

No bones about it, WCC pet rego fees are astronomical



Pet registrations in Warrnambool are already the second highest in Australia and continue to climb. Stock image.

Carol Altmann – The Terrier

Well this is enough to make pet owners barking mad.

Tucked within the pages of the Warrnambool City Council draft budget is a little note that pet registration fees are set to rise – AGAIN.

If this rise goes ahead – as I suspect it will – this time next year a single desexed dog or desexed cat will cost \$72 to register, up from \$70. It was \$54 just a couple of years ago.

The CEO said at last Monday night's meeting that our rego fees are, "not dissimilar to some other municipalities".

This is untrue.

We now pay the second highest pet regos fees in Australia, behind only Brighton, in Melbourne.

In Ballarat, the fee is \$40. In Traralgon, it is \$43. In Portland, it is \$35. Over in Port Fairy, it is \$39...you get the drift.

The reason we are being fleeced, it seems, is that in 2017 the council signed on to a three-year deal with the RSPCA that saw an explosion in its fees for running the council pound – the cost tripled overnight.

Not only that, the cost of running the pound has risen astronomically for EACH year of the three-year deal.

The RSPCA charged the council \$328,000 in 2018-19.

Next financial year, which is the last year of its contract, it will charge \$425,000: almost half a million dollars!

Holy malooza! It's enough to make you have kittens.

In response to a question from a ratepayer on Monday night, our CEO explained that the RSPCA is all about saving animals, rehousing them, returning them home etc all of which costs money and is supported by any animal lover, including me.

But here is the rub.

The RSPCA also runs the pound in Portland and they ain't payin' anywhere near \$70 a dog or cat. Why not? Because, to put it simply, Glenelg Shire negotiated a better deal.

The RSPCA runs very few animal shelters in Victoria now and no doubt those they do run are top notch, but charging \$425,000 a year for a city the size of Warrnambool?

I would rather see these funds used to subsidise desexing – of cats, in particular, as happens in South Australia.

As it also happens, the WCC has just advertised a tender to run the pound from 2021-22. Will the RSPCA be, again, the only

one to apply?

Or maybe the council, post C19 when people need to be redeployed, could think about using that half a million bucks a year to run the pound again itself?

Unless we want to see pet regos go up and up and up, it could be the best option.

[The WCC draft budget is open for public comment and feedback until 3 June.]