

Melbourne Observer Life & Style

SHOWING CONSIDERATION TOWARDS CATS

Travel Extra

47 nights

■ Ecrusing.travel has brought together into one 47-nights package a diversity of holiday concepts by road, rail, sea and air that would normally be undertaken in shorter individual segments, and embracing **Canada, Alaska, Japan, Russia, South Korea, China, Hong Kong, Vietnam, Thailand and Singapore.**

Prices start from \$13,299 per person twin-share* including **Qantas** air and taxes from **Sydney** on September 3 this year, coach travel and **Rocky Mountaineer Rail** in **Canada**, and 38-nights aboard the 5-star megaliners **Diamond Princess** from **Vancouver** to **Singapore** via those countries above.

Two breakfasts and three lunches are included on **Rocky Mountaineer**, and all meals on **Diamond Princess** including a choice of Traditional, Anytime or Casual Dining, a 24-hour buffet and complimentary 24-hour room service.

After departing **Sydney** by air on September 3 this year, there's an overnight in **Canada's** cattle-country **Calgary**, followed by **Lake Louise** with an Icefields Excursion and Glacier Helicopter Experience, **Banff** with a Gondola Ride, Helicopter Tour and Ranch Visit, and two days **Rocky Mountaineer Rail** to **Kamloops** and **Vancouver.**

Book by March 12 and **ecrusing.travel** will include a free Whale Watching, Flightseeing and City Tour in **Vancouver.**

* After March 12 prices rise by \$200pp. Details phone 1300 369 848 or visit **www.ecrusing.travel** - David Ellis

■ It seems my life this week has revolved around moggies: Heinz 57 varieties, pedigreed ones, lots of lonely ones, and ones that slink around the neighbourhood looking for food or a home or both.

Most of my friends are cat lovers and when we get together we sound like proud parents as we discuss the merits of the cat that owns us.

My first cat chat this week was with Gigi who rang to tell me that her beloved cat Flochi ('Little Flea'), her friend for 17 years, had to be put down.

We've all been through this sad episode when you own animals, but it's such a heart wrenching time.

Cat owns you

■ So Moosh my cat, Peter my husband and I sent her our love and that of readers of my column, who I might add, may have a cat sitting on their lap as I write.

I'd like to tell her that Hamish, my "cat from hell" still sporting his Mr Menzies eyebrows and enormous whiskers will be waiting for Flochi at the "Rainbow Bridge." I think those two will get on famously.

If you haven't owned a pet, you will never understand the strong loving bond that can form with an animal. In the case of some lonely and elderly people it's the love they receive, and having the responsibility of their pet that keeps them going.

Not many men seem to like cats. Those who do are rare. I think it's because you don't own a cat, the cat owns you.

Felt it wrong to trap

■ Call a dog and most times he or she will come galloping towards you with tail wagging furiously. Call a cat and you get that long piercing stare that says "Message Received, I'll Get back to you".

It's a power thing with men I'm sure. My other episode with a cat this week was a stray that comes into the house and eats Moosh's food.

I went to a couple of houses in the street to ask if the cat belonged to them.

Well, a couple of the neighbours were as ill-mannered as the cat that invades our house.

I explained that I was calling in case the cat belonged to them because we were about to call the Council to trap it. Well, you'd have thought I was the Jill the Ripper, and after taking some rather offensive snarling from the occupants it turned out that they didn't even own a cat, but felt it was wrong to trap it.

Is he being bullied?

■ Last month one of these families had a party with what seemed like every rock band in Australia performing. The noise was indescribable, I was so tempted to call the police to shut the rave down, but I knew if I waited others neighbours who lived closer would call. They did. I heard the siren and knew the racket would stop and peace would descend on the neighbourhood.

It's nice to think they showed some consideration towards a cat!

When I attempt to shoo this cat out, he spits and snarls. Someone must love him, I don't know why because he looks like he's been hit with the ugly stick several times - a real boof head, that has no fear of anyone or anything.

I can't understand Moosh because he sits back and watches his food being stolen. Then he'll stroll to the French doors, his slender tail as large as a lambs wool duster, and mark his territory, just like humans dusting their hands off after they've done a deal.

I don't really want to trap the cat, although he's not the best specimen of feline. They say that beauty is in the eye of the beholder and no doubt someone cares about him, but he's costing me a kings ransom in dry and wet food.

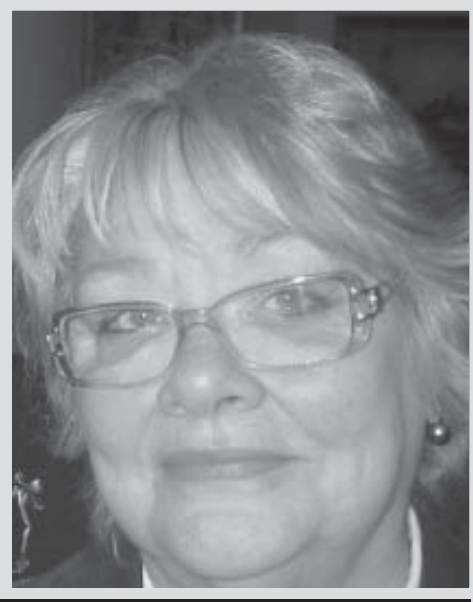
I have a feeling that Moosh doesn't eat all of his food so that "Boof" can eat. Moosh supervises the possums eating their food without interfering, although it's taken a bit of training.

Perhaps Moosh is being bullied like some of our school kids.

Feed them, they're yours

■ And my last episode with cats for the week was sympathising with a friend who lives next door to a family who at the Sheriff's order had to leave their

Yvonne's Column



with Yvonne Lawrence
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house. They left but didn't take their cat with them and now the poor frightened animal is trying to get into the empty house.

My friend has eight cats and he is beside himself deciding what action to take.

I remember my mum telling me that if you feed a stray cat then you have to take responsibility because he will adopt you. In fact, if you feed a stray cat, according to Dr Hugh Wirth, by law, the cat is yours.

I thought she was trying to give me a message because I used to feed the stray cats and kittens that lived in the hay shed.

The cats were terrified of the workmen and even mum if she went into the shed, but because I used to feed them fresh warm milk from the house cow, and any table scrapes I could sneak out of the house, they came to me, and how could I not play with sweet little kittens. I was only young and didn't think of what would happen to all of the cats, I just loved them.

Unacceptable perspective

■ So, when I hear the message on the radio asking that "do you want to take full ownership of stray cats you are feeding?" I think back to when I was a little tacker.

Unowned cats suffer from poor health, diseases and have a short average life expectancy of around two to three years.

They can also be hit by cars and seriously injured or killed. This is unacceptable from an animal welfare perspective.

Semi-owned cats differ from unowned cats in that they are fed by caring people and may be friendlier to

humans (all except Boofa, the food thief.) However, these semi owned cats suffer the same illnesses, accidents and outcomes as unowned cats and it is recommended that: semi-owned cats are adopted by the feeder if the person is willing to take full ownership by having the cat desexed and micro chipped.

Fair lump out of pension

■ I contacted Whitehorse Council where an annual fee is charged for each cat owned. I asked what responsibility, if any, it took for stray cats, and what portion of this annual largesse is devoted to the problem.

I asked if there was some assistance given to pensioners or those who just can't afford the vets bill to neuter the animal.

I was informed that a fee is set by the State Government and the fee at the Whitehorse Council is: sterilised cats \$22 and at \$10 for pensioners.

For the unsterilised cat it's \$76 and \$24 for pensioners. That's a fair lump out of a pension if you want to do the right thing.

The Council doesn't assist with micro chipping or sterilisation from the \$10 registration of your cat.

That's quite a little money earner at the expense of us cat owners.

Yvonne
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EXHIBITION TO OPEN AT ST KILDA

■ The exhibition year for **Jackman Gallery** in **St Kilda** is start with a bang from Wednesday, March 24.

The first exhibition of 2010 will showcase the emerging talent of **Kylie Baudino**, local **St Kilda** artist and the satirical work of **Darrell Hall**.

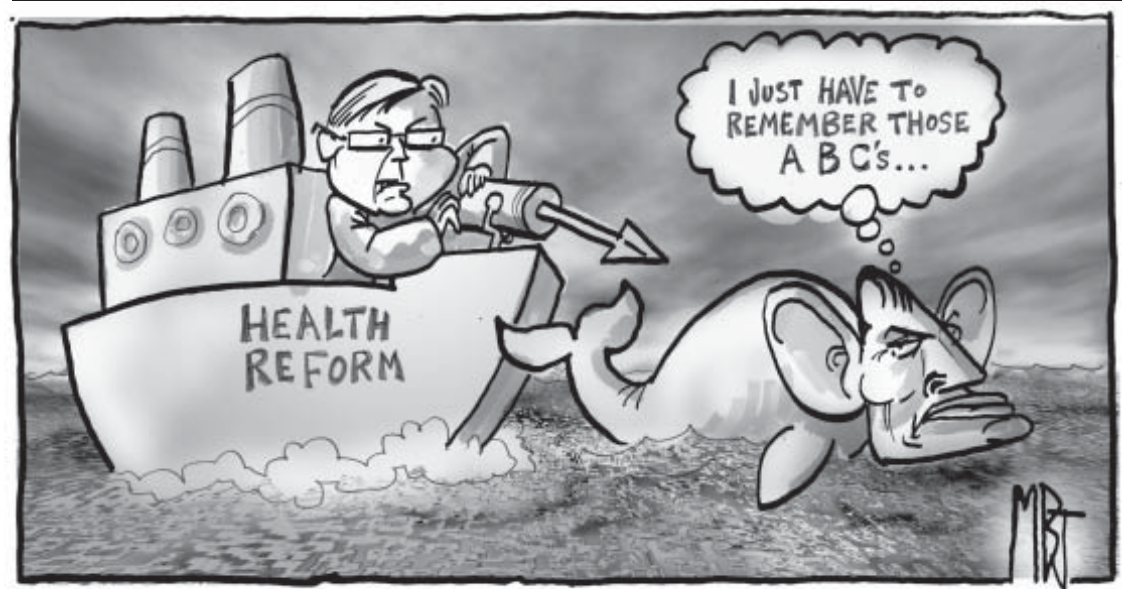
Opening night will be from 6:30 - 8:30 pm. The exhibition will conclude on Sunday, April 11 and is definitely a must see for those interested in a progressive look into **Melbourne's** contemporary art scene.

Operating from her **St Kilda** based studio at the **City of Port Phillip Bowling Club** studio adjoining the **Veg Out** gardens, **Baudino's** work draws on the conceptual concerns of her art practice and her love of negative spaces.

Known for her sculptural endeavours in and around the **City of Port Phillip**, this latest collection will house a number of new works on paper.

Baudino comments "I am interested in how we, as viewers, interpret negative spaces. When the form or subject matter is not clear, we can still read the artwork, but do so from an emotive response point rather than a logical perspective."

Melbourne Observations with Matt Bissett-Johnson



Malice in Blunderland