term 'mandatory desexing'. Conditions will be applied to the fee.

- Non-discounted fees to Keep a Dog or Cat Sexually Entire should have a similar pricing structure to the ACT eg. The registration fee to keep a dog or cat sexually entire is greater than the cost of desexing. The cost of the fee will provide dog and cat owners the ability to consider both options, that is, “do I pay this fee (which is more than the cost of desexing) or do I desex my animal?”.. *(This thought process combined with a positive promotion of the benefits of desexing has increased the number of desexed animals in the community whilst reducing the number of “unwanted animals” in the community with the ACT.)* This approach could be classed as ‘encouraged desexing’.
- Owners of cats/dogs that are registered with member associations such as the Canine Control Council, Greyhound Racing Control Board of Qld, ‘show’ dogs and cats (which must be kept entire to be able to show) etc will be able to source a discounted fee to Keep a Dog or Cat Sexually Entire.
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- Stricter provisions for the sale of cats and dogs should be covered in the new legislation ie an entire dog or cat can only be bought from a registered breeder. This way breeders can sell entire animals but with provisions that they must keep records of who they sell to. This way Councils can audit the records to check that the animals are registered as entire or otherwise with their new owners. Registered breeders can also sell desexed dogs and cats in addition to sexually entire animals.
- Pet shops (and other operators) should only be able to sell desexed dogs and cats (registered breeders can only sell entire dogs and cats), and in addition they must keep records of who they sell them to so Councils can audit the records and check animals are registered.
- A Code of Practice to be considered for Pet Shop Operators (and any other point of sale/transfer) under the legislation. Increasingly, more cats and dogs are being sold/transferred to members of the community without giving them the correct advice or providing them with inaccurate information eg how big a dog may grow. The primary aim is to provide more education at the point of sale/transfer.
- Funding for State-wide education and promotion campaigns in addition to research could be funded through joint State and Local Government funds. Council could contribute a percentage of their dog/cat registrations to a Dog & Cat Management Fund that is administered by a Independent Board that is set up under the proposed legislation and relevant Minister. The Board would consist of appropriate representation from Local Government, State Government. and any relevant external stakeholders such as the RSPCA and AWL . All funds would be legislatively quarantined to ensure that funds are not siphoned off into general government revenue.
- Appropriate enforcement tools need to be included in the rollout of any new proposed legislation, for example a fully robust State-wide database that is able to be interrogated easily to assist in sending out bulk correspondence on the status of their dog/cat and assisting owners to comply with the new regulations. A robust database will automate enforcement where relevant which will reduce costs in other areas of animal management.

- Strong linkages with other State's that undertake a form of compulsory registration/ identification/desexing should be made so Queensland does not have to 'reinvent the wheel'. The lessons learned by other States will be invaluable to the success of any Queensland legislation.

COMPLETED RESPONSE FORM

The following is Ipswich City Council's response to the Discussion Paper in the Response Form format that was provided on the State Government's website and should be referred to in addition to the information provided previously in our submission document.

CATS AND DOGS

How concerned are you about unwanted cats and dogs in your area?

- 1 Not Concerned
- 2 Slightly Concerned
- 3 No Opinion
- 4 Concerned
- 5 Very Concerned**

What (if any) systems are in place in your area for managing unwanted cats and dogs?

Dog Registration
Cat permits

How effective do you think these systems have been?

- 1 Not Effective
- 2 Slightly Effective**
- 3 No Opinion
- 4 Effective
- 5 Very Effective

EDUCATION

What (if any) educational initiatives are used in your area to promote responsible animal ownership?

Pet Talk Newsletters to the community
PetPep School Visits to promote responsible pet ownership to kids
Pet Packs distributed to owners of newly registered dogs
Various media releases etc

How effective have these initiatives been?

- 1 Not Effective
- 2 Slightly Effective**
- 3 No Opinion
- 4 Effective
- 5 Very Effective

REGISTRATION

What (if any) dog or cat registration services are available in your area?

2006/2007 CAT AND DOG REGISTRATION/PERMIT FEES

Cat Permits

- ICC does not register cats
- 2 domestic cats allowed with no permit
- Domestic Cat Permit required for 3 or 4 cats (all must be desexed)
- Restricted cattery permit - to keep up to 4 cats (for the purpose of breeding or sale)
- Cattery Permits allow you to keep more than 4 cats. The Planning and Development Department has have relevant requirements for catteries.

Dog Registration (per dog) First Year only, for dogs not previously registered with Council (excludes Declared Dangerous Dogs)

Dog Registration (per dog)

Dog Registration (per dog Desexed)

Dog Registration Pensioner (per dog)

Dog Registration Pensioner (per dog desexed)

***Note:** Pensioner discount applies to: Age Pension; Sole Parent Pension; Wife's Pension; Widow's Pension; Carer's Pension; Disability Support Pension; War Widow's Pension; Defence Widow's Pension; Service Pension; War Disability Pension.*

Dog Registration – Farm Working Dog

- First Dog
- First Dog Desexed
- Additional Dog(s) No charge

***Note:** For the purposes of Registration – in order to determine whether a dog is a farm working dog or not, Council may require the owner of such dog to satisfy an authorised officer that the said dog is in fact a farm working dog.*

Dangerous Dogs

- As of October 1996 dogs declared dangerous pursuant to Local Law (Applicable for three (3) years from date of declaration)
- As of October 1996 **pensioners** dogs declared dangerous pursuant to Local Law (Applicable for three (3) years from date of declaration)

Restricted Dog Permit (Restricted dogs as determined by State legislation eg.. American Pitbull Terrier) in addition to normal registration fee.

How effective have these services been?

- | | |
|---|---------------------------|
| 1 | Not Effective |
| 2 | Slightly Effective |
| 3 | No Opinion |
| 4 | Effective |
| 5 | Very Effective |

How supportive are you of a state-wide animal registration system for cats and dogs?

- 1 Not Supportive
- 2 Slightly Supportive
- 3 No Opinion
- 4 Supportive
- 5 Very Supportive**

IDENTIFICATION

What (if any) identification methods are available in your area?

Council does not register cats.

Identification tags are supplied by Council as part of the dog registration process. Microchipping is not compulsory and we do not currently provide a registration discount for microchipped dogs.

How effective have these methods been?

- 1 Not Effective
- 2 Slightly Effective**
- 3 No Opinion
- 4 Effective
- 5 Very Effective

How supportive are you of using microchips as a method of identification?

- 1 Not Supportive
- 2 Slightly Supportive
- 3 No Opinion
- 4 Supportive
- 5 Very Supportive**

DESEXING

How supportive are you of compulsory animal desexing?

- 1 Not Supportive
- 2 Slightly Supportive
- 3 No Opinion
- 4 Supportive
- 5 Very Supportive PLEASE SEE ICC PREFERRED OPTION**

IMPLEMENTATION OPTIONS

1. Maintain current system

How supportive are you of the current Queensland system of managing unwanted cats and dogs being maintained?

- 1 Not Supportive**
- 2 Slightly Supportive
- 3 No Opinion
- 4 Supportive
- 5 Very Supportive

2. Enhance the current system through non-compulsory measures

How supportive are you of enhancements to the current system through the modification of model local government laws?

- 1 Not Supportive**
- 2 Slightly Supportive
- 3 No Opinion
- 4 Supportive
- 5 Very Supportive

How supportive are you of enhancements to the current system through a coordinated communication campaign?

- 1 Not Supportive**
- 2 Slightly Supportive
- 3 No Opinion
- 4 Supportive
- 5 Very Supportive

3. State-wide voluntary registration, identification and desexing with incentives

How supportive are you of state-wide voluntary registration, identification and desexing with incentives?

- 1 Not Supportive**
- 2 Slightly Supportive
- 3 No Opinion
- 4 Supportive
- 5 Very Supportive

What (if any) incentives to register, identify and desex are available in your area?

A range of discounted registration fees are available including a discount for desexed dogs. Identification tags are included in the registration fee.

There are currently no incentives to encourage microchipping.

How effective do you think these incentives are?

- 1 Not Effective
- 2 Slightly Effective**
- 3 No Opinion
- 4 Effective
- 5 Very Effective

Are there any incentives that would encourage you to have your animal desexed?

Desexing Vouchers/subsidies
Dog & Cat Clinic Days (that provide desexing for a minimal fee)
Education/Promotion on the benefits of desexing – consistent message

4. State-wide mandatory registration and identification, and voluntary desexing with incentives

How supportive are you of state-wide mandatory registration and identification, and voluntary desexing with incentives?

- 1 Not Supportive
- 2 Slightly Supportive**
- 3 No Opinion
- 4 Supportive
- 5 Very Supportive

Comments:

A mandatory consistent approach across Queensland for registration and identification will help in returning cats and dogs to their owner. Community expectations will be met if they move from town to town/region to region etc – the same rules will apply. (fees will differ though).

Voluntary desexing only captures responsible pet owners and allows ‘unregulated’ breeding and sales to occur, which in turn will contribute to an increase in the statistics of unwanted cats and dogs.

5. State-wide mandatory registration, identification and desexing

How supportive are you of state-wide mandatory registration, identification and desexing to address the unwanted cat and dog issue?

- 1 Not Supportive
- 2 Slightly Supportive
- 3 No Opinion
- 4 Supportive****
- 5 Very Supportive

Comments:

Reduction in unwanted cats and dogs will occur across the State through a consistent state-wide approach to education and promotion of the benefits of desexing, and supporting provisions in State Legislation.

However, the community may feel their rights have been taken away if it is promoted as mandatory desexing. The core of the issue is around regulated breeding and trade (point of sale). A permit system that allows dog and cat owners to keep their animals sexually entire will allow owners the 'option' of desexing but at a price.

**See Ipswich City Council's preferred option below

Can you suggest other potential solutions to the unwanted cat and dog issue?

Refer to Ipswich City Council's preferred option below.

Which system of animal control would you prefer in Queensland?

IPSWICH CITY COUNCIL'S PREFERRED OPTION

The best outcome for State Government and Local Government would be a holistic approach to developing a legislative system that encompasses all aspects of cats and dogs ie environmental and social impacts, animal welfare, and management of administrative functions and strategic opportunities (incl research).

We ask that State Government consider this approach.

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- Compulsory identification method to be microchipping. The technology (eg type of chip) used should be consistent across the state and aiming towards a national consistency.
- The community will be provided an opportunity to keep their cats and dogs sexually entire by paying a yearly fee which is priced appropriately (similar to ACT) , which is why we have not used the term ‘mandatory desexing’. Conditions will be applied to the fee.
- Non-discounted fees to Keep a Dog or Cat Sexually Entire should have a similar pricing structure to the ACT eg. The registration fee to keep a dog or cat sexually entire is greater than the cost of desexing. The cost of the fee will provide dog and cat owners the ability to consider both options, that is, “do I pay this fee (which is more than the cost of desexing) or do I desex my animal?”.. *(This thought process combined with a positive promotion of the benefits of desexing has increased the number of desexed animals in the community whilst reducing the number of “unwanted animals” in the community with the ACT.)* This approach could be classed as ‘encouraged desexing’.
- Owners of cats/dogs that are registered with member associations such as the Canine Control Council, Greyhound Racing Control Board of Qld, ‘show’ dogs and cats (which must be kept entire to be able to show) etc will be able to source a discounted fee to Keep a Dog or Cat Sexually Entire.
- Financial and non-financial incentives to be considered such as desexing vouchers, access to Dog/Cat Community Clinics where they can be registered/vaccinated/microchipped and desexed in the one visit. Partnerships with the RSPCA and AWL could be established to assist with these types of activities. Non-financial incentives may include reduced holding times for dogs/cats impounded that are non-identified (effective promotion will need to be carried out).
- Stricter provisions for the sale of cats and dogs should be covered in the new legislation ie an entire dog or cat can only be bought from a registered breeder. This way breeders can sell entire animals but with provisions that they must keep records of who they sell to. This way Councils can audit the records to check that the animals are registered as entire or otherwise with their new owners. Registered breeders can also sell desexed dogs and cats in addition to sexually entire dogs and cats.
- Pet shops (and other operators) should only be able to sell desexed dogs and cats (registered breeders can only sell entire dogs and cats), and in addition they must keep records of who they sell them to so Councils can audit the records and check animals are registered.
- A Code of Practice to be considered for Pet Shop Operators (and any other point of sale/transfer) under the legislation. Increasingly, more cats and dogs are being sold/transferred to members of the community without giving them the correct advice or providing them with inaccurate information eg how big a dog may grow. The primary aim is to provide more education at the point of sale/transfer.

- Funding for State-wide education and promotion campaigns in addition to research could be funded through joint State and Local Government funds. Council could contribute a percentage of their dog/cat registrations to a Dog & Cat Management Fund that is administered by a Independent Board that is set up under the proposed legislation and relevant Minister. The Board would consist of appropriate representation from Local Government, State Government, and any relevant external stakeholders such as the RSPCA and AWL . All funds would be legislatively quarantined to ensure that funds are not siphoned off into general government revenue.
- Appropriate enforcement tools need to be included in the rollout of any new proposed legislation, for example a fully robust State-wide database that is able to be interrogated easily to assist in sending out bulk correspondence on the status of their dog/cat and assisting owners to comply with the new regulations. A robust database will automate enforcement where relevant which will reduce costs in other areas of animal management.

Strong linkages with other State's that undertake a form of compulsory registration/ identification/desexing should be made so Queensland does not have to 'reinvent the wheel'. The lessons learned by other States will be invaluable to the success of any Queensland legislation.

Appendix A

Ipswich City Council 2007 LGAQ Part two (2) Motion

Title: Companion Animals – Call For State Government Legislation

Motion:

That the Local Government Association of Queensland (LGAQ) call upon the State Government to develop, in collaboration with Local Government, state-wide legislation for companion animals.

Background:

Queensland councils currently regulate companion animals¹ in their communities through animal local laws. These local laws are developed in accordance with the provisions in Chapter 12 and 17A of the *Local Government Act 1993*.

The purpose of having regulations in place to control and manage animals in the community is the same across the State whether you are in the communities of Ipswich, Bundaberg, Mt Isa or Longreach. That is,

- (a) to encourage responsible companion animal ownership;
- (b) to reduce public and environmental nuisance caused by companion animals;
- (c) to promote the effective management of companion animals.

There are currently 125 local councils, 15 Aboriginal Shire councils and 17 Island councils. The majority of Aboriginal and Island councils have local laws for the management of animals in their communities. Of the 125 local councils there is only one who does not currently have a local law for the management of animals (Burke Shire Council). Burke Shire Council has advised that they do recognise a need for a local law in their community and are proposing to develop/adopt one in the near future.

Based on the above, all communities in Queensland recognise the need for companion animals to be regulated and this can be best achieved through State legislation which provides state-wide consistency that meets Queensland community expectations.

The benefits of this are:

- Uniform provisions and expectations – a family/individuals moving from one community to another would expect the same rules and regulations for companion animals to apply. Eg number of dogs you are permitted to own in a residential area.
- Common terminology and definitions – the same meaning across the State eg companion animals, animal nuisance, domestic animals etc
- Consistent enforcement of the legislation provisions by councils (from community to community) meeting community expectations eg impounding and release of dogs and cats.

The State Government already legislate Restricted Dogs through Chapter 17a of the Local Government Act (1993) and then councils incorporate references to this legislation in their animal local laws.

The majority of other State's and Territories in Australia already regulate Companion Animals through State Legislation.

Together with the State Government's proposed review of the Local Government Act it is timely for the State Government and Local Governments to work collaboratively in developing State legislation for the control and management of companion animals in the State of Queensland.

¹ For the purpose of this motion companion animal means each of the following: (a) a dog, (b) a cat (c) any other animal that is prescribed by the proposed legislation as a companion animal.