

**EMBARGOED**

1:30pm - Thursday 23 July 2020

**MEDIA RELEASE**

ADELAIDE, SA

## Australia's largest Cat Desexing Programme heralds start of three-year partnership between RSPCA and Onkaparinga Council

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More than 2000 cats and kittens south of Adelaide will soon get the snip – at no cost to their owners – thanks to a joint initiative by Onkaparinga Council and RSPCA South Australia.

Funded by RSPCA South Australia through a \$200,000 donation from a single donor and \$50,000 from the City of Onkaparinga, the cat desexing programme will be the largest ever undertaken in Australia.

For two years, all City of Onkaparinga residents will be eligible to have their cats desexed for free by the veterinary team at RSPCA's Lonsdale animal shelter.

Subsidised cat desexing will also be available at several vet clinics located in the Onkaparinga region.

Aligned with recommendations made in the RSPCA/AWL Cat Management Plan for South Australia (released last year), this two-year cat desexing campaign is part of a longer three-year partnership agreement between RSPCA South Australia and the council for the management of stray dogs and cats from the Onkaparinga area.

As part of the agreement, RSPCA South Australia will continue to provide dog and cat impounding and rehoming services to the City of Onkaparinga.

RSPCA South Australia CEO Paul Stevenson praised the council for its innovative approach to the management of stray cats.

“Uncontrolled reproduction is the root cause of cat over-population in South Australia, and the current piecemeal approach by some councils isn't working,” Mr Stevenson said.

“To date, we have seen 36 local councils introduce cat by-laws that although well-intentioned, overall are highly inconsistent and we've not seen any tangible results through this approach.

“The City of Onkaparinga should be lauded for taking a lead in addressing cat management in this State, and for rejecting the punitive interim approach of introducing a cat by-law.

“We expect the data collected as part of this project will prove that large-scale cat desexing programmes, supported by local councils, are the most effective way to stop indiscriminate breeding.”

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Onkaparinga Mayor Erin Thompson said higher desexing rates will make the biggest difference to cat management across the region.

“We want people to enjoy having cats as pets, but when cats are having unwanted litters of several kittens, it can create a real problem for our city.

“Together the RSPCA and Animal Welfare League receive over 10,000 unwanted kittens and cats at their shelter each year.

“Clearly, desexing cats is the answer,” Mayor Thompson said.

RSPCA South Australia and Onkaparinga Council will also work together to promote the three core elements of responsible cat ownership – desex, microchip and “indoors at night”.

“Responsible cat ownership is good for cats, it’s good for wildlife, and it’s good for neighbours,” Mayor Thompson said.

Paul Stevenson said tangible change would come from this joint approach to education.

“Far more people will become responsible cat owners in response to Onkaparinga Council’s education and desexing programmes than other councils will achieve through fines and penalties,” Mr Stevenson said.

Onkaparinga residents will receive details about the desexing programme in August.

The first surgeries will begin in September, prior to the spring/summer kitten breeding season.

The programme will run through an ongoing weekly schedule and a number of major weekend “Desex-athon” events.

## **Media opportunity - Thursday 23 July 2020**

12noon - RSPCA SA Animal Shelter - 25 Meyer Rd, Lonsdale

RSPCA SA President Rob DiMonte and Onkaparinga Mayor Erin Thompson will open proceedings, and Mayor Thompson and RSPCA South Australia CEO Paul Stevenson will be available to interview

Cats and kittens currently up for adoption will also be available to film.

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