

New template for cat by-laws

Cat management in South Australia has received a boost with the release of a new template cat by-law developed by South Australia's Local Government Association (LGA) and the Dog and Cat Management Board (DCMB).

Containing suggested clauses to help councils deal with microchipping, mandatory desexing, managing nuisance cats and the maximum number of cats allowed on a property, it also gives the option of introducing registration.

Dog and Cat Management Board Chair Jan Connolly said the template was accompanied by guidelines to assist councils through the process of community consultation and deciding which of the suggested clauses were appropriate for their local area.

"The template gives councils choice about the best by-laws for their community and enables local considerations to be taken into account," Ms Connolly said.

"About a third of South Australia's councils currently have some form of cat by-law in place, but most of these simply contain a restriction on the number of cats.

"It is hoped that the template and guidelines will encourage more councils to introduce cat by-laws, improving the management and care of owned and un-owned cats.

"It covers issues such as returning cats to their owners when they become lost, nuisance complaints reducing the impact they have on wildlife.

"Cat owners need to be responsible for their cats and be considerate of the effect they may have on their neighbours and the environment."

Local Government Association Acting President Mayor Lorraine Rosenberg said appropriate by-laws would help facilitate good neighbour relations.

"We want happy and healthy cats, that are safe and cared for in their own homes," Ms Rosenberg said.

"Without adequate by-laws, council officers are often powerless to deal with nuisance or dangerous animals, meaning they usually have to negotiate with owners and their neighbours to find an amicable solution.

"Having clear by-laws in place will give council staff a legal back-up when owners of nuisance cats refuse to do the right thing.

"Managing cats is quite different to managing dogs. Most councils have had comprehensive dog by laws for decades but cats are very different animals and, when they create problems, a different response is required.

"We now have enough experience with cat management to be able to identify options that work and can be chosen by communities to apply locally.

"It's time we had rules that are targeted specifically to cats but also make allowances for local circumstances and the views of local communities."

In 2011, Mitcham Council became one of the first councils in the state to introduce cat registration.

Statistics now show that 99.7% of cats registered with the council are desexed. There has also been a large reduction in stray cats in the Mitcham area since the introduction of registration.

For more information on good cat management, please visit dogandcatboard.com.au.

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