

CATS SNIPPED

Jessica Clement

THE practice of neutering hundreds of stray city cats before returning them to the streets could become legally sanctioned next month.

Sydney State Independent MP Alex Greenwich has introduced a bill to parliament that would ensure trap, neuter and release (TNR) programs, already undertaken widely by cat care groups across Sydney, were made lawful.

Community Cat Carers president Chris Lett said his organisation had operated in "a grey area" for years.

"That's because when you return an animal to a colony at any stage, the law would consider that abandonment," Mr Lett said.

TNR is used on those animals deemed too difficult to be socialised or rehomed and volunteers continue to monitor and feed those cats returned to their colonies.

Mr Lett said the program was a viable alternative to euthanasia and pointed to results achieved by his own organisation in which the size of some colonies had been reduced by 80 per cent.

He said there was a marked difference between city strays and feral cats which "wander the bush, grow half the size of a horse and could take a kangaroo down".



Stray cats are breeding in the inner city, especially near abandoned industrial sites in Marrickville.

Picture: DAMIAN SHAW

TRAP, NEUTER, RETURN COULD GET GO-AHEAD

"What we're dealing with are cats which have been dumped and it's a huge problem in Sydney."

He said volunteers continued to pour time, money and effort into TNR programs but under current legislation they were still treated as the bad guys.

According to the RSPCA, one un-sexed female cat and her subsequent off-

spring are capable of producing up to 420,000 cats over seven years.

Over the years, colonies gathered in Paddington, Surry Hills, Ultimo and Redfern but a larger population now exists in areas around Rosebery, Marrickville and beyond.

Mr Greenwich said his bill provided a framework for what was already occurring.

"It gives volunteers legal certainty and potential access to grants while enabling the collection of data on TNR," he said.

The TNR bill will be discussed when parliament returns for its October sitting.

Mr Greenwich's bill has the support of the City of Sydney, within which Greens Councillor Irene

Doutney has led the charge. "Stray cats don't really hurt anybody, they aren't like feral cats - they're very shy and always hiding," Cr Doutney said.

"They adapt to wherever they can find shelter and keep away from humans.

"This is the answer on how to handle them humanely."



What do you think of the plan. Tell us on our Facebook page