

Submission to Inquiry into the problem of feral and domestic cats in Australia

Living in country Victoria I have had direct and ongoing experience with feral cats. On my previous farm property we were accustomed to people from the nearest town dropping off a “box of kittens” on the roadside on occasions. This alerted us to the problem of uncontrolled breeding.

Moving into Benalla later we discovered the problem continued, our garden regularly used by neighbours’ cats as a toilet. Cat fights during the night. Dead birds in our garden.

We sought help from the local Council, who supplied a trap. Several have been caught over the years. We understand the process involves Council staff checking a trapped cat for microchip in an attempt to find the owner. Should no chip be found the animal is transferred to Wangaratta to the nearest RSPCA facility. It is checked there and held for a period. This facility regularly offers “free cats”, microchipped and vaccinated, to the public. No checking is done to see if potential owners have cat enclosures.

We have attempted to cost this process. Council staff provide and collect the traps and transport animals to Wangaratta (40klms). Several hours in this process. The animals are checked, chipped and vaccinated by the RSPCA, considerable costs again. Provided free (at times) these animals are effectively taxpayer subsidised free pets, with significant costs transferred to ratepayers and taxpayers. RSPCA are beneficiaries of State Government funding.

Research reveals that many cat owners believe their animal has a right to “roam free”. Data from our town shows little effort is made to enforce registration regulations or to control free ranging cats.

Some suggested solutions:

- Australia wide regulations to be universally enforced in all States.
- Only registered breeders permitted to advertise cat sales.
- No taxpayer/ratepayer subsidised RSPCA “free cat” programs.
- Costs of capture and return of wandering animals to be charged to the owner.

From the RSPCA website <https://www.rspcavic.org/adoption/adoption-fees/>

Did you know the costs covered by the RSPCA to prepare our animals ready for adoption?

Here's a list to give you an idea:

- Desexing (starts from \$91)
- Microchipping (\$39)
- Vaccinations (starts from \$83)
- Vet checks (\$65)
- Other health care costs that may include dental care (\$250) and x-rays (up to \$500).